

## Word Order in English and Sentence Patterns

\* Word order is important in most languages. English is no exception, as is illustrated with the following examples. Compare:

1 My holidays begin at the end of next week.

2 \*The next end week holidays of begin my.

3 \*My holidays begin the next week end of.

4 \*Begin next week end my holidays.

In English, there are many contrasting examples that can illustrate the important effect of word order on meaning, e.g.

5 His dog chased my cat.          6 My cat chased his dog.

7 Did John ring you?          8 Did you ring John?

All sentences, even the most complicated, are built from a few basic elements: subjects (S), verbs (V), objects (O), and complements (C).

### REQUIREMENTS OF A SENTENCE

- A sentence must begin with a capitalized letter or word
- A sentence must end with a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point
- A sentence must have a subject (a word or words that name the topic of the sentence)
- A sentence must have a predicate (a complete verb that shows tense)
- A sentence must have at least one independent clause.

#### **1. Identifying the verb:**

Verbs are easy to identify because they are words that indicate action or a state of being, like: write, run, tell, have, be, look, feel. Verbs are the only part of speech that gets conjugated.

There are two types of verbs:

- a) **Action verbs** indicate movement or accomplishment in idea or deed. They tell what the subject does.
  - ✓ The students **boarded** the plane for San Juan. (What did the students do? They boarded. The verb in this sentence is boarded.)
  - ✓ Oceans **cover** three-quarters of the earth's surface. (What action takes place in this sentence? What do the oceans do? They cover. Therefore, the verb in this sentence is cover.)

- ✓ Visitors to Disneyland **buy** souvenirs for their friends at home. (What do visitors do? They buy souvenirs. The verb is buy.)

b) **Linking Verbs:** Some verbs do not show action. Instead, they express a condition or state of being. They are called linking verbs, and they link the subject to another word that renames or describes the subject. They include *be, appear, become, feel, grow, look, remain, seem, smell, sound, and taste.*

- ✓ My parents **seem** happy in their new apartment. (The linking verb **seem** connects the subject parents with the word that describes them: happy.)
- ✓ French **is** the language of the province of Quebec in Canada. (The linking verb is connects the subject French with the word that renames it: language.)
- ✓ The first-graders **remained** calm during the earthquake. (The verb remained connects the subject first-graders with the word that describes them: calm.)

Verbs can be a single word, a phrase or compound verb such as:

- ✓ He **understood** her main theories.
- ✓ The judge **has presided** over many capital cases.
- ✓ She **prepared** carefully and **presented** her ideas with clarity.

You may sometimes be confused by two forms of the verb that may be mistaken for the main verb of the sentence. These forms are the infinitive and the present participle.

- ✓ Missionaries from Spain began **to arrive** in California in the 1760s.
- ✓ Seeing is **believing**.

## 2. Identifying the Subject

**I.** The subject of a sentence names a person, place, thing, or idea; it tells us who or what the sentence is about.

To find the subject of a sentence, first find the verb. Then ask, “Who?” or “What?” The answer will be the subject.

- ✓ **The invoice** was paid on February 10. (By asking “What was paid?” you can easily determine the subject of this sentence: invoice.)
- ✓ **Several cracks** in the kitchen ceiling appeared after the last earthquake. (What appeared? Cracks, the subject.)
- ✓ Please **(you)** return all overdue library books by next Friday.

**II.** The subject can be a noun, pronoun, a phrase or a clause:

- ✓ **Adam** left for work. (noun)
- ✓ **He/Everyone** wants a copy of that photograph.(pronoun)
- ✓ **To win** is her objective. (phrase)
- ✓ **What President Aquino wants most** is political stability. (clause)

**III.** A subject may be compound. That is, it may consist of two or more subjects, usually joined by *and* or *or*, that function together.

- ✓ **He** and **his** friends listened carefully.
- ✓ **Steven, Juan,** and **Alicia** attended the seminar.

**IV.** A subject may be implied, or understood. An imperative sentence—a sentence that gives a command—has you as the implied subject.

- ✓ **(You)** Sit in that chair, please.
- ✓ **(You)** Now take the oath.

**V.** Although the subject usually appears before the verb, it may follow the verb instead:

- ✓ Here are **your books** and **your papers**.
- ✓ There are **several reasons** to explain his refusal. (What are there? Several reasons, the subject.)
- ✓ On her desk is **a new word processor**.

**VI.** The subject of a sentence will never be in a prepositional phrase.

- ✓ **One** of the Beatles continues to produce records. (Beatles is the object of a preposition and therefore is not the subject. Who continues to produce records? The subject is One.)
- ✓ **The chairperson** [subject] of the department [object of the preposition] directs the discussion.

### **3. Complements:**

#### **A. verb complement (object):**

- ❖ **Direct object (DO)** appears after transitive verbs such as: eat, wash, study .... etc. It is the receiver of the action. It is always a NP.
  - We met **the new teacher**. (NP)
  - A good student reviews **his notes** every day. (NP)
  - Have you finished **reading the newspaper**?

- ❖ **Indirect object (IO)** appears after intransitive verbs such as offer, send, etc. It is a second object to or for which the action of the verb is directed.
  - The firm gave their employees **an unexpected rise**.
  - The firm gave **an unexpected rise** to their employees.
  - This song gives me **a headache**.
- ❖ **Prepositional object (PO)** appears after a prepositional verb such as adhere to, aspire to, culminate in/with, detract from, differentiate between, incline to/towards, specialize in.
  - Her parents will not approve **of her marriage**. (PP)
  - We had to deal **with hundreds** of complaints. (PP)
  - He'll have to account **for his conduct**. (PP)

#### ❖ **Transitive/ intransitive verbs**

Not every verb takes a direct object.

The direct object completes the meaning of the verb, but not every verb needs completion. For example: I built last year. This sentence feels incomplete because something is missing. So, what did I build? To complete the idea I should add a direct object: "I built a house last year."

Now the idea is complete.

**An opposite example:** I ran yesterday.

This sentence is completely fine just like that. The idea is complete, and the verb doesn't require a direct object.

Hence, verbs that take direct objects are called **transitive verbs**.

The meaning of a transitive verb is **incomplete** without a direct object.

"She **is drinking** a glass of water."

-Verbs that don't take direct objects are called **intransitive verbs**.

The meaning of an intransitive verb is **complete** on its own.

"She **is standing**."

**B. Subject complement:** it appears after intensive verbs such as: be, seem, taste, feel, ... etc.

It can be an NP, AP, PP.

- This man is **a new teacher**. (NP)
- He was **himself** again. (NP)
- The journey was **quite pleasant**. (AP)
- The speech sounds **convincing**. (AP)
- The furniture is **in bad condition**. (PP)
- His aim is **to win**.

**C. Object complement (OC)** appears after complex transitive verbs. It modifies the direct object either by describing it or naming it. It can be NP, AP or PP.

- They named the baby **Lucas**. (NP)
- They elected John **president**. (NP)
- The government set the prisoners **free**. (AP)
- She throw the window **open**. (AP)
- We found the flat **in good condition**. (PP)