

## FOUNDATIONAL GRAMMAR

### LESSON FIVE: WORD JOBS - SUBJECTS, VERBS, and OBJECTS

You've learned what verbs are and how they signify the action, being, or existence happening in a sentence. You've also learned what nouns and pronouns are and how these can function as the *subject* in a sentence when they are the words which tell us *who or what* is doing the action.

You've had some practice identifying the subject and verb. Today's lesson is going to solidify that by going through some slightly trickier sentences and making sure you're still able to find the subject(s) and verb(s). We'll then name that grouping of subject+verb.

A sentence needs to have a subject and a verb to express a complete idea--to be a sentence at all. A sentence, as we know from our reading experience, can be made up of one subject+verb grouping. The word for a group of words with a subject and a verb is a **clause**. In the simple sentences we'll be working with, our sentences will be composed of just one clause. We'll be seeing later how sentences can be composed of multiple clauses. A Clause is not to be confused with a Phrase, which is simply a group of words without a subject/verb pairing.

#### **“To the store” = Phrase**

A simple group of words with no subject/verb

#### **“I(subject) went (verb) to the store” = Clause**

This group of words does have a subject/verb pairing (“I went”), and can be a complete sentence on its own when given an end mark and a capital letter because it expresses a complete thought.

You will have noticed that what we're calling a clause looks very much like a sentence. You will see in a later lesson that there are actually two kinds of clauses, one of which can be a sentence on its own, and one of which cannot. The kind of clause we have addressed thus far, which has a subject and a verb and can be a sentence on its own, is named an “independent” clause. This is, of course, because it can stand alone and needs no help from anyone else! We will uncover the second kind of clause in Lesson 9.

### PART ONE:

## Identifying the simple subject and main verb

Sometimes, identifying the simple subject and main verb of a sentence is easy:

Eg. The boy jumped into the pool. [It's pretty clear that *boy* is our simple subject and the main thing happening is that he *jumped*.]

Sometimes the subject isn't listed first, however, or the sentence may be in the form of a question. In these cases, you need to always ask yourself questions to first find the main verb.

**To find the main verb: What is the main *action/thing* happening?**

**To find the main subject: *Who or what* is doing this main thing/action?**

In the example above: The main action is *jumped* [so it's our main verb]. The who or what that jumped is the *boy* [so it's our subject].

Let's look at some more examples:

Eg.

Out of the darkness came a huge, lumbering creature.

What is the main action/thing happening [verb]? *came*

Who or what is doing that action [subject]? *creature*

Notice, the subject [creature] is the last word in the sentence but that doesn't change how it functions. It could just have easily been written differently:

The huge, lumbering creature came out of the darkness.

The subject and verb are the same in both constructions. This sentence is made up of just one clause, because there is just one subject/verb.

Eg.

To everyone's surprise, Jamie was not late to the party.

What is the main action/thing happening [verb/verb phrase]? *Was (not) late*

Who or what is doing that action [subject]? *Jamie*

**If you have a question, turn it into a statement first, and then you can analyze.**

Eg.

Question: What subject did you choose to study?

Statement: You did choose what subject to study.

What is the main action/thing happening [verb]? *Did choose*

Who or what is doing that action [subject]? *You*

Can you turn the following example questions into statements and then identify the subject and verb?

Where are you going after work?

When did Cindy realize she was missing her grocery bags?

What color of jersey are you going to wear to the game?

**In sentences expressing a command or a request, the subject is always *you* even though the word *you* may not appear in the sentence. We call it an *implied* subject.**

Eg.

(You) Proofread your assignment before turning it in.

What is the main action/thing happening [verb]? *proofread*

Who or what is doing that action [subject]? *You.*

(You) Please read the book carefully.

What is the main action/thing happening [verb]? *read*

Who or what is doing that action [subject]? *You*

**Can you identify the main subject and main verb in each sentence below?**

The water in the ocean was very cold.

Please do not omit any necessary punctuation.

Brian told Mark some funny stories.

Even brisk walks four times a week may prevent serious diseases.

Carefully consider your own physical activities.

### **Compound Subjects and Compound Verbs**

You have now seen simple verbs and compound verbs. You've also seen simple subjects and learned how to be masters of identifying them in sentences. It probably won't surprise you that there are compound subjects as well.

A *compound subject* consists of two or more subjects that are joined by a linking word [usually *and* and *or*] and have the same verb. As the two subjects are acting as one, both doing the same verb, they are considered one, “compound” or two-part subject.

Eg.

Sarah and Kelly wore wizard hats to school. [The compound subject *Sarah...Kelly* share the verb *wore*]. This sentence is made up of just one clause, since the subject, although it is made up of two nouns, is acting as one subject doing one verb.

Refresher:

A *compound verb* consists of two or more verbs that are joined by a linking word and have the same subject. They can be considered as a single, “compound” or two-part verb, following the rule that each clause needs one subject/verb pair.

Eg.

Researchers at Harvard university studied the exercise patterns of rats and reported the results. [The compound verb *studied.....reported* share the same subject *researchers*.] There are two actions in the sentence, but they can be considered as one, two-part verb, as they are both being done by the same subject, “researchers.”

## **PART TWO:**

### **Simple Sentences - Objects**

In every sentence with a transitive active verb, there is something called the object: a noun or pronoun to which the action is done. For example: She sang a song. In this sentence, what is the action? The action is singing, therefore *sang* is the main verb. Who did the action? She did the action; therefore, *she* is the subject. What was the action done *to*? The action was done *to* the *song*; therefore, *a song* is the object of the sentence. To find out if a sentence has an object, say the verb and then ask “Whom or What?” “I hit...whom or what?” “I ate... whom or what?” “I slept... whom or what?” You can hit and eat things, but you cannot sleep something: the action of that verb does not pass over to any object.

To remember the difference between the terms Subject and Object, remember that the word *object* refers to things like rocks--an inanimate “object” is something that doesn’t DO anything, but rather, things are done TO it. You can throw a rock, or hit a rock, or perhaps even eat a rock--it’s just an OBJECT, after all! Objects RECEIVE the action from the verb. This is not to say, of course, that any “object” is the direct object in a sentence. The true key to knowing if a noun/pronoun is the direct object in a sentence is to see if it answers the question “whom/what?”

after the verb. Remembering that the word “object” is often used to refer to inanimate things that are passive and have things happen to them only can be a helpful shortcut to remembering what precisely the term “direct object” means.

Another important note to remember: A noun is only a direct object *if it is **able** to be placed directly after the verb.* (It need not always be, in fact, placed after the verb in the sentence. However it needs to be *able* to be moved there, and have the sentence stay the same in meaning in order to be called a direct object.)

Example: “*I ate the delicious muffin.*”

*Muffin* is the direct object. The muffin is receiving the action of eating, making it the direct object. The word “delicious” does not interfere with that: the sentence would mean much the same thing if we got rid of the word “delicious”. We know “muffin” is the direct object because it is “WHAT” I ate, and we can double check by placing “muffin” directly next to “ate” and seeing if the sentence still makes sense.

In a sentence like “I sat ON the rock” or “I ran UP the stairs”, notice that little words are wedged between the verb and the noun. Those little words like “ON” and “UP” are prepositions and get their own lesson next week. “ON” and “UP” in those two sentences are necessary to the meaning of the sentence. If they were removed from their sentence, the sentences wouldn’t make sense. You don’t “sit a rock” or “run the stairs”. For this reason, “rock” and “stairs” cannot be direct objects in these examples--they are *not* able to be placed directly after the verb!

Another example of a direct object: “*She sang songs.*” She sang WHAT? Songs = direct object

If you were to draw a basic diagram of this sentence, it would look like this:

She | sang | songs

What simple sentences with objects can you make? Come up with a few examples to share with the class.

### **Direct vs Indirect Objects**

Usually, when you talk about objects, you are referring to direct objects. Occasionally, however, you will run into something called an indirect object. The direct object is the thing the action is done to, while the indirect object is the thing the action was done **to** or **for**. Eg: She gave me the apple. In order to distinguish between the direct and indirect object, you must first ask: What is the action? The action is *gave*. Who or what did she give? Did she give me, or did she give the apple? The answer to this question reveals the direct object. She gave the apple, therefore *the*

*apple* is the direct object. To or for what did she give the apple? She gave the apple to me, therefore *me* is the indirect object. Later, you will learn about the object of a preposition. In the sentence: *She gave me the apple*, *me* is an indirect object, but in the sentence: *She gave the apple to me*, *me* is the object of the preposition *to*. You will learn more about prepositions and their objects later; for now, just remember that an indirect object cannot actually come after the words *to* or *for*, even though the meaning of the sentence might imply the preposition. A diagram of a sentence with an indirect object looks like this:

She | gave | the apple  
me

Indirect objects are more rare than direct objects and usually do not appear unless there is already a direct object. Can you come up with a few simple sentences that have both a direct AND an indirect object to share with the class?