

# The Complete Sentence

A **sentence** is a group of words that has a **subject** (doer of the action) and a **predicate** (the action or state of being). This makes a sentence a complete thought. The subject is the person, place, or thing we are writing about. The predicate is what the subject is or does. Both the subject and the predicate may be one word or a group of words. The **complete subject** is the simple subject and all the words that describe or explain it. The sentences below have the complete subject underlined once. The predicate is underlined twice.

- The blue car belongs to my brother.
- A** Bob Smith is the new shop foreman.  
You need new tires for your car.  
I am.

**EXERCISE: Underline the complete subject and circle the predicate in the sentences below:**

- 1) The box on the table is mine.
- 2) The bread for dinner was burned.
- 3) My boss at the store is friendly.
- 4) The horse's teeth need to be cleaned.

## **Part One: The Subject**

The most important word in the subject is called the **simple subject**. It tells who or what the sentence is about. The simple subject is underlined in the sentences below.

- The blue car belongs to my brother.
- B** Bob Smith is the new shop foreman.  
You need new tires for your car.  
I am.

**Note:** The simple subject can be more than one word if it is a name. The second sentence in **B** is an example. Bob Smith is the simple subject. Other examples are: Glacier National Park, Ms. Maria Lopez, and Technical Vocational Institute. Sometimes the simple subject and the complete subject can be the same. The second, third, and fourth sentences in **B** are examples of this.

**EXERCISE: Underline the simple subject in the sentences below:**

- 1) The elevator rises quickly to the top floor.
- 2) Fifteen cars remained in the race.
- 3) The officer gave me a ticket.
- 4) The Lobos won the game.

A sentence can have more than one word as its subject. This is called a **compound subject**. The words in a compound subject are usually joined by the word *and* or the word *or*. The compound subject is underlined in each example below.

- Apples and pears grow on trees.
- C** His mother or his brother will be there.
- The house and the car are for sale.

A **comma** (,) is used to join three or more simple subjects in a compound subject. We put a comma between each simple subject. We use the word *and* or the word *or* before the last word, as seen in **D** below.

- Ray, Mel, and Jose live on Oak Street.
- D** Land, homes, money, and free transportation were offered to us.
- George, Jane, and Ebony will win the prizes.

**EXERCISE: Underline the compound subject in the sentences below:**

- 1) Men, women, and children came to the picnic.
- 2) Two houses and a garage were on fire.
- 3) Dr. Martinez and his partner work hard for the community.

**Word Order:** Most of the time, the subject comes before the predicate. However, sometimes the subject can come after part of the predicate. This can happen when the sentence is a question. The subject can also come after part of the predicate if a sentence begins with the word **here** or **there** (here and there are never used as subjects). See **E** below. The complete subject in each sentence is underlined.

- Does the music sound loud enough?
- E** Have two tall men passed here this morning?
- Here are your shoes.
- There was a small creek near the farm.

Each sentence in **E** can be changed to have the subject before the predicate. This has been done in **F**.

- The music does sound loud enough.
- F** Two tall men passed here this morning.
- Your shoes are here.
- A small creek was there near the farm.

## Part Two: The Predicate

A complete sentence needs a **predicate**. The predicate is what the **subject** is or does. It can be one word or more. The predicate is underlined in the complete sentences below.

- My car uses regular gasoline.
- A** The deer ran quickly away.
- The sentence is written on the board.

The most important word or words in the predicate is the simple **predicate**. There are two kinds of simple predicates: **verbs** and **verb phrases**. A verb shows the action or state of being of the subject.

**Action verbs** are easy to spot. They show the subject's **physical** or **mental actions**. Some action verbs that show physical actions are swim, run, and jump. Some action verbs that show mental actions are *think*, *believe*, and *remember*.

**Being verbs** are also called **linking verbs**. They are used to link the subject to a word in the predicate. Some common being verbs are listed below:

- |          |     |      |                  |                 |                        |
|----------|-----|------|------------------|-----------------|------------------------|
|          | is  | were | <b>has been</b>  | <b>can be</b>   | <b>will have been</b>  |
| <b>B</b> | are | was  | <b>had been</b>  | <b>could be</b> | <b>shall have been</b> |
|          | am  | be   | <b>have been</b> | <b>shall be</b> | <b>may have been</b>   |

The following words are sometimes used as being verbs:

- |          |        |        |      |       |      |
|----------|--------|--------|------|-------|------|
|          | become | remain | seem | smell | grow |
| <b>C</b> | appear | sound  | feel | taste | look |

A **verb phrase** is when two or more words are used as a single verb. Some examples of action verb phrases are *can run*, *should*

*have seen, and is going.* Some examples of being verb phrases are shown in **bold type** in **B**.

The **simple predicate** is the most important verb or verb phrase in a complete sentence. The simple predicate is underlined in the sentences below:

- My car uses regular gasoline.
- D** The deer ran quickly away.  
The sentence is written on the board.

The simple predicate can be an action verb or action verb phrase, as shown in **D**. It can also be a being verb or being verb phrase. See the examples of being verbs and being verb phrases below (being verb phrases are in **bold type**):

- The house was very old.
- E** The weather station is near the North Pole.  
Our relatives **will be** there.  
You **should have seen** the show.

To review, a **sentence** needs a **subject**(doer of the action) and a **predicate** (subject's action or state of being) to be complete. The predicate can be a **verb** or a **verb phrase**. The simple predicate is the most important word or group of words in the predicate. Find and underline the simple predicate in the sentences below:

- 1) A tugboat came up to the dock.
- 2) My brother works for Acme Building Company.
- 3) The alligator was captured by the young boy.
- 4) Many large trees are cut for lumber.
- 5) We will be late for the meeting.
- 6) A person can be wrong.