

Sentence or Sentence Fragment?

- 1a.** A **sentence** is a word group that contains a subject and a verb and that expresses a complete thought.

A sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point.

S V
SENTENCES Rain fell on the canvas tent. [The subject is *Rain*, and the verb is *fell*.]

V S
 Isn't one of the *Black Stallion* series of books your favorite? [The subject is *one* and the verb is *Is*.]

V
 Get an umbrella with a wood handle. [The subject is understood to be *you* in this sentence. The verb is *Get*.]

S V
 What a lovely sunset we saw! [The subject is *we* and the verb is *saw*.]

EXERCISE A Add capital letters and end marks to the following word groups to make them sentences. Write your answers on the lines provided.

Example 1. according to legend, Atlas was a North African king [This word group has a subject, *Atlas*, and a verb, *was*. Capitalize the first word and put a period at the end to make it a sentence.]

According to legend, Atlas was a North African king.

1. six apples had been placed in the bowl [Does the word group have a subject and a verb? Which word should be capitalized? What end mark should be used?]

2. we have already discussed that story

3. my pen leaked all over my paper

4. a dozen white candles were burning in the dark fireplace

5. what should we finish first

A *sentence fragment* is a word group that looks like a sentence but does not contain both a subject and a verb or does not express a complete thought.

SENTENCE FRAGMENTS Fell on the canvas tent. [This word group has a verb, *Fell*, but it does not have a subject.]

One of the *Black Stallion* series of books? [This word group has a subject, *One*, but it does not have a verb.]

After we watched the lovely sunset. [This word group has a subject, *we*, and a verb, *watched*, but it does not express a complete thought.]

NOTE A sentence always has a subject. However, sometimes the subject is not shown in the sentence. The subject may be understood to be “you,” the person or persons the sentence is addressing.

EXAMPLE (*You*) Show me the plans. [The understood subject is *You*—the person or persons being addressed.]

EXERCISE B Identify each of the following word groups as either a sentence or a sentence fragment. On the line provided, write *S* for sentence or *F* for sentence fragment.

Example *F* 1. Had been a student of his several years earlier. [This word group does not have a subject.]

_____ 6. My room, which is on the second floor. [Does this word group have a subject and a verb?]

_____ 7. Someone let my hamster out!

_____ 8. Named for the Biloxi people, American Indians of Mississippi?

_____ 9. The next paragraph in the textbook.

_____ 10. Do not neglect your teeth.

EXERCISE C Some of the following word groups are sentences, and some are not. For each sentence, insert proper capitalization and an appropriate end mark. Cross out each word group that is not a sentence.

Example 1. ~~the~~^{*T*}he wooden blinds had been lowered. [This word group has a subject, *blinds*, and a verb, *had been lowered*, and it expresses a complete thought. Capitalizing the first word and adding a period at the end will make this word group a sentence.]

11. have you ever been to another state [Does this word group have a subject and a verb? What end mark would be appropriate?]

12. in the exact center of the hotel lobby

13. call Stacey, Clint, Heather, and Victor

14. paddling around the shallow pool

15. save some of your allowance

The Subject

Subjects

Every sentence has two basic parts: the subject and the predicate.

1b. A **subject** tells *whom* or *what* the sentence is about.

The subject can appear at the beginning, the middle, or at the end of a sentence.

EXAMPLES **Senator Smith** served many years in Congress. [The sentence tells something about *Senator Smith*.]

Was **one of the baskets** missing? [The sentence tells something about *one of the baskets*.]

At the end of the road was **Neal's Lumber Yard**. [The sentence tells something about *Neal's Lumber Yard*.]

EXERCISE A Underline the subject in each of the following sentences.

Example 1. On the table were several keys. [The sentence tells something about *several keys*.]

1. Has my letter from Grandmother arrived? [What word group does the sentence tell something about?]
2. I am the oldest of five brothers.
3. Some of the Mayan buildings from that time survived.
4. Mary noticed a bit of fur behind the shrub.
5. Can you name all of the Seven Wonders of the World?

Simple Subjects

The complete subject is made up of all the words that tell *whom* or *what* the sentence is about. The simple subject is the main word or word group in the complete subject. The simple subject may be a single word or a group of words that is considered a single unit.

1c. The **simple subject** is the main word or word group that tells *whom* or *what* the sentence is about.

EXAMPLE The green **book** with the horse on the cover is my favorite. [The sentence tells something about the complete subject, *The green book with the horse on the cover*. The main word in the complete subject is *book*. *Book* is the simple subject.]

TIP The simple subject is never found after a preposition. Some common prepositions are *about*, *among*, *at*, *for*, *from*, *in*, *of*, *under*, and *with*. To find the simple subject, cross out any preposition and the noun or pronoun that follows it.

EXAMPLE The green **book** ~~with the horse on the cover~~ is my favorite. [*Book* is the subject, not *horse* or *cover*.]

EXERCISE B Underline each simple subject in each of the following sentences.

- Example 1.** One of the kittens was sleeping on the sofa. [The sentence tells something about the complete subject, *One of the kittens*. The simple subject is *One*. *Kittens* follows the preposition *of*, so *kittens* cannot be the subject.]
6. The two girls from the chess club gave a speech to the class. [The sentence tells something about the complete subject, *The two girls from the chess club*. What is the main word in the complete subject?]
7. Is the bicycle with the graphite frame yours?
8. Colorful flowers nodded in the breeze.
9. Is maple a hardwood?
10. Out of the forest and into the bright sunlight stepped a deer.

Compound Subjects

- 1f.** A **compound subject** consists of two or more connected subjects that have the same verb.

EXAMPLES *The Black Stallion* and *King of the Wind* are my favorite books. [Both *The Black Stallion* and *King of the Wind* are subjects of the verb *are*.]

A **pair** of balloons and a blue **package** lay on my doorstep. [Both *pair* and *package* are subjects of the verb *lay*.]

EXERCISE C Underline each simple subject in the following sentences. Hint: Some subjects may be compound.

- Example 1.** Glossy green paint and golden brass shone on the front door. [Both *paint* and *brass* are subjects of the verb *shone*.]
11. Two of the kittens had six toes on each foot. [What word is the subject of the verb *had*?]
12. Everybody on the bus laughed.
13. A huge swan of ice and a bowl of fruit sat in the middle of the table.
14. One of the girls in the band made a good suggestion.
15. Red and green apples tumbled to the floor.

The Predicate

Predicates

1d. The **predicate** of a sentence tells something about the subject.

The *complete predicate* includes everything in the sentence that is not part of the complete subject.

PREDICATES Thunder **rumbled**. [*Rumbled* tells something about the subject *Thunder*.]

In the distance flashed lightning bolts. [*In the distance flashed* tells something about the subject *lightning bolts*.]

Didn't you close the door? [*Didn't close the door* tells something about the subject *you*.]

Close the door. [*Close the door* tells something about the subject, which is understood to be *you*.]

The complete predicate can appear at the beginning or at the end of a sentence. The predicate can also be divided.

BEGINNING **On the front door hung** a wreath of red leaves.

END A wreath of red leaves **hung on the front door**.

DIVIDED **On the front door,** a wreath of red leaves **hung**.

EXERCISE A Underline the complete predicate in each of the following sentences.

Example 1. Shouldn't these disks have been formatted at the factory? [*Shouldn't have been formatted at the factory* tells something about the subject *these disks*.]

1. Wash the dishes in the sink, please. [What words tell something about the subject, which is understood to be *you*?]
2. A metal staircase led to the roof.
3. The drill press was encircled by a yellow line on the floor.
4. Our treasurer and the board of directors met.
5. Were you on the committee?

Simple Predicates

1e. The **simple predicate**, or **verb**, is the main word or word group that tells something about the subject.

ONE WORD Teresa **sent** a letter to her aunt. [The word *sent* is the main word that tells something about the subject *Teresa*.]

WORD GROUP Teresa **had been sending** a letter to her aunt every month. [The word group *had been sending* is the main word group that tells something about the subject *Teresa*.]

Parts of the verb can be separated from each other.

EXAMPLE **Would** you **send** the letter to your aunt? [*Would* and *send* are separated by the subject *you*.]

NOTE The words *not* and *never* often appear with verbs but are not verbs. Even when *-n't*, the contraction for *not*, is attached to a verb, *-n't* is not a verb.

EXAMPLE The wrath **didn't last** though the storm. [The parts of the verb *did last* are separated by the contraction *n't*.]

EXERCISE B Underline the verb in each of the following sentences. Remember to underline all parts of the verb.

Example 1. May we use a tape recorder? [The word group *May use* tells something about the subject *we*.]

6. Carl shut the window tightly. [Which word tells something about the subject *Carl*?]
7. Has the storm passed?
8. Gabriella caught the ball!
9. Please hand me the dictionary.
10. The new building was quickly completed.

Compound Verbs

1g. A **compound verb** consists of two or more verbs that have the same subject.

EXAMPLE She **wrote** and **sent** a letter to her aunt. [Both *wrote* and *sent* tell something about the subject *She*.]

EXERCISE C Underline each verb in the following sentences. Some sentences have compound verbs. Hint: Do not underline *-n't*, *not*, or *never*.

Example 1. Listen carefully and take notes. [Both *Listen* and *take* tell something about the understood subject *you*.]

11. This keyboard plug does not match our port. [Which words tell something about the subject *plug*?]
12. We smashed the rock and saw brilliant lavender crystals inside.
13. Consider the alternatives but do make a decision.
14. Have the geese flown south for the winter yet?
15. This company will pack, wrap, label, and ship your package.

Classifying Sentences by Purpose

Every sentence has a purpose. All sentences can be classified as having one of these four purposes: *declarative*, *imperative*, *interrogative*, and *exclamatory*.

1h. A **declarative sentence** makes a statement and ends with a period.

EXAMPLES I ride the bus. [This sentence makes a statement.]
The building is three stories tall. [This sentence makes a statement.]

1i. An **imperative sentence** gives a command or makes a request. Most imperative sentences end with a period. A strong command ends with an exclamation point.

EXAMPLES Support public transportation. [command]
Don't be late, Jerry. [request]
Throw the ball! [strong command]

NOTE The subject of a command or a request is always *you*. When *you* doesn't appear in the sentence, *you* is called the *understood subject*.

EXERCISE A Identify the purpose of each of the following sentences. On the line provided, write *DEC* if the sentence is *declarative* or *IMP* if it is *imperative*.

Examples DEC 1. The Natchez people lived on the southern Mississippi River. [This sentence makes a statement.]

IMP 2. Wake up, Rick! [This sentence gives a command.]

- _____ 1. Turn your tests over now. [Does this sentence make a statement or give a command or request?]
- _____ 2. Clouds were gathering in the sky. [Does this sentence make a statement or give a command or request?]
- _____ 3. Report to the office!
- _____ 4. The recycling box is in the corner.
- _____ 5. The old tree in the backyard must be cut down.
- _____ 6. Ashley, just wait five more minutes.
- _____ 7. Please pass the mashed potatoes.
- _____ 8. The bird feeder has attracted many birds.
- _____ 9. The final exam will be on Tuesday.
- _____ 10. Call the fire department right now!

1j. An **interrogative sentence** asks a question and ends with a question mark.

INTERROGATIVE Do you ride the bus?

1k. An **exclamatory sentence** shows excitement or strong feeling and ends with an exclamation point.

EXCLAMATORY What a good bargain bus rides are!
Bus rides are cheap!

EXERCISE B Identify the purpose of each of the following sentences. Write *INT* for *interrogative* sentence, or *EXC* for *exclamatory* sentence on the line provided.

Examples INT 1. Were you there? [This sentence asks a question.]

EXC 2. You had better save some soup for me! [This sentence shows strong feeling.]

_____ 11. What a lucky coincidence this is! [Does this sentence ask a question or show a strong feeling?]

_____ 12. Did you save me a seat? [Does this sentence ask a question or show a strong feeling?]

_____ 13. How silly that penguin looked on land!

_____ 14. I got an A!

_____ 15. Was the movie funny?

_____ 16. We won the championship!

_____ 17. Who left this book behind?

_____ 18. How you must have laughed at such a sight!

_____ 19. Has the new library opened yet?

_____ 20. When does winter begin?