



PART A Defining and Spotting Subjects

PART B Spotting Prepositional Phrases

PART C Defining and Spotting Verbs

Part A

Defining and Spotting Subjects

Every sentence must contain two basic elements: a **subject** and a **verb**.

A subject is the *who* or *what* word that performs the action or the *who* or *what* word about which a statement is made:

1. Three *hunters* tramped through the woods.
2. The blue *truck* belongs to Ralph.

- In sentence 1, *hunters*, the *who* word, performs the action—"tramped through the woods."
- In sentence 2, *truck* is the *what* word about which a statement is made—"belongs to Ralph."
- Some sentences have more than one subject, joined by *and*:

3. Her *aunt and uncle* love country music.

- In sentence 3, *aunt and uncle*, the *who* words, perform the action—they "love country music."
- *Aunt and uncle* is called a **compound subject**.

Sometimes an *-ing* word can be the subject of a sentence:

4. *Reading* strains my eyes.

- *Reading* is the *what* word that performs the action—“strains my eyes.”

PRACTICE 1 Circle the subjects in these sentences.

1. Do you know the origin and customs of Kwanzaa?
2. This African-American holiday celebrates black heritage and lasts for seven days—from December 26 through January 1.
3. Maulana Karenga introduced Kwanzaa to America in 1966.
4. In Swahili, Kwanzaa means “first fruits of the harvest.”
5. During the holiday, families share simple meals of foods from the Caribbean, Africa, South America, and the American South.
6. Specific foods have special meanings.
7. For instance, certain fruits and vegetables represent the products of group effort.
8. Another important symbol is corn, which stands for children.
9. At each dinner, celebrants light a black, red, or green candle and discuss one of the seven principles of Kwanzaa.
10. These seven principles are unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith.

Part B

Spotting Prepositional Phrases

One group of words that may confuse you as you look for subjects is the prepositional phrase. A **prepositional phrase** contains a **preposition** (a word like *at*, *in*, *of*, *from*, and so forth) and its **object**.

Prepositionat
on
of**Object**the beach
time
the students

The object of a preposition *cannot be* the subject of a sentence. Therefore, spotting and crossing out the prepositional phrases will help you find the subject.

1. The sweaters in the window look handmade.
2. The sweaters ~~in the window~~ look handmade.
3. ~~On Tuesday~~, a carton ~~of oranges~~ was left ~~on the porch~~.

- In sentence 1, you might have trouble finding the subject. But once the prepositional phrase is crossed out in sentence 2, the subject, *sweaters*, is easy to spot.
- In sentence 3, once the prepositional phrases are crossed out, the subject, *carton*, is easy to spot.

Here are some common prepositions that you should know:

Common Prepositions

about	before	in	through
above	behind	into	to
across	between	like	toward
after	by	near	under
along	during	of	until
among	for	on	up
at	from	over	with

PRACTICE 2 Cross out the prepositional phrases in each sentence. Then circle the subject of the sentence.

1. From 6 A.M. until 10 A.M., Angel works out.
2. Local buses for Newark leave every hour.
3. Three of my friends take singing lessons.
4. That man between Ralph and Cynthia is the famous actor Hank the Hunk.
5. Near the door, a pile of laundry sits in a basket.
6. Toward evening, the houses across the river disappear in the thick fog.
7. Before class, Helena and I meet for coffee.
8. In one corner of the lab, beakers of colored liquid bubbled and boiled.

Part C

Defining and Spotting Verbs

Action Verbs

In order to be complete, every sentence must contain a **verb**. One kind of verb, called an **action verb**, expresses the action that the subject is performing:

1. The star quarterback *fumbled*.
2. The carpenters *worked* all day, but the bricklayers *went* home early.

- In sentence 1, the action verb is *fumbled*.
- In sentence 2, the action verbs are *worked* and *went*.*

Linking Verbs

Another kind of verb, called a **linking verb**, links the subject to words that describe or identify it:

3. Don *is* a fine mathematician.
4. This fabric *feels* rough and scratchy.

- In sentence 3, the verb *is* links the subject *Don* with the noun *mathematician*.
- In sentence 4, the verb *feels* links the subject *fabric* with the adjectives *rough* and *scratchy*.

Here are some common linking verbs:

Common Linking Verbs

appear	feel
be (am, is, are, was, were, has been, have been, had been . . .)	look
become	seem

* For work on compound predicates, see Chapter 21, "Revising for Sentence Variety," Part D.

Verbs of More Than One Word—Helping Verbs

So far you have dealt with verbs of only one word—*fumbled*, *worked*, *is*, *feels*, and so on. But many verbs consist of more than one word:

5. He *should have taken* the train home.
6. *Are Tanya and Joe practicing* the piano?
7. The lounge *was painted* last week.

- In sentence 5, *taken* is the main verb; *should* and *have* are the **helping verbs**.
- In sentence 6, *practicing* is the main verb; *are* is the helping verb.
- In sentence 7, *painted* is the main verb; *was* is the helping verb.*

PRACTICE 3 Underline the verbs in these sentences.

1. She exposes insurance cheats and lying spouses.
2. She spies on suspected nannies with a tiny camera.
3. Theresa Coleman-Negast might have become a police officer.
4. However, wearing a uniform every day did not appeal to her.
5. Instead, she became a private investigator.
6. Only one of every ten private investigators is a woman.
7. Women in this business might face criticism or even sexual harassment.
8. On the other hand, many clients prefer a female P.I. and can talk more freely with her.
9. Theresa enjoys her lack of routine and even the spy equipment.
10. Thanks to technology, cameras and tape recorders have gotten small enough to fit into a Beanie Baby, a pair of sunglasses, or even a ballpoint pen.

PRACTICE 4 Circle the subjects and underline the verbs in the following sentences. First, cross out any prepositional phrases.

1. Do you think of baseball as America's oldest team sport?
2. In fact, lacrosse takes that honor.

* For more work on verbs in the passive voice, see Chapter 29, "The Past Participle," Part E.

3. Native Americans were playing the sport long before the arrival of Europeans.
4. A team scores by throwing a ball into the opposing team's goal.
5. The goal is ferociously guarded by a goalie.
6. Each player uses a curved racket with a mesh basket at its end.
7. Algonquin tribes in the valley of the St. Lawrence River invented the game.
8. The Hurons and Iroquois soon learned this demanding sport.
9. By 1500, the rough-and-tumble game was played by dozens of tribes in Canada and the United States.
10. Sometimes matches would require hundreds of players and might last for days.
11. Playing lacrosse trained young warriors for battle.
12. With this in mind, the Cherokees named lacrosse "little brother of war."
13. However, tribes often settled their differences peaceably with a lacrosse match.
14. French missionaries saw a resemblance between the racket and a bishop's cross.
15. They changed the name of the game from *boggotaway*, the native word, to *lacrosse*, French for *the cross*.



Exploring Online

<http://webster.commnet.edu/grammar/quizzes/verbmaster.htm>

Graded quiz: Find complete verbs in the sentences.

http://webster.commnet.edu/grammar/quizzes/preposition_quiz2.htm

Graded quiz: Find the prepositions in Hemingway's paragraph.