

## **PRINCIPAL ELEMENTS OF THE SENTENCE**

A sentence is a group of words that makes a statement and can be followed by a period or other terminal punctuation.

The principal elements of a sentence are the verb, subject or the verb, and direct object of the verb or complement of the verb. Many sentences have only a verb and a subject.

Other elements are the indirect object and modifiers.

### **VERB**

A verb is the word or words that describe the action or state of being of the subject.

Rats eat mice. (The verb eat describes the action performed by the subject rats.)

John has felt well recently. (The verb felt describes the state of being of the subject John.)

The organ was often played during chapel. (The verb was played describes the action of the subject organ.)

### **SUBJECT**

A subject is the person or thing that performs the action indicated by the verb or that is in the state of being described by the verb.

Trees and shrubs line the driveway. (Trees and shrubs is the subject of the verb line, answering the question Who or what line? Trees and shrubs line.)

Rare books are expensive. (Books is the subject of the verb are. Who or what are expensive? Books are. Expensive is the complement of are. Complements are discussed below.)

### **DIRECT OBJECT**

A direct object is the word or words that receive the action indicated by the verb.

Automobiles are polluting cities. (What is the action? Are polluting. What receives the action? Cities. Cities is the direct object of the verb are polluting.)

The gardener fertilized the lawn and trees. (What receives received the action? The lawn and trees. Lawn and trees is the object of fertilized.)

The safe was robbed. (There is no direct object. This sentence has only a subject safe and a verb was robbed.)

### **COMPLEMENT**

A complement is the word or words that complete the meaning of verbs that express feeling, appearing, being, and seeming. Such verbs are classified as linking verbs. Linking verbs do not take a direct object. They are completed by complements. Note that all forms of the verb to be are linking except when used as auxiliary verbs.

## Examples:

He seems sick. (The verb seems does not describe action, but does describe a state of being. Seems links the subject he with sick, and sick is the complement of seems. Note that it occupies the position in the sentence that an object would occupy. The sentence He seems sick can best be understood by imagining that a physician is receiving a report on a patient's health. No action is being reported, only a state of being. The verb seems conveys no meaning without a complement. Thus, sick completes the meaning of seems and is called the complement of the linking verb seems.)

He is a carpenter. (The verb is links the subject he with carpenter, a noun. No action is being performed. Carpenter complements--completes--the linking verb is.)

She feels fine early in the morning. (The linking verb feels links she with fine, the complement of feels.)

It should be noted that the verb feel does not always function as a linking verb. In the sentence She felt the table, an action is being performed, the action of feeling. In this sentence, then, table is the direct object of felt.

To find principal elements of a sentence:

1. Find the verb or verbs by asking yourself: What is happening? What state of being is indicated?
2. Find the subject or subjects by asking yourself: Who or what is performing the action described by the verb or verbs? Whose state of being is described by the verb or verbs?
3. Find the direct object of the verb or verbs by asking yourself: Who or what is receiving the action of the verb or verbs?
4. Find the complement of a being verb by asking yourself: What element of the sentence completes the verb?

Note that a verb that takes a direct object cannot take a complement. A verb that takes a complement cannot take a direct object.

This exercise tests your abilities to identify subjects, verbs, direct objects, and complements. You may want to review the material presented above before beginning work on this exercise. (The sentences included certain elements not yet discussed. They will be discussed shortly.)

In the following sentences, identify the principal sentence elements as shown in these examples:

Example: Many dogs have fleas.

Verb	<u>have</u>	Direct object	<u>fleas</u>
Subject	<u>dogs</u>	Complement	<u>none</u>

Example: Juan and Maria appeared happy.

Verb	<u>appeared</u>	Direct object	<u>none</u>
Subject	<u>Juan, Maria</u>	Complement	<u>happy</u>

1. Playwrights and authors receive acclaim.

Verb	_____	Direct object	_____
Subject	_____	Complement	_____

2. Libraries contain the wisdom of civilization.

Verb	_____	Direct object	_____
Subject	_____	Complement	_____

3. Accounts are busy at tax time.

Verb	_____	Direct object	_____
Subject	_____	Complement	_____

4. Buenos Aires has the largest opera house in the world.

Verb	_____	Direct object	_____
Subject	_____	Complement	_____

5. Religion is a required course in many colleges.

Verb	_____	Direct object	_____
Subject	_____	Complement	_____

6. Eli and Samuel were Old Testament prophets.

Verb	_____	Direct object	_____
Subject	_____	Complement	_____

7. Wars have produced death and destruction.

Verb	_____	Direct object	_____
Subject	_____	Complement	_____

8. Jane called her brothers and sisters.

Verb	_____	Direct object	_____
Subject	_____	Complement	_____

9. The bartender served beer and whiskey to his customers.

Verb	_____	Direct object	_____
Subject	_____	Complement	_____

10. The house was ransacked.

Verb \_\_\_\_\_

Direct object \_\_\_\_\_

Subject \_\_\_\_\_

Complement \_\_\_\_\_

11. Burglars were ransacking the house.

Verb \_\_\_\_\_

Direct object \_\_\_\_\_

Subject \_\_\_\_\_

Complement \_\_\_\_\_

12. Joyce studied German in Switzerland.

Verb \_\_\_\_\_

Direct object \_\_\_\_\_

Subject \_\_\_\_\_

Complement \_\_\_\_\_

13. She felt the lining of her coat.

Verb \_\_\_\_\_

Direct object \_\_\_\_\_

Subject \_\_\_\_\_

Complement \_\_\_\_\_

14. She felt well again.

Verb \_\_\_\_\_

Direct object \_\_\_\_\_

Subject \_\_\_\_\_

Complement \_\_\_\_\_

15. The defendants called their lawyer.

Verb \_\_\_\_\_

Direct object \_\_\_\_\_

Subject \_\_\_\_\_

Complement \_\_\_\_\_

16. An orderly mind assures success in business.

Verb \_\_\_\_\_

Direct object \_\_\_\_\_

Subject \_\_\_\_\_

Complement \_\_\_\_\_

17. Transistors have revolutionized the television industry.

Verb \_\_\_\_\_

Direct object \_\_\_\_\_

Subject \_\_\_\_\_

Complement \_\_\_\_\_

18. A bibliography is a list of books and articles.

Verb \_\_\_\_\_

Direct object \_\_\_\_\_

Subject \_\_\_\_\_

Complement \_\_\_\_\_

19. Even teenagers are checking accounts today.

Verb \_\_\_\_\_

Direct object \_\_\_\_\_

Subject \_\_\_\_\_

Complement \_\_\_\_\_

20. Professionals in England still wear bowler hats.

Verb	_____	Direct object	_____
Subject	_____	Complement	_____

21. The table and chair suited him well.

Verb	_____	Direct object	_____
Subject	_____	Complement	_____

22. Matadors are highly respected in Spain.

Verb	_____	Direct object	_____
Subject	_____	Complement	_____

23. Many homes now are air conditioned.

Verb	_____	Direct object	_____
Subject	_____	Complement	_____

24. Air conditioning cleans and cools buildings.

Verb	_____	Direct object	_____
Subject	_____	Complement	_____

25. Although Polish, Conrad wrote in English.

Verb	_____	Direct object	_____
Subject	_____	Complement	_____