

SENTENCES: BASIC PATTERNS

The bare-minimum sentence in English has only a subject and a verb. The **subject** is a noun. Or the subject may be a **pronoun**-a short noun-substitute like *I, you, he, she, it, we, they*. The verb then goes on to make a statement about the subject. (We call this statement the **predicate**.)

Dogs/bark. The faucet/leaks. We/agree. The train/has arrived.

Many English sentences need one or more **completers** (also called **complements**) after the verb in order to make a complete statement. The different kinds of completers that are possible account for seven basic sentence patterns that we find used over and over again.

Pattern One: Subject-Verb (S-V)

Example: Dogs bark.

In this pattern, the verb completes the statement; no further completers are needed. We call the verb an **intransitive** verb. It is not in transit to anywhere. It is not going anywhere. Fill in a verb to complete each of the following Pattern-One sentences. (Fill in a single word.)

Bees _____ . Wolves _____ . Engines _____ .
Spectators _____ . Fires _____ . Speed _____ .

Pattern Two: Subject-Verb-Object (S-V-O)

Example: Boys meet girls.

This pattern often carries the meaning of “Agent-Action-Target.” The verb carries the action across to a target or receiver. We call the verb a **transitive** verb. We call the target or receiver the **object** of the verb. Fill in a noun to serve as object in each of the following Pattern-Two sentences. (Fill in a single word.)

Dogs bite _____ . Farmers grow _____ .
Children need a _____ . Juries weigh the _____ .
Detectives chase _____ . Voters elect _____ .

Pattern Three: Subject-Linking Verb-Noun (S-LV-N)

Example: Tim is a secretary.

In this sentence, a linking verb pins a label on the subject. Usually the linking verb is a form of *be*: *is, are, am, was, were, has been*, and so on. Fill in a noun to serve as the label to be pinned on the subject. Fill in a single word. (Other linking verbs: *become, remain, stay*.)

Lincoln was a _____ . Zeus is a _____ .

My relatives are _____s. My friend has been a _____ .

Pattern Four: Subject-Linking Verb-Adjective (S-LV-A)

Example: Advice is cheap.

In this pattern, the label pinned on the subject is an adjective. Several linking verbs that fit this pattern have to do with the senses: *look, smell, sound, taste, feel*. Fill in an adjective to serve as the label pinned on the subject. (Fill in a single word.)

Her eyes were _____ . The soup tasted _____ .

The spectators looked _____ . The sand felt _____ .

The weather turned _____ . The driver remained _____ .

Pattern Five: Subject-Verb-Indirect Object-Object (S-V-IO-O)

Example: We gave the waiter a tip.

In this pattern, we use verbs like *give, bring, tend, teach, lend, sell*. We first fill in the destination: Who is sent something? Who is taught? Then we fill in what is sent, or what is taught. Fill in a noun to serve as **indirect object** in each sentence. (Fill in a single word.)

Jim sent his _____ a letter.

People should teach their _____ manners.

My friend lent his _____ his motorcycle.

The visitor sold the _____ an encyclopedia.

Pattern Six: Subject-Verb-Object-Object Complement (S-V-O-OC)

Example: Jim called his sister a lady.

In this pattern, the verb pins a label on the object. Fill in an additional noun to serve as the label to be pinned on the object. (Fill in a single word.)

Jerry called his teacher a _____ .

The mayor made his friend a _____ .

The students elected Frieda _____ .

Pattern Seven: Subject-Verb-Object-Adjective (S-V-O-A)

Example: Jim called his sister lazy.

In this pattern, the label pinned on the object is an adjective instead of a noun. Fill in an adjective in each sentence. (Fill in a single word.)

My words made the stranger very _____ .

The speaker called poverty _____ .

The natives considered bribery _____ .

Note: In most actual sentences, other optional sentence parts have been added to the basic patterns. What kind of word has been used to expand the basic pattern in each of the following examples: Explain orally what has been added to the basic patterns.

1. S-V Angry customers complain.
2. S-V-O The manager helped us *gladly*.
3. S-LV-N Her decision was a *terrible* mistake.
4. S-LV-Adj My friend *suddenly* looked pale.
5. S-V-IO-O Her cousin *often* showed visitors the capital.
6. S-V-O-OC They called the *anonymous* benefactor a saint.
7. S-V-O-Adj We painted the house green *again*.