

BASIC SENTENCE PATTERNS

Every sentence must have a subject and a verb. When a sentence is written in “regular or normal” order, the subject precedes (comes before) the verb.

Example: John is a good student. (“John” is the subject and “is” is the verb.)

When a sentence is written in “inverted” order, the verb or part of the verb precedes the subject.

Example: Is Mary your sister’s name? (“Mary” is the subject and “is” is the verb.)

Note that the verb “is” precedes the subject.

In order to identify the Basic Sentence Patterns, you must be able to identify the subject and verb of each sentence. However, subjects and verbs are presented in several different ways.

SUBJECTS:

1. Single-one subject

Example: Jack is my brother. (Jack is the subject.)

2. Compound-two or more subjects

Example: Sue and Betty are very good friends. (Sue and Betty are the subjects.)

3. Word or Word Group

a. Gerund or Gerund Phrase

Example: Singing is good therapy. (Singing, which is a gerund, is the subject.)

Example: Talking with my sons is very difficult. (Talking with my sons, which is a gerund phrase, is the subject.)

b. Infinitive or Infinitive Phrase

Example: To study is your job. (To study, which is an infinitive, is the subject.)

Example: To study effectively requires discipline. (To study effectively, which is an infinitive phrase, is the subject.)

c. Noun Clause

Example: What you need is a new approach. (What you need, which is a noun clause, is the subject.)

VERBS:

1. Single-one verb

Example: Teresa makes me angry. (Makes is the verb.)

2. Compound Verb-two or more verbs

Example: Jerri rented a car and drove to Dallas. (Rented and drove are the verbs.)

3. **Verb Phrase**-two or more verbs that work as a unit. The last verb is always the main verb. There may be one or more helping verbs that precede (come before) the main verb.

Example: Sue has been invited to my house. (Has been invited is the verb phrase. Invited is the main verb; has and been serve as helpers.)

Example: Joseph is leaving the firm. (Is leaving is the verb phrase. Leaving is the main verb; is is the helping verb.)

4. **Compound Verb Phrase**-two or more verb phrases

Example: Helen has moved to Dallas and is working at Walker, Inc. (Has moved and is working are the verb phrases.) Moved and working are main verbs; has and is serve as helpers.

Verbs are classified as **action** or **non-action**. In verb phrases, classify the “main” verb. The “main” verb is always the last verb in a verb phrase. Example: Jim is moving his car. “Is moving” is the verb phrase. Since “moving” is the last verb, it is the main verb; “is” serves as a helping verb.

ACTION:

Most of the verbs are action verbs.

Examples: **Run, move, leave, so, notice, walk, talk,** etc.

NON-ACTION:

Non-action verbs tell a state-of-being of the subject. There are two kinds of non-action verbs: being and linking.

1. **Being** – **am, is, are, was, were, be, been, being**
2. **Linking** – **seem, feel, smell, taste, sound, appear, become, look, remain, grow, continue, keep, turn, prove, stay,**

Being verbs, when used as “single” verbs or “main” verbs, are always non-action verbs. However, some of the **linking** verbs can be action or non-action verbs.

Test: If the subject can do what is indicated by the verb, then the verb is classified as an action verb.

Example: I smell cinnamon rolls. “I” is the subject and “smell” is the verb. Since the subject, I, can smell, then “smell” is the action verb.

Example: The roses smell sweet. Since “roses” is the subject and “roses” cannot smell, then “smell” is a non-action verb.

STEPS IN IDENTIFYING BASIC SENTENCE PATTERNS

Most sentences can be classified according to four basic sentence patterns, although there are other patterns.

