

Subject	Verb	Complement	Modifier of Place	Modifier of Time
The pilot	completed	his training	at Embry Riddle Aeronautical University	last year.
All students	must submit	their housing requests		by next week.
The boy	enjoys	fishing.		

Sentences that follow this rule may be simple or complex. Additional words and phrases can appear in these sentences without violating the basic rule.

Subjects

The *subject* performs the action in an active sentence. Every sentence and every clause must have a subject. The subject is usually a noun or noun phrase (explained in the following section), although it may consist of something else. Usually when a TOEFL test question asks you to identify the subject of a sentence, the sentence begins with a dependent clause or phrase, and you must recognize that the sentence subject is located in the independent clause.

Incorrect: Without a doubt, is very important to study throughout the term rather than trying to cram at the end.

Correct: Without a doubt, *it* is very important to study throughout the term rather than trying to cram at the end.

The first example is incorrect because it is a *phrase* — a string of words that is missing either a subject or a verb. In this case, the subject is missing; the subject *it* should appear before the verb *is*.

Incorrect: Being a very abrupt and unfriendly man, did not have many friends.

Correct: Being a very abrupt and unfriendly man, *Professor Stanley* did not have many friends.

The first example is incorrect because the subject, *Professor Stanley*, is missing.

Nouns and Noun Phrases

The subject of a sentence may be a single-word noun, such as *teacher* or *dog*, or it may be a noun phrase. A *noun phrase* is a group of words ending with a noun (but not beginning with a preposition). The noun phrase may contain one or more nouns, articles, adjectives, and conjunctions.

Following are examples of sentences that contain noun phrases as subjects.

A linguistics student studies how languages are created.

Tall buildings must provide safety mechanisms.

The greatest skiers will compete in the show.

The noun phrase *A linguistics student* contains an article, *A*, an adjective, *linguistics*, and a noun, *student*. *Tall* is an adjective describing the noun *buildings*. In the last example, an article, *The*, an adjective, *greatest*, and a noun, *skiers*, combine to create the subject.

Other Types of Subjects

Although a noun phrase usually functions as the subject of a sentence, there are other possibilities. I describe many of these later in this chapter, and I simply mention them here to clarify that there are other possibilities.

There is a car in the road. (The subject is actually *a car*.)

It is important to read something every day. (*It* acts like a subject.)

Knowing the essay topics in advance was helpful to him. (*Knowing*, a gerund form of a verb, is the subject.)

To believe in yourself is very important. (*To believe*, an infinitive form of a verb, is the subject.)

Verbs and Verb Phrases

Every sentence and every clause must have a conjugated verb. By *conjugated*, I mean that the verb can't be a verb+*ing* alone, an infinitive alone, or a simple form alone. If the verb is one of these forms, it must be accompanied by an auxiliary or another verb form. The verb or verb phrase follows the subject in an active sentence and describes the action. In a passive sentence, the noun that served as a complement in the active voice sentence becomes the subject.

A *verb phrase* has an auxiliary in addition to the main verb. In general, the auxiliaries are :

- A form of *be*; in an active sentence, it is followed by a verb in the present participle: *be* + verb+*ing*

Example: The bat *is flying* towards the light.

- A form of *have*; in an active sentence, it is followed by a verb in the past participle: *have* + verb+*ed*.

Example: She *has completed* the project.

- A modal (*will, would, can, could, may, might, or must*); in an active sentence, it is followed by a verb in simple form

Example: The team *must practice* more.

Keep in mind that the passive sentence construction is different. A sentence isn't correct if any of the three verb forms above appear without the auxiliary. Verbs are dealt with in more detail later in this chapter in the section "Form of Verb."

Complements

A *complement* completes the verb. Some verbs require a direct object; some may be followed by an object, although it's not required; and some can't be followed by an object. A verb that requires a direct object is a *transitive verb*. A verb that doesn't require a direct object is an *intransitive verb*. Most dictionaries indicate whether a verb is transitive or intransitive before the definition of the word by including "tr," "intr," or some such abbreviation. Sometimes a dictionary will show one definition as transitive and another as intransitive.

Determine is a transitive verb.

The group is trying to determine the best course of action.

complement

Swim is an intransitive verb.

The girl wants to swim in the pool.

no complement

The phrase *in the pool* is a place modifier, not a complement.

A complement may also consist of something other than a noun or noun phrase, such as a verb in the infinitive form or in the gerund (verb+*ing*) form.

They will probably consider Atlanta as the location for next year's meeting.

noun as complement

They will probably consider calling another meeting.

gerund as complement

They plan to call another meeting.

infinitive as complement

Modifiers

A modifier is not required in a basic standard English sentence, but if one appears, it generally follows the complement in the sentence.

If a sentence contains both a modifier of place and a modifier of time, the modifier of time usually appears last, unless it appears at the beginning of the sentence, before the subject.

Donna took the test in Orlando yesterday.

modifier of place modifier of time

Yesterday, Donna took the test in Orlando.

modifier of time

modifier of place

The group ate dinner at Bern's Steakhouse last month.

modifier of place

modifier of time

Normally, the modifier won't separate a verb from the complement.

Incorrect: Marjorie cooked on the grill the chicken.

verb

modifier

complement

Correct: Marjorie cooked the chicken on the grill.

verb

complement

modifier

The modifier can also appear between two parts of a verb; that is, after the auxiliary and before the main verb.

The boy *will* probably *go* to class today.

modifier

The boy *is* probably *going* to class today.

modifier

The boy *has* probably *gone* to class already.

modifier

The man *was* recently *found* guilty of manslaughter.

modifier

Phrases and Clauses

A *phrase* is a group of words that lacks a subject and verb. For example, *in the corner* is a phrase. Obviously, a phrase cannot stand alone as a complete sentence.

Clauses are groups of words that do contain subjects and verbs. *Independent clauses* can stand alone as complete sentences. *Dependent clauses* cannot stand alone because they contain words that make them dependent. If you remove the word that makes a clause dependent, the clause can stand alone as a sentence.

Although the bear is able to sprint rapidly, it tires easily due to its weight.

clause

The underlined words in this example represent a dependent clause. On its own, *Although the bear is able to sprint rapidly* is not a complete sentence. However, the clause does contain a subject, *the bear*; and a verb phrase, *is able*. The word *Although* is the only thing preventing this clause from being independent.

The bear is able to sprint rapidly.

With the word *Although* removed, the clause is a complete sentence.

Structure Quiz 1

Directions: The first type of question consists of incomplete sentences, with a blank line showing where information is to be filled in. Choose the word or phrase that most correctly completes the sentence. The second type of question consists of sentences with four underlined words or phrases. Choose the one word or phrase that is incorrect in standard written English. Mark your answer choices in the book or on a separate piece of paper.

- The rain forest, _____ large trees that provide shade to the vegetation below, is home to unique flora and fauna.
 - has
 - with its
 - and
 - although has
- Despite the polar bear's tremendous weight and height, _____ of sprinting at tremendous speed.
 - it is capable
 - is capable
 - it is able
 - ability
- Having multiple sclerosis has diminished Mr. Wilson's physical condition, but his ability to maintain a positive attitude and continue working an inspiration.

A
B
C
D

4. The huge_A increase in popularity of specialty coffees contribution_B to the success of_C Starbucks, Barney's and other_D coffee purveyors.
5. Patients on Interferon are advised _____, so that they can sleep through the night without noticing the flu-like symptoms that are characteristic of the drug.
- A. just before going to sleep to inject themselves
 - B. to inject themselves just before going to sleep
 - C. to inject just before going to sleep themselves
 - D. injecting themselves just before going to sleep
6. After it had conclude_A work on the budget, the_B legislature adjourned_C until_D the next session.
7. Even when awarded_A a scholarship, a student generally must still paying_B for books, living_C expenses, and other_D costs.
8. The U.S. government, along with a number of states, is fight_A a protracted_B legal battle with tobacco companies in order to obtain_C relief_D for the huge medical costs caused by smoking.
9. The leaders of the two countries _____ an agreement to avoid future conflicts.
- A. have recently reach
 - B. recently reach
 - C. have reached recently
 - D. have recently reached
10. The teachers are expecting_A to call tomorrow a meeting_B in order to review_C the disciplinary_D problems.