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# The Linking Verb

Recognize a *linking verb* when you see one.

Linking verbs do not express action. Instead, they connect the **subject** of the **verb** to additional information about the subject. Look at the examples below:

Keila *is* a shopaholic.

*Ising* isn't something that Keila can do. *Is* connects the subject, *Keila*, to additional information about her, that she will soon have a huge credit card bill to pay.

During the afternoon, my cats *are* content to nap on the couch.

*Areing* isn't something that cats can do. *Are* is connecting the subject, *cats*, to something said about them, that they enjoy

sleeping on the furniture.

After drinking the old milk,  
Vladimir **turned** green.

**Turned** connects the subject,  
**Vladimir**, to something said about  
him, that he needed an antacid.

A ten-item quiz **seems**  
impossibly long after a night of  
no studying.

**Seems** connects the subject, **a  
ten-item quiz**, with something said  
about it, that its difficulty depends  
on preparation, not length.

Irene always **feels** sleepy after  
pigging out on pizza from  
Antonio's.

**Feels** connects the subject, **Irene**,  
to her state of being, sleepiness.

The following verbs are *true* linking verbs:  
any form of the verb **be** [**am**, **is**, **are**, **was**,  
**were**, **has been**, **are being**, **might have  
been**, etc.], **become**, and **seem**. These true  
linking verbs are *a/ways* linking verbs.

Then you have a list of verbs with multiple  
personalities: **appear**, **feel**, **grow**, **look**,  
**prove**, **remain**, **smell**, **sound**, **taste**, and  
**turn**. Sometimes these verbs are linking  
verbs; sometimes they are **action verbs**.

How do you tell when they are action verbs  
and when they are linking verbs?

If you can substitute **am**, **is**, or **are** and the sentence still sounds logical, you have a *linking* verb on your hands.

If, after the substitution, the sentence makes no sense, you are dealing with an *action* verb instead. Here are some examples:

Sylvia **tasted** the spicy squid eyeball stew.

Sylvia **is** the stew? I don't think so! **Tasted**, therefore, is an action verb in this sentence, something Sylvia is *doing*.

The squid eyeball stew **tasted** good.

The stew **is** good? You bet. Make your own!

I **smell** the delicious aroma of a mushroom and papaya pizza baking in the oven.

I **am** the aroma? No way! **Smell**, in this sentence, is an action verb, something I am *doing*.

The mushroom and papaya pizza **smells** heavenly.

The pizza **is** heavenly? Definitely! Try a slice!

When my dog Oreo **felt** the wet grass beneath her paws, she bolted up the stairs and curled up on the couch.

Oreo *is* the wet grass? Of course not! Here, then, *felt* is an action verb, something Oreo is *doing*.

My dog Oreo *feels* depressed after seven straight days of rain.

Oreo *is* depressed? Without a doubt! Oreo hates the wet.

This substitution will not work for *appear*. With *appear*, you have to analyze the function of the verb.

Swooping out of the clear blue sky, the blue jay *appeared* on the branch.

*Appear* is something a blue jay can *do*—especially when food is near.

The blue jay *appeared* happy to see the bird feeder.

Here, *appeared* is connecting the subject, *the blue jay*, to its state of mind, happiness.



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