

# Linking Verb

## Definition of Linking Verb

A linking verb connects a [subject](#) to a verb in a [sentence](#) in order to show the action that is being done. A linking verb does not express the action by itself. Some words can serve as both linking verbs and action verbs.

The most common linking verb is “be,” and its purpose is to indicate the state of the subject within the sentence. Different uses of “be” include:

are  
is  
am  
was  
were  
been  
being  
appear  
become  
grow  
feel  
look  
seem  
remain  
smell  
stay  
sound  
turn  
taste

These verbs can also be called “copular verbs,” or “copulas.” For example, in the sentence, “War remains the decisive human failure” (*The Economics of Innocent Fraud*, by John Kenneth Galbraith), “remains” is used as a linking verb.

## Common Uses of Linking Verbs

“Thomas feels energetic after playing basketball all the night.”

In this sentence, the word “feels” joins the subject (“Thomas”) to the state of being energetic.

“Drinking cold coffee in the winter seems like an impossible feat.”

Here, “seems” joins the subject (“cold coffee”) with the state of “impossible.”

“Terry is a cricket fan.”

Here, the word “is” is not an action that Terry can do. It is used to link the subject (“Terry”) to the additional information that is provided about him (how he enjoys watching or playing cricket). Thus, “is” is the linking verb in this sentence.

“The cats are meowing furiously at the rat.”

Obviously, the use of “are” in this sentence does not refer to an action that the cats can do. Instead, it provides additional information about how angry the cats are at the rat.

“This lemon tastes sour; however, that pizza smells”

Here, “tastes” and “smells” are linking verbs that connect their subjects (“lemon” and “pizza”) to additional information being provided about them.

## **Types of Linking Verb**

Linking verbs can be grouped into two [categories](#). First are those that use the verb form of “to be” to refer to the current state of the subject. These include:

am  
are  
is  
was  
were  
been  
being

Second are those that convey a result. These include:

appear  
become  
feel  
grow  
look  
remain  
seem  
smell  
sound  
stay  
taste  
turn

For example: “If you leave milk outside of the fridge for too long, it may turn sour.”

To confirm the identity of a linking verb, replace it with the correct form of “be.” If the sentence still makes sense, then it is a linking verb. However, if the sentence does not make sense after the replacement, then the verb being used is an [action verb](#), not a linking verb. Consider the following:

“Laura appears“

“Laura is“

In the second line, “is” has replaced “appears,” and yet the sentence still conveys the same meaning. Therefore, “appears” as it is used here is a linking verb.

## Examples of Relative Pronoun in Literature

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### Example #1: *The Sign of Four* (by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle)

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“How often have I said to you that when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth?”

In these lines, if the linking verb “remains” is replaced with “is,” then the meaning of the sentence stays the same. Therefore, “remains” is the linking verb in this sentence.

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“But this morning everything seemed so extraordinarily queer that a question like Nancy’s ... She looked a little skimpy, wispy; but not unattractive. He liked her. The shore seemed refined, far away, unreal.”

Woolf has used two linking verbs here: “seemed” and “looked.” “Seemed” connects the subject (“everything”) to its related details, while “looked” connects the subject (“she”) to the description of her body.

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### **Example #3: *The Doomsday Conspiracy* (by Sidney Sheldon)**

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“General Mark Hilliard, deputy director of the NSA, appeared to be in his middle fifties, very tall, with a face carved in flint, icy, steely eyes, and a ramrod-straight posture ...”

In this example, “appeared” is used as a linking verb to connect the subject (“General Mark Hilliard”) to the details about his appearance.

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### **Example #4: *1984* (by George Orwell)**

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“A sudden hot sweat had broken out all over Winston’s body. His face remained completely inscrutable...”

Here the linking verb “remained” links the subject (“Winston”) to his facial description. If the linking verb was replaced with the word “was,” the sentence would still make sense.

## **Function**

A linking verb shows the relationship between the subject and the complement of a sentence. A linking verb also connects the subject to the words and phrases that provide additional information about the subject, such as an existing condition or relationship.