**The Sentence**

The sentence is the basic unit of writing. A complete sentence must have four things:

1. a subject

2. a verb

3. complete thought

4. end with a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point

We are going to cover each of these three things in detail, but before we do, here are the key terms and concepts about sentences:

1. Clauses (***independent clauses*** and ***dependent clauses***) make sentences. A main clause can stand on its own as a sentence, a dependent clause needs additional information to express a complete thought, and are not sentences on their own.

2. Clauses are different from ***phrases,*** which do *not* have a subject and a verb.

3. Conjunctions (*coordinate conjunctions* and *subordinate conjunctions*) join one clause to another clause to make different types of sentences.

4. The three types of sentences (***simple sentences, compound sentences*,** and ***complex sentences***) are defined by the number and types of clauses they have; we will go over these in detail next week.

Every **CLAUSE**, whether it’s an ***independent*** ***clause*** or a ***dependent******clause***, has to have a ***subject*** and a ***verb*** that go together.

· The **SUBJECT** is the person, place, thing, quality, or idea that the clause is about (it is a noun).

· The **VERB** is the word (or words) that express(es) the physical or mental action, or condition, of its subject.

We’ll start with some different kinds of **VERBS**; then you can figure out the **SUBJECT**—*who* or *what* is engaged in the action.

**A. ACTION VERBS** express physical action *(hit, run, dance, sing)* or mental action *(think, know, believe).*

Physical Action:*The waves* **crash** *against the shore. The birds* **fly** *above our heads.*

Mental Action: *Tim* **believes** *in ghosts. I* **think** *Tim* *is* *out of his mind.*

**B. LINKING VERBS** do not express action. They help make a statement by linking a subject to a word or idea. They’re often associated with a form of the verb “to be”: *be, am, is, are, was, were, being*, and *been*.

**Examples:** *Anton* **is** *ready. I* **am** *leaving.*

Verbs like *appear, become, feel, grow, look, prove, remain, seem, smell, sound*, and *taste* are **linking verbs** when they are followed by a word or word group that names or describes the subject.

**Examples:** *You* **seem** *tired. He* **appears** *nervous.*

**C. COMPOUND VERBS** AND **VERB PHRASES:** Sometimes verbs are groups of words.

**Compound Verb** (two or more connected verbs that have the same subject):

**Examples:** *We* **left** *at noon and* **arrived** *at four*. *George* **washed** *the windows and* **mowed** *the lawn.*

**Verb Phrase** (a group of words that acts as a verb):

**Examples:** *The game* **has been played***. The movie* **will be coming** *to a theater near you.*

Once you have recognized the **VERB**, it’s easier to locate the **SUBJECT**. Just ask yourself “Who?” or “What?” is performing the action. Subjects are often people or things, but they can also be places, events, qualities, or ideas.

Sarah sang a song. *Who* sang? **Sarah** sang.

Justice is blind. *What* is blind? **Justice** is blind.

My book fell in a puddle. *What* fell in a puddle? My **book** fell in a puddle.

Success feels good. *What* feels good? **Success** feels good.

**A. Sometimes the subject may be compound** (two or more connected words):

My aunt and uncle own a bakery. *Who* owns? My **aunt** and **uncle.**

**B. Sometimes the subject may come after the verb:**

There is a spider in the sink. *What* is in the sink? A **spider**.

**C. And sometimes the subject may be separated from the verb by several words:**

The books on that shelf are old. *What* are old? The **books** are old.

My cat, startled by the noise, ran under the bed.

*Who* ran under the bed? My **cat** ran under the bed.

**CLAUSES:** A clause is any group of words that has both a subject and a verb. There may be other words in a clause, but it must have a subject and a verb. There are two types of clauses: INDEPENDENT and DEPENDENT. First we’ll look at **INDEPENDENT CLAUSES.**

**A.** An **Independent Clause** contains the same three elements as a sentence: a main verb, a subject, and a complete thought. A sentence *is* an independent clause:

*College life can be challenging. College life can be fun.*

These are not only sentences, but they are also independent clauses. Generally, we call them independent clauses when they are combined into one sentence:

*College life can be challenging, but it can also be fun.*

Now we do not have two sentences, but *one sentence* containing two *independent clauses*. (This is called a *compound sentence.*  We’ll discuss types of sentences later on.)

**B.** A **Dependent Clause** is like an Independent Clause in that it also has a main verb and a subject. The difference is that a *Dependent Clause does not express a complete thought:*

§ As cars quickly fill the parking lot. § If we all try to get along.

These two clauses have a subject and a verb, but they do not express a complete thought. They clearly need something else attached to them so they make sense; they need an **Independent Clause:**

§ **Tension grows** as cars quickly fill the parking lot.

§ If we all try to get along, **we can be more productive.**

You can see that a **Dependent Clause** can never be a sentence by itself: It needs an **Independent Clause** to express a complete thought.

**PHRASES:** A phrase is a group of words that does not have both a *subject* and a *verb*. A *phrase* is only a fragment of a sentence. You’ve already seen examples of *verb phrases* (The game **has been** played. The movie **will be coming** to a theater near you.).

Now we’ll look at two other kinds of phrases: **PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES** and **VERBAL PHRASES**. First, we’ll examine **VERBAL PHRASES.**

**A.** A**Verbal** **Phrase** is different from a *Verb* *Phrase* in that it contains either an -ing verb or the infinitive form of the verb (to + verb). **Verbal Phrases** can be used to modify words in a sentence, or they can function as a subject, but they do not function as the main verb in a sentence. (Modifiers are words or phrases that describe or give additional information about subjects, verbs, objects, or other modifiers.)

*This phrase modifies the clause that follows it:* **Parking his car a mile off campus,** Juan ran to class.

*This phrase functions as the subject of the clause:* **Parking a mile off campus** is a pain.

**B.** A **Prepositional Phrase** is simply a group of words beginning with a preposition that modifies a noun. Prepositions are words such as *at, in, by, of, with, on, up, as, over, under,* etc*.* Examples of **prepositional phrases** are *above* thedesk*, under* the desk*, by* the desk*, in* the desk*, beside* the desk,etc.

Please leave my book **on the desk**.

Students **with self-motivation** perform well in school.

The class **down the hall** is noisy.

**In spite of the rain,** she made it to class on time.

**OBJECTS:** Here is one important thing to remember about prepositions:

A preposition always has an *object*—the word or group of words that completes the meaning of a preposition. We’ll illustrate objects with the sentences we just worked with:

**Please leave my book on the desk.**

“On” is the preposition; “desk” is the **OBJECT** of the preposition; and the prepositional phrase is “on the desk.”

**Students with self-motivation perform well in school.**

“With” is the preposition; “self-motivation” is the OBJECT of the preposition; and “with self-motivation” is the prepositional phrase.

**The class down the hall is noisy.**

“Down” is the preposition; “hall” is the **OBJECT** of the preposition; and “down the hall” is the prepositional phrase.

**In spite of the rain, she made it to class on time.**

“In” and “of” are both prepositions; “rain” is the **OBJECT** of those prepositions; and “In spite of the rain” is the prepositional phrase.

**PUNCTUATION:** Every independent clause must end with either a period, a question mark or an exclamation point.

**A. Period:** the most common, it simply indicates the end of the sentence.

**B. Question mark:** indicates that the sentence is asking a question. The only times this can be confusing is when a sentence is *reporting* that someone asked a question, rather than asking a direct question itself. If the sentence is reporting, then a period is used:

§ Watson asked Mary if she would like to join them for dinner.

§ Would you like to join us for dinner**?**

§ Holmes wondered where she had hidden the portrait.

§ I wonder where she has hidden the portrait**?**

Questions asked in a series may be followed by question marks even if they are not complete sentences (missing a subject or a verb):

§ Holmes wondered where she had hidden the portrait. Behind the lamp? In the bureau? Under the floorboards?

**C. Exclamation point:** used to add emphasis or express added feeling. *Do not overuse*, or it will lose its impact.

Correct:

"Wedlock suits you," he remarked. "I think, Watson, that you have put on seven and a half pounds since I saw you."

"Seven!" I answered.

Watson uses the exclamation point because he is shocked and surprised that Holmes thinks he has gain so much weight.

Incorrect:

"Let me see!" said Holmes. "Hum! Born in New Jersey in the year 1858. Contralto--hum! La Scala, hum! Prima donna Imperial Opera of Warsaw--yes! Retired from operatic stage--ha! Living in London--quite so!

By using an exclamation after each statement, no element is given special weight and they all become equally important: the meaning is lost.

**Practice – Subjects/Verbs**

For each of the sentences below, identify the subject and the verb, and indicate what kind of verb is used (action, linking, compound or phrase).

1. At three o'clock precisely I was at Baker Street.

2. I fear that I bore you with these details.

3. He appeared to be in a great hurry.

4. Slowly and solemnly he was borne into Briony Lodge and laid out in the principal room.

5. Holmes had sat up upon the couch.

6. We are but preventing her from injuring another.

7. A maid rushed across and threw open the window.

8. Thick clouds of smoke curled through the room.

9. .He walked swiftly and in silence for some few minutes

10. Now it was clear to me that our lady of today had nothing in the house more precious to her than what we are in quest of.

**Practice – Complete Thought**

Rewrite each subordinate clause so that it is an independent clause (a complete sentence). *Hint:* first identify the subject and the verb.

1. The smoke was enough

2. The coachman had

3. Because of the hasty retreat he felt

4. He bowed, and turned away without

5. And that was how a great scandal threatened

**Practice – Punctuation**

Fill in each blank with the correct punctuation, either a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point.

"You are sure that she has not sent it yet "

"I am sure "

"And why "

"Because she has said that she would send it on the day when the betrothal was publicly proclaimed, that will be next Monday "

"Oh, then we have three days yet " exclaimed Holmes.