

1 Subjects and Verbs

Basics about Subjects and Verbs

Every complete sentence contains a **subject** and a **verb**.

SUBJECTS

The **subject** of a sentence is the person, place, thing, or idea that the sentence is about. The subject can be called the “who or what” word. To find the subject, ask yourself, “Who or what is this sentence about?” or “Who or what is doing something in this sentence?”

For example, look at the following two sentences:

- People applauded.
- Gloria wrote the answers on the board.

People is what the first sentence is about; they are the ones who applauded. So *people* is the subject of the first sentence. The second sentence answers the question, “Who is doing something in the sentence?” The answer is *Gloria*. She is the person who wrote the answers on the board. So *Gloria* is the subject of the second sentence.

A subject will always be either a noun or a pronoun. A **noun** is the name of a person, place, thing, or idea. A **pronoun** is a word—such as *I*, *you*, *he*, *she*, *it*, *we*, or *they*—that stands for a noun.

VERBS

Many **verbs** express action; they tell what the subject is doing. You can find an **action verb** by asking, “What does the subject do?” Look again at these sentences:

- People applauded.
- Gloria wrote the answers on the board.

You remember that *people* is the subject of the first sentence. What did they do? They *applauded*. *Applauded* is the verb in the first sentence. *Gloria* is the subject in the second sentence. What did Gloria do? She *wrote*, so *wrote* is the verb in the second sentence.

Some verbs do not show action; they are called **linking verbs**. Linking verbs like *is*, *are*, *was*, and *were* join (or link) the subject to something that is said about the subject. For example, in the sentence *Gloria is a teacher*, the linking verb *is* connects the subject *Gloria* with what is said about her—that she is a teacher.

Notes

- 1 Some verbs consist of more than one word—a **helping verb** plus the main verb. Here are some examples of verbs containing more than one word:
 - Gloria has written the answer on the board.
The verb is *has written*.
 - The balloons were drifting slowly to earth.
The verb is *were drifting*.
- 2 The verb of a sentence never begins with *to*. For example:
 - Gloria is going to write the answer on the board.
The verb of the sentence is *is going*. It is not *write* or *to write*.
 - The balloons seemed to hang in the air.
The verb of the sentence is *seemed*. It is not *hang* or *to hang*.

Understanding Subjects and Verbs

In each sentence, underline the subject once and the verb twice. Then check your answers below.

¹Daisy Russell lives in Missouri. ²Her dog's name is Happy. ³Daisy is happy now, too, after an unhappy past. ⁴Daisy experienced a difficult childhood. ⁵Her father beat her. ⁶He called her worthless. ⁷He even tried to sell her to another couple. ⁸Her family moved constantly. ⁹Unable to read, Daisy felt stupid and ashamed. ¹⁰Now things are different. ¹¹Daisy has learned to read. ¹²Moreover, she teaches other adults to read. ¹³Today, Daisy has a lot to smile about.



ANSWERS

¹Daisy Russell, lives; ²name, is; ³Daisy, is; ⁴Daisy, experienced; ⁵father, beat; ⁶He, called; ⁷He, tried; ⁸family, moved; ⁹Daisy, felt; ¹⁰things, are; ¹¹Daisy, has learned; ¹²she, teaches; ¹³Daisy, has

Check Your Understanding

Underline each subject once and each verb twice.



¹Daisy often baby-sits her grandchildren. ²Their childhood is very different from hers. ³She was often lonely and afraid. ⁴They live without fear. ⁵In the photo to the left, Daisy appears with her granddaughter Tiffany. ⁶Daisy taught Tiffany to read. ⁷The two visit the library in their town often. ⁸Daisy's grandchildren both enjoy reading. ⁹They have no need to feel ashamed. ¹⁰Their grandmother feels great about that.

A Note on Prepositional Phrases

The subject of a sentence is never part of a prepositional phrase. A **prepositional phrase** is a group of words that begins with a preposition and ends with a noun. Common prepositions are *about, after, as, at, before, between, by, during, for, from, in, into, like, of, on, outside, over, through, to, toward, with,* and *without*. As you look for the subject of a sentence, it may help to cross out any prepositional phrases that you find. Here are examples:

The coffee ~~from the leaking pot~~ stained the carpet.

One ~~of my classmates~~ fell asleep ~~during class~~.

The woman ~~on that motorcycle~~ has no helmet.

The cracks and booms ~~during the thunderstorm~~ were terrifying.

Subjects and Verbs: PRACTICE 1

In each sentence below, cross out the prepositional phrases. Then underline the subject of each sentence once and the verb of each sentence twice.



1. Daisy is looking through her “brag book.”
2. She keeps special papers in it.
3. One letter in the book is especially important to her.
4. She had entered a scholarship contest for college students.
5. Her entry was an essay about her life.
6. The letter from the contest officials awarded her first prize.
7. The eagle on the front of her brag book has a special meaning.
8. It tells her to “fly” over any obstacle to her success.

9. Daisy used the scholarship money for a computer.
10. On the computer she writes more essays, poems, and stories.
11. Daisy’s life has changed a great deal during the last few years.
12. She learned to read as an adult.
13. She earned her high-school diploma at age 44.
14. She has told her life story on radio and TV.
15. Daisy truly has taken charge of her own life.



A Note on Helping Verbs

As already mentioned, many verbs consist of a main verb plus one or more helping verbs. Helping verbs are shown below:

Forms of <i>be</i> :	be, am, is, are, was, were, being, been
Forms of <i>have</i> :	have, has, had
Forms of <i>do</i> :	do, does, did
Special verbs:	can, could, may, might, must, ought (to), shall, should, will, would

Subjects and Verbs: PRACTICE 2

In each sentence below, cross out the prepositional phrases. Then underline the subject of each sentence once and the verb of each sentence twice.

1. Dogs at the animal shelter wait for a good home.
2. The frozen fish on the counter defrosted quickly.
3. My computer's screen went blank without warning.
4. The kitchen in my parents' house smells like vanilla and cinnamon.
5. A very large truck stalled on the bridge.
6. The orange in the refrigerator has purple spots.
7. Everyone cried at one point during the movie.
8. Several sad-looking puppies huddled in the small cage.
9. Two young boys from the neighborhood were playing catch in the alley.
10. By the end of the day, we had sold between 350 and 400 tickets.

Subjects and Verbs: PRACTICE 3

In each sentence below, cross out the prepositional phrases. Then underline the subject of each sentence once and the verb of each sentence twice.



1. Today, Daisy is surrounded by people.
2. All of them care about her.
3. Her husband Don has encouraged her over the years to pursue her dreams.
4. Daisy calls their neighbor Shorty by the name of "Dad."
5. "I was without a loving dad of my own."
6. "So I adopted Shorty as my father."
7. Little Bradley has no knowledge of Daisy's story.
8. He just loves to be with his Grandma.
9. As a child, Daisy had an unhappy family life.
10. But, through her own efforts, she is creating a happy present and future.

Name _____ Section _____ Date _____
Score: (Number right) _____ x 10 = _____%

Subjects and Verbs: TEST 1

For each sentence, cross out any prepositional phrases. Then underline the subject once and the verb twice. Remember to include any helping verb(s).

NOTE To help in your review of subjects and verbs, explanations are given for three of the sentences.

1. A family of ducks waddled toward the pond.

Of ducks and *toward the pond* are prepositional phrases. The sentence is about a *family (of ducks)*; what they did was *waddled*.

2. Ramona loves to exchange e-mails with her friends.

Since *exchange* has a *to* in front of it, it cannot be the verb of the sentence.

3. Many park visitors have complained about the new regulations.

Have complained (complained plus the helping verb have) is what the sentence says the park visitors did.

4. The pot of vegetable soup simmered gently on the stove.

5. Your digital camera takes very clear pictures in all kinds of locations.

6. After the party, we went to a diner for coffee.

7. The summer concert was canceled with only one day's notice.

8. The coffee from the leaking pot left a stain on the white carpet.

9. A German shepherd waited patiently outside the drugstore.

10. The curious child stared silently at the man in the Santa Claus suit.

Name _____ Section _____ Date _____

Score: (Number right) _____ x 10 = _____%

Subjects and Verbs: TEST 2

For each sentence, cross out any prepositional phrases. Then underline the subject once and the verb twice. Remember to include any helping verb(s).

1. The candles on the table smell like vanilla.
2. The people in my family speak two languages.
3. Clean clothes on the line fluttered in the breeze.
4. Without a word, Hugh raced out of the house and into the front yard.
5. Teams of cheerleaders yelled on opposite sides of the gym.
6. Sofia's boyfriend is good with cars.
7. I work at the computer lab between classes.
8. Huge mounds of dirt surround the construction site.
9. The tiles on the bathroom floor look gray in the dim light.
10. Movies about dinosaurs always seem popular with audiences.

Name _____ Section _____ Date _____
Score: (Number right) _____ x 10 = _____%

Subjects and Verbs: TEST 3

In each sentence below, cross out the prepositional phrases. Then underline the subject of each sentence once and the verb of each sentence twice.

1. In present-day America, with all its wealth and resources, many adults read poorly.
2. Many, in fact, are unable to read at all.
3. Some, like Daisy Russell, never had a chance to learn during childhood.
4. In other cases, people struggle with learning disabilities.
5. Adults without the ability to read often feel hopeless about their situation.
6. In addition, they may feel ashamed about their lack of this skill.
7. It took a number of years for Daisy Russell to find the courage to ask for help.
8. Then she began to work with a tutor.
9. She learned quickly about “sounding out” words and how to understand written language.
10. Now she is happy to work with other nonreaders.

Name _____ Section _____ Date _____

Score: (Number right) _____ x 10 = _____%

Subjects and Verbs: TEST 4

Read the sentences below. Then, in the space provided, write the letter of the correct answer to each question.

- The movie audience shrieked in terror and glee at the sight of the seven-headed monster.

_____ 1. In the sentence above, the subject is
a. audience. **b.** terror. **c.** monster.

_____ 2. In the sentence above, the verb is
a. shrieked. **b.** glee. **c.** sight.

- A solution to the problem suddenly popped into my head.

_____ 3. In the sentence above, the subject is
a. problem. **b.** head. **c.** solution.

_____ 4. In the sentence above, the verb is
a. popped. **b.** suddenly. **c.** head.

- During the long bus trip from Baltimore to Florida, many passengers slept.

_____ 5. In the sentence above, the subject is
a. bus. **b.** many. **c.** passengers.

_____ 6. In the sentence above, the verb is
a. During. **b.** many. **c.** slept.

- For his birthday dinner, Will had a pizza with pepperoni, mushrooms, and onions.

_____ 7. In the sentence above, the subject is
a. dinner. **b.** birthday. **c.** Will.

_____ 8. In the sentence above, the verb is
a. dinner. **b.** had. **c.** with.

- After my final exam, I can forget about school for a week.

_____ 9. In the sentence above, the subject is
a. exam. **b.** I. **c.** school.

_____ 10. In the sentence above, the verb is
a. can. **b.** can forget. **c.** forget.

Name _____ Section _____ Date _____
 Score: (Number right) _____ x 10 = _____%

Subjects and Verbs: TEST 5

Read the sentences below. Then, in the space provided, write the letter of the correct answer to each question.

- During the hot, dry summer, the farmers worried about their crops.

- _____ 1. In the sentence above, the subject is
 a. summer. b. crops. c. farmers.
- _____ 2. In the sentence above, the verb is
 a. During. b. about. c. worried.

- Drops of icy rain began to fall on the basketball players.

- _____ 3. In the sentence above, the subject is
 a. Drops. b. rain. c. players.
- _____ 4. In the sentence above, the verb is
 a. icy. b. began. c. fall.

- As a result of my father's illness, my family in the past two months has lived a nightmare.

- _____ 5. In the sentence above, the subject is
 a. illness. b. result. c. family.
- _____ 6. In the sentence above, the verb is
 a. lived. b. has lived. c. has.

- To catch the bus to school, Stacy awakens before sunrise.

- _____ 7. In the sentence above, the subject is
 a. Stacy. b. bus. c. sunrise.
- _____ 8. In the sentence above, the verb is
 a. catch. b. to catch. c. awakens.

- Tracy has been sending romantic e-mails to her boyfriend during computer lab.

- _____ 9. In the sentence above, the subject is
 a. Tracy. b. boyfriend. c. e-mails.
- _____ 10. In the sentence above, the verb is
 a. has. b. has been sending. c. during.