What is a subject?

- **The subject** of a sentence is the person or thing about which an assertion is made or a question is asked. Subjects can either be "simple" (composed of a single pronoun, noun or noun phrase), "compound" or "complex".

Simple subjects
- **Christine** looked in the mirror.  
  In this example, "Christine" is the subject because the sentence asserts that she looked in the mirror.

- **The scientist** was correct in her prediction.  
  In this example, "the scientist" is the subject because the sentence asserts that she made a correct prediction.

What is a complex subject?

A **complex subject** consists of a noun phrase and any words, phrases or clauses that modify it.

- The man who had followed us inside walked over to the telephone.  
  *central noun* - man  
  *complex subject* - the man who had followed us inside

- The superior performance of La Traviata pleased the wealthy audience.  
  *central noun* - performance  
  *complex subject* - the superior performance of La Traviata
What is a compound subject?

A compound subject consists of two or more noun phrases (and their modifiers if any) joined together with a coordinating conjunction.

• The man and the woman walked over to the telephone. The compound subject here is the whole phrase, "the man and the woman."

• Neither the superior performance of La Traviata nor the excellent wine at intermission pleased the wealthy audience. Again, the whole phrase, "neither the superior performance of La Traviata nor the excellent wine at intermission," is the subject. The phrase answers the question, "What pleased the wealthy audience?"

More compound subjects

• Team pennants, rock posters and family photographs covered the boy’s bedroom walls.

• Her uncle and she walked slowly through the Aboriginal art gallery and admired the dot paintings exhibited there.

Find the subject!

• His terror of spiders kept him out of the dark basement.
• There will be three concerts in the arts centre tonight.
• Would you willingly exchange half your intelligence for one million dollars?
• Despite the storm’s destructiveness, the ship, with its crew of amateurs, might have survived in more experienced hands.
• After the movie, Emma and her brother bought a birthday present for their mother.
What is a predicate?

The **predicate** is the part of the sentence which makes a statement or asks a question. The predicate always contains a verb.

- **Mary paints.**
  This is an example of a sentence with only a subject and a verb. The **predicate** of this sentence is “paints”, since the subject is never part of the predicate, and “Mary” is the subject.

- **Mary paints portraits of Sue.**
  The **predicate** of this sentence is “paints portraits of Sue” since the predicate includes objects or complements and their modifiers.

- **Mary is painting a portrait of Sue.**
  The **predicate** of this sentence is “is painting a portrait of Sue” since the predicate includes any auxiliary verbs or modifiers of the verb.

Simple predicate

- **A piece of pepperoni pizza would satisfy his hunger.**
  The subject is built around the noun "piece," with the other words of the subject -- "a" and "of pepperoni pizza" -- modifying the noun. "Piece" is the simple subject.

  Likewise, a predicate has at its centre a **simple predicate**, which is always the verb or verbs that link up with the subject. In the example we just considered, the simple predicate is "would satisfy", in other words, the verb of the sentence.

Find the predicate!

- **His terror of spiders kept him out of the dark basement.**
- **There will be three concerts in the arts centre tonight.**
- **Would you willingly exchange half your intelligence for one million dollars?**
- **Despite the storm's destructiveness, the ship, with its crew of amateurs, might have survived in more experienced hands.**
- **After the movie, Emma and her brother bought a birthday present for their mother.**
What is a simple object?

A simple object is a word that "receives the action" of a transitive verb or a verbal.

- I met her this morning.
  "Her" is the simple object that receives the action of being met.
- Meeting her was nice.
  "Her" is the simple object of the gerund "meeting."
- I always wanted to meet her.
  Here, "her" is the simple object of an infinitive.

Direct and indirect objects

Two kinds of objects can follow verbs: direct objects and indirect objects. To determine if a verb has a direct object, isolate the verb and make it into a question by placing "whom?" or "what?" after it.

- The advertising executive drove a flashy red Porsche.
- Her secret admirer gave her a bouquet of flowers.

To determine if a verb has an indirect object, isolate the verb and ask to whom?, to what?, for whom?, or for what? after it. The answer is the indirect object.

- Not all verbs are followed by objects. In the following two sentences there are no objects.
  - The guest speaker rose from her chair to protest.
  - After work, Randy usually jogs around the canal.

How else can I identify a direct object?

Another useful method for determining the direct object is to attempt to rephrase the sentence in the passive voice. If you can turn the sentence into the passive form, then the direct object of the active sentence becomes the subject of the passive sentence.

- Active - Todd sang a song.
- Passive - A song was sung by Todd.
  The direct object, "a song," of the active sentence becomes the subject of the passive one.

- Ashley became a track star.
  "A track star" is not a direct object and thus cannot become the subject in a passive sentence.
  Incorrect: A track star was become by Ashley.
More about indirect objects

Most commonly, verbs that involve giving something to someone or making something for someone have an indirect object as well as a direct one. Indirect objects are usually placed directly before the direct object. They usually answer the questions "to what/whom?" or "for what/whom?"

• She gave Dave a rose.
  She gave a rose to whom? Dave
The predicate of the above sentence consists of the verb "gave," the indirect object "Dave," and the direct object "rose."

Complex objects

Like subjects, objects can be complex, consisting of the simple object and all the words which modify it.

• I finally bought the jeans I had tried on at least thirty times.
  simple object – jeans
  complex object - the jeans I had tried on at least thirty times

• He chose the small puppy shivering over in the corner of the cage.
  simple object - puppy
  complex object - the mangy puppy shivering over in the corner of the cage.
Compound Objects

Objects can also be compound, that is, composed of two or more noun phrases joined with a coordinating conjunction.

- Mary hated the heat and the flies.
  compound object - the heat and the flies

- I can tolerate neither your arrogance nor your compassion.
  compound object – neither your arrogance nor your compassion.

What is a subject complement?

A subject complement can either be a predicate noun, which renames the subject, or a predicate adjective which describes the subject.

Certain verbs called linking verbs, connect a subject complement to the subject. Some linking verbs are:

appear    become    seem    feel    grow
act       look       taste    smell    sound    get       be

- The lake was a tranquil pool.
  "Was" is a linking verb which links the subject complement (predicate noun) "tranquil pool" to the subject "lake."

- The lake is tranquil. "Tranquil" is a predicate adjective linked through the verb "is."
Object Complements

An object complement is similar to a subject complement, except that (obviously) it modifies an object rather than a subject. Consider this example of a subject complement:

- The driver seems tired.

In this case, as explained above, the adjective "tired" modifies the noun "driver," which is the subject of the sentence.

Sometimes, however, the noun will be the object, as in the following example:

- I consider the driver tired.

In this case, the noun "driver" is the direct object of the verb "consider," but the adjective "tired" is still acting as its complement.

In general, verbs which have to do with perceiving, judging, or changing something can cause their direct objects to take an object complement:

- Paint it black.
- The judge ruled her out of order.
- I saw the Prime Minister sleeping.

In every case, you could reconstruct the last part of the sentence into a sentence of its own using a subject complement: "it is black," "she is out of order," "the Prime Minister is sleeping."

What is an object complement?

With some verbs the direct object can be followed by another noun or modifying phrase called an object complement. Some of the verbs which can take object complements are:

make name elect call find consider paint
appoint believe judge declare turn

- He dyed his hair blonde.

The predicate of the above sentence consists of the transitive verb "dyed," the direct object "his hair," and the object complement "blonde."

- The students elected him president.

The above sentence consists of the transitive verb "elected," the direct object "him," and the object complement "president."
Sentence Clauses and Phrases

Sentences can be broken down into smaller units called **clauses** and **phrases**. The main difference between the two is that clauses have a subject and a predicate whereas phrases do not have a predicate.

- She was walking *with a friend who went to my school*.

Clauses contain both a subject and a predicate, so *who went to my school* constitutes a **clause** in the above example. *With a friend* is one example of a **phrase** from the above sentence, since it has no subject and no predicate.

Clauses can be either main or subordinate

A **main clause** is one which is independent. A **subordinate clause** depends on the main clause which it often modifies. Subordinating conjunctions (as, since, because...) or relative pronouns (who, which, that) usually introduce dependent clauses.

- While I was driving, I noticed the leaves had begun to turn autumn colours.

The first clause, **while I was driving**, is a **subordinate clause** introduced by the subordinate conjunction "while."

The clause is subordinate because it cannot stand by itself as a complete sentence.

The second clause is the **main clause**. By itself, **I noticed the leaves had begun to turn autumn colours** can be a whole sentence.
Recognising clauses

• cows eat grass
  This example is a clause, because it contains the subject "cows" and the predicate "eat grass."

• cows eating grass
  What about "cows eating grass"? This could be a subject, but it has no predicate attached to it. The adjective phrase "eating grass" shows which cows the writer is referring to, but there is nothing here to show why the writer is mentioning cows in the first place. Therefore, this is a phrase.

• cows eating grass are visible from the highway
  This is a complete clause again. The subject "cows eating grass" and the predicate "are visible from the highway" make up a complete thought.

• Run!
  This single-word command is also a clause, even though it does seem to have a subject. With a direct command, it is not necessary to include the subject, since it is obviously the person or people you are talking to: in other words, the clause really reads "[You] run!".

Review: identifying clauses

• I love to eat meat pies
• the big, bad wolf
• took the bus to Shepparton
• they were thinking about the language issue
• the student considering everything written on this subject
• stay on the Princes Highway through New South Wales
• after the morning rush hour
• they hate politics
• because of the coat which I bought in Swanston Street
• when the train arrived at the station

Review: parts of the sentence

Identify the highlighted word in each of the sentences below as:

a simple subject, a verb, a direct object, an indirect object, or a subject complement.

• The old house on the hill gave Leonora chills and conjured up images of ghosts and monsters and other unknown beings.
• Next to the china cabinet, Mrs. Wilkes placed a polished side table and an antique jug.
• Despite winning the lottery last week, my cousin still seems unhappy.
• They gave the university a large endowment for the scholarship fund.
• Some experts believe it is easy to overstate the role that genes and heredity play in determining a person’s predisposition to alcoholism.
Identify the highlighted word in each of the sentences below as:
a simple subject, a verb, a direct object, an indirect object, or a subject complement.

• After the luncheon buffet, she grew drowsy and decided to take a nap.
• I don't know how you can understand anything that professor says.
• There were no credits after the movie.
• His deaf aunt will be going to the symphony next week.
• The company has been mailing George CD catalogues ever since he bought his stereo.
• Some experts believe it is easy to overstate the role that genes and heredity play in determining a person's predisposition to alcoholism.