

Unit 1-The Sentence

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The Simple Sentence

A **simple sentence** is the most basic kind of sentence you can write in English. It contains only one **clause**.

A **clause** is a set of words that contains one subject and one verb.

This lecture is on **a simple sentence structure only**; for a more complex structure, please see the Bicycle Sentence lecture.

The Simple Sentence

A **simple sentence** has two main components:

- Subject
- Verb

Simple sentences often have a third component: an **object**.

The Subject

The Subject of a sentence is its main actor.

Imagine that each sentence is a movie scene and each scene requires a main actor.

For example:

The man walked.

The main actor here is **the man**. He is the one doing something in the sentence.

Another example:

The bee stung the man.

The main actor here is **the bee**. It is doing something (stinging) the man.

The next few slides will give you a chance to work out who the main actor (the subject) In each sentence.

The Subject

The kung-fu master saved the child.

What is the **subject**? (The main actor.)

The Subject

The kung-fu master saved the child.

The kung-fu master is the subject. He is the one performing the act of saving on the child.

Let's try another example.

The apple fell from the tree.

What is the subject of this sentence?

The Subject

The apple fell from the tree.
What is the **subject** of this sentence?

The apple is the **subject**. It is the one doing something (falling). The tree is not the subject because it is merely the object upon which the apple acts.

Fell (the action) is the verb. It is what the **subject (the apple)** is doing.

Let's try one more.



The Subject

The student studied for the test.

What is the **subject** in the above sentence?

The Subject

The student studied for the test.

What is the **subject** in the above sentence?

The student is the **subject**. The student is acting upon the test by studying for it.

Can you pick out the object and verb?

The object is **the test** and the verb is **studied**.

We will learn more about the object in the next slide.

The Object

If the Subject is the actor, then the **Object** is the scenery or prop. For example if Johnny Depp runs into a train, then the actor (Johnny Depp) is running into the prop (a train).

Depp here is the subject and **the train is the object**.

Let's try two more examples.

The Object

The cat ate the mouse.

We know the subject is the cat (actor) but what is the **object**?

The object is **the mouse** (prop). It is what the cat is doing something (eating) to.

The dog chased the cat.

Here the dog is the actor. The dog (subject) is doing something (chasing) **the cat (object)**.

As you can see the cat may have been the subject in the first example, but in the second example it becomes the **object** because it is being acted upon by the dog.

Let's see if you can pick out the **object** in the next three samples:

The Object

A woman drove her car to the store.

This one is a bit tricky, but can you guess the **object**?

We know the woman is the subject as she is doing something, but is the car or the store the object?

The answer is: **her car**.

The reason why is because the woman (actor) is using (driving) **her car (object)**. The store is just an added detail and not affected by the car nor the woman. She could drive to the zoo, and **the car would still be the object**.



The Object

'Magic' Johnson passed the ball.

The Object

'Magic' Johnson passed the ball.

'Magic' Johnson is the subject here and he is passing an **object**. What is the **object**? **The ball**.

This one can have added detail but it won't change the subject or **object**. For instance,

'Magic' Johnson passed the ball to James Worthy.

The subject is still 'Magic' Johnson and he is still passing **the ball (object)**. The only difference is that we now know to whom 'Magic' is passing the ball.

Let's try one more.

The Object

The Los Angeles Lakers are the best team in basketball.

This one is really tricky because of the verb. I'll give you a hint--'to be' is a verb usage.
Another hint--'is' is a form of 'to be'.
A final hint--'are' is a tense of 'is'.

So, we know the subject is 'The Los Angeles Lakers' and we know the verb is 'are', so what is the **object**?

The Object

The Los Angeles Lakers are the best team in basketball.

So, we know the subject is 'The Los Angeles Lakers' and we know the verb is 'are', so what is the **object**?

'**basketball**' is the **object**. The 'best team' is just a description and can fool you. The **object** is what the subject changes. The Los Angeles Lakers changed basketball.

Now that the Subject and **Object** are discussed, there is still one more component of the basic sentence: the verb (action).

The Verb

The verb is usually the 'action' or 'what is being done to the object' in the sentence. An example from from film would be, 'Clint Eastwood shoots the car'.

The subject is Clint Eastwood (actor). He is doing something (shooting) the car (object).
The **verb** is '**shoots**'.

The subject (Clint Eastwood) did something (shoots) to the object (the car).

Let's look a few more examples.

The Verb

The student ate dinner.

The student is the subject; dinner is the object; and **ate** is the **verb**.

The student (actor) ate (did something) dinner (the thing being eaten).

I turned on the light.

What is the **verb**?

We know 'I' is the subject and 'the light' is the object. So what did the person do to the light?

The person turned on the light.

'turned on' is the **verb**.

Let's try a few on our own.

The Verb

The clown chased the child.
What is the **verb**?

The Verb

The clown chased the child.

What is the **verb**?

What did the clown do to the child?

The clown chased the child.

'**chased**' is the **verb** here.

How about this one:

Snoopy stole the blanket.

What is the **verb**?

The Verb

Snoopy stole the blanket.

What is the **verb**?

If Snoopy is the Subject and the blanket is the object, then the **verb** has to be '**stole**'.

The actor did something to the prop. In this case the actor stole the blanket.

Finally, one last example for you to figure out:

The student read the paper.

What is the **verb**?

The Verb

The student read the paper.

What is the **verb**?

We know the student is the subject and the paper is the object, so what did the student do to the paper?

The student read it.

So, '**read**' is the **verb**.

The Sentence

Well done. In this exercise you learned how to:

1. Analyze the two basic parts and the common third part of a simple sentence.
2. Enhance your ability to read and write sentences.
3. Analyze various sentences for their key structural components.

Good luck with the rest of the unit!