

LESSON NOTES - STEP 3

The subject of a sentence is what the sentence is about. It will be a noun or pronoun that usually appears in front of the verb and tells “who” or “what” did the action of the verb or is linked to other information in the sentence by the verb.

To find the simple subject, LOOK IN FRONT OF THE VERB and ask “WHO?” or “WHAT?”

Example: Sentence: “John is late.” Ask: Who is late?

John answers that question, so *John* is the subject of the sentence.

Sentence: “He is tall.” Ask: Who is tall?

He answers that question, so *He* is the subject of the sentence.

Sometimes the subject will be compound. If so, it will be joined by a conjunction.

Example: Maria and Omar will lead the parade.

Maria answers the question “Who?” about the verb, but Omar answers the question, as well. Therefore, they are BOTH the subject of the sentence. The conjunction “and” between them tells you the subject is compound (made up of more than one).

Though the subject is usually found in front of the verb, there are four times that the subject will be found in a different position in the sentence.

THE SUBJECT WILL NOT BE IN FRONT OF THE VERB WHEN AND IF:

- 1) The sentence begins with a prepositional phrase. Example: [Under the bridge] lay the cow.
Remember: The subject will NEVER be found inside a prepositional phrase.
- 2) The sentence begins with the words “here” or “there.” Example: “Here is my friend.” “There is my car.”
Note: The words “here” and “there” are adverbs and are NEVER the subject of the sentence.
- 3) The sentence asks a question (an interrogative sentence). Example: “Is he the manager of the motel?”
Hint: Put the words back in order, and it’s easy to find the subject.
He is the manager of the motel.
- 4) The sentence is a command or polite request (an imperative sentence). The subject of an imperative sentence is an understood “you.” Example: “Pass the salt.” - MEANS - (You) pass the salt.
(The subject of this sentence is implied, not stated. The subject is “understood” to be in front of the verb, but it is NOT written there.)

LESSON PRACTICE

It is very easy to find the simple subject once you have shortened the sentence by eliminating the prepositional phrases and identifying the verb phrase. All you have to do then is look in front of the verb and ask the questions who? or what? The answer will be the subject.

Note: Remember to watch for the **four** times the subject will **NOT** be in front of the verb.

Find the prepositional phrases in the practice sentences below and enclose them in []. Find the verb phrase and underline it. **Bold** the subject.

1. Maxine and Maria are friends of mine.
Maxine and Maria are friends [of mine].
2. Wait for me at the corner.
You wait [for me] [at the corner]
3. There is no need for tears.
There is no need [for tears]

sentence. The subject of this sentence follows the verb.

GROUP PRACTICE

INSTRUCTIONS: Find the prepositional phrases and enclose them in []. Find the verb phrase and underline it. Find the subject and **bold** it.

1. Here is the blue ribbon cake in the contest.
Here is the blue ribbon **cake** [in the contest]
2. Patience and kindness go a long way with children.
Patience and **kindness** go a long way [with children]
3. Open the window.
You (implied) open the window
4. Under her guidance, he became a concert pianist.
[Under her guidance], **he** became a concert pianist
5. Are you joking with me?
You are joking [with me]?
6. Marty Milchin is the pitcher for our team.
Mary Milchin is the pitcher [for our team]
7. There were many reasons for the delay in plans.
There were many reasons [for the delay] [in plans]
8. Warm gloves would make a nice gift for Gene.
Warm **gloves** would make a nice gift [for Gene]
9. Oscar took me to the movies yesterday.
Oscar took me [to the movies] yesterday
10. The native tribes were fighting each other once again.
The native **tribes** were fighting each other [once again]
11. Shakespeare wrote thirty-seven plays.
Shakespeare wrote thirty-seven plays
12. Don't leave your umbrella in the house.
You (implied) don't leave your umbrella [in the house]
13. Stop!
You (implied) stop!
14. A hobby can become expensive.
A **hobby** can become expensive
15. The holiday season is a happy time of year for most people.
The holiday **season** is a happy time [of year] [for most people]
16. The trees were green with spring leaves.
The **trees** were green [with spring leaves]
17. Above the water was a lovely rainbow.
A lovely **rainbow** was [above the water]
18. Benjamin Franklin invented the light bulb.
Benjamin Franklin invented the light bulb
19. Watch me!
You (implied) watch me!
20. Mando and I are not going to the dance.
Mando and **I** are not going [to the dance]

INDIVIDUAL PRACTICE

INSTRUCTIONS: Find the prepositional phrases and enclose them in []. Find the verb phrase, underline it twice, and label each word in it. Find the subject and underline it once. Label all conjunctions.

1. The PTA mothers were helping each other.
The **PTA mothers** were helping each other
2. Rita Dove wrote several hundred poems.
Rita Dove wrote several hundred poems
3. Don't play your drums in the house.
You (implied) don't play your drums [in the house]
4. Run!
You (implied) run
5. A sport can become addictive.
A **sport** can become addictive
6. The early years are a happy time of life for most people.
The early **years** are a happy time [of life] [for most people]
7. The grass was brown with fallen leaves.
The **grass** was brown [with fallen leaves]
8. Above the mountain was a fluffy cloud.
A fluffy **cloud** was [above the mountain]
9. Catherine Cookson writes inspirational novels.
Catherine Cookson writes inspirational novels
10. Follow her!
You (implied) follow her
11. There is only one vegetable in the meal.
There is only one **vegetable** [in the meal]
12. More information and explanation will help me.
More **information** and (conj) **explanation** will help me
13. Open the gate.
You (implied) open the gate
14. With her help, he became an accomplished painter.
[With her help], **he** became an accomplished painter
15. Are you going with her?
You are going [with her]
16. Geraldo is the spokesperson for the product.
Geraldo is the spoke
17. There were many people in the picture
There were many **people** [in the picture]
18. Warm gloves would make a nice gift for a skater.
Warm **gloves** would make a nice gift [for a skater]
19. Martha took me to the museum today.
Martha took me [to the museum] today
20. Faith and hope are important to me.
Faith and **hope** are important [to me]

THE WRITING CONNECTION

MAKING THE SUBJECT AND VERB AGREE

By now, it should be very easy to find the subject and verb of a sentence. Once you find them, it's important to make sure they agree in number. If the subject is singular, the verb must be singular. If the subject is plural, the verb must be plural. (Singular means one person or thing; plural means more than one person or thing.)

The subject and verb **AGREE** in this sentence: The mayor **is** going [to the convention]. The subject and verb **DO NOT AGREE** here: The mayor **are** going [to the convention]. **Remember: Singular verbs end in "s."** is = singular are = plural

It's usually easy to tell that a sentence has a subject/verb agreement error because the sentence sounds wrong when you read it, but sometimes, a prepositional phrase located between the subject and verb can fool you.

Example: One of the girls are going to the dance.

That may sound all right, but it isn't correct. The sentence has an error in subject/verb agreement. Remember that the subject of a sentence will NEVER be found within a prepositional phrase. "Girls" cannot be the subject of the sentence because it is in the prepositional phrase. If we follow the steps and eliminate the prepositional phrase (of the girls), then find the verb (are going), and then find the subject (one), it is easy to see that the subject is singular, but the verb is plural: "One are"

Remember: Singular verbs end in "s," so the sentence should read:

One [~~of the girls~~] **is** going to the dance.

A. Rewrite the following sentences on your own paper making sure the subjects and verbs agree in number. Underline the subject once and the verb twice in each sentence.

1. The apples in the bowl was rotten.
The **apples** in the bowl were rotten
2. One of the children were responsible.
One of the children was responsible
3. The discomforts of a fever is clearly described.
The **discomforts** of a fever is clearly described
4. The schedule of the city buses are uncertain.
The **schedule** of the city buses are uncertain
5. The hot days of summer seems a lazy time to me.
The hot **days** of summer seem a lazy time to me

THE WRITING CONNECTION: MAKING SUBJECTS AND VERBS AGREE - CONTINUED

Here are some other things to watch for when you are making subjects and verbs agree:

Two or more subjects joined by the conjunction “and” take a plural verb.

Example: Dogs and cats are both good pets.

If two or more subjects are joined by “or” or “nor,” make the verb agree with the **nearer** subject.

Example: The teacher or the students are going to the assembly.

subject nearer to the verb is plural	plural verb
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Example: The students or the teacher is going to the assembly.

subject nearer to the verb is singular	singular verb
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B. Rewrite the following sentences correctly on your own paper. Underline the subject once, the verb twice, and then check to see if they agree.

6. Neither the boy nor the girls knows the real reason.
Neither the **boy** nor the **girls** know the real reason
7. Some inner voice or idea were present in his mind.
Some inner **voice** or **idea** was present in his mind
8. Either your mom or your grandparents is welcome at the picnic.
Either your **mom** or your **grandparents** are welcome at the picnic

If the subject follows the verb in a sentence (such as sentences beginning with “there is” or “there are”), be especially careful to find the subject and verb and make them agree in number.

Example: There is a fly in my soup!

singular verb	singular subject
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C. Rewrite the following sentences on your own paper making them agree in number.

9. There has been very few changes in my life.
There have been very few **changes** in my life
10. In some families there is several people.
In some families there are several **people**
11. There are only one stamp in each of these boxes.
There are only one **stamp** in each of these boxes
12. During every bad storm, there has been injuries.
During every bad storm, there have been **injuries**