

LESSON 3

Simple and Complete Subjects and Predicates

In a sentence, the **simple subject** is the key word or words in the subject. The simple subject is usually a noun or a pronoun. The simple subject does not include any modifiers. The **complete subject** includes the simple subject and all the words that modify it.

The **simple predicate** is the key verb or verb phrase that tells what the subject does, has, or is. The **complete predicate** includes the verb and all the words that modify it.

In the following sentence, a vertical line separates the complete subject and complete predicate. The simple subject is underlined once. The simple predicate is underlined twice.

EXAMPLE

complete subject	Dried, crumpled <u>leaves</u>		complete predicate
			<u>littered</u> the floor underneath the dying plant.

Sometimes the simple subject is also the complete subject, and the simple predicate or verb is also the complete predicate.

EXAMPLE

Sarah | cheered.

To find the simple subject and simple predicate in a sentence, first break the sentence into its two basic parts: complete subject and complete predicate. Then, identify the simple predicate by asking yourself, “What is the action of this sentence?” Identify the simple subject by asking yourself, “Who or what is performing the action?”

In the following sentences, the complete predicate is underlined. The simple predicate, or verb, appears in boldface. Remember, verbs may include more than one word, and as many as four.

EXAMPLES

one-word verb	The bald eagles flew <u>over the mountaintops, looking for prey.</u>
two-word verb	The bald eagles are flying <u>over the mountaintops, looking for prey.</u>
three-word verb	The bald eagles have been flying <u>over the mountaintops, looking for prey.</u>
four-word verb	The bald eagles might have been flying <u>over the mountaintops, looking for prey.</u>

EXERCISE 1

Identifying Simple and Complete Subjects and Predicates in Literature

Draw a vertical line between the complete subject and predicate in each sentence. Then, single underline the simple subject and double underline the simple predicate.

EXAMPLE

She rang the doorbell. (She | rang the doorbell.)

It was Monday, the first week of November. The grape season was over and I could now go to school. I woke up early that morning and lay in bed, looking at the stars and savoring the thought of not going to work and of starting sixth grade for the first time that year. ...I decided to get up and join Papá and Roberto at breakfast. I sat at the table across from Roberto, but I kept my head down. I did not want to look up and face him. I knew he was sad. He was not going to school today. He was not going tomorrow, or next week, or next month. He would not go until the cotton season was over, and that was sometime in February. I rubbed my hands together and watched the dry, acid stained skin fall to the floor in little rolls.

*from "The Circuit," page 42
Francisco Jiménez*

EXERCISE 2

Understanding Simple and Complete Subjects and Predicates

Each of the following sentences contains a simple subject and predicate. Revise each sentence by adding details to the simple subject and predicate to create a more specific and clearer sentence. Then draw a vertical line between the complete subject and predicate you've created. Underline the original simple subject, and double underline the original simple predicate.

EXAMPLE

Children rested.

(*The two lost and frightened children | rested by the side of the road.*)

1. Tugboat chugged.

2. Truck might have overturned.

3. Package will arrive.

4. Woods have been burning.

5. Puppy returned.

6. Students are moving.

7. Soldier saluted.

8. Plays entertain.

9. Pond melts.

10. Plane should have arrived.

EXERCISE 3

Using Simple and Complete Subjects and Predicates in Your Writing

Write a myth or legend for second-graders, one that explains how and why something in nature, such as mountains, boulders, or mourning doves, came to be. Add details to simple subjects and predicates to help your readers visualize what is taking place in your story. Use your own sheet of paper for this exercise.