**Simple Sentences**

**The Simple Sentence Guidelines**

3 pages long (ELC charges 10 cents/page for print jobs)

Definition - A sentence is a group of words that meets all of the following four requirements:

1. Contains a subject

2. Contains a verb

3. Expresses a complete thought

4. Is punctuated as a sentence

The Simple Sentence contains only one subject-verb unit.

Subjects

1. A simple sentence requires a subject: who or what the sentence speaks about. The subject is often (but not always) located at the beginning of the sentence.

EXAMPLES:

\* Pets bring a lot of pleasure and companionship to their owners.

\* Some people with disabilities rely on pets to help them navigate their surroundings.

\* Even the best animal becomes a problem when not cared for correctly.

1. When the subject contains more than one item, it is a compound subject .

Examples:

\* Snakes, lizards, and exotic toads are among the least common house pets.

\* Hunters and other sportsmen use specially trained animals to track and retrieve game.

\* Around farms, cats and dogs are both pets and helpers.

1. Although the subject is often a noun , there are many other words and word combinations that can substitute for a noun and thus act as the subject of the sentence.

Examples:

Verbals (certain forms of verbs) can be used as noun substitutes.

\* Training a Seeing Eye dog requires an intense commitment of time and energy.

\* For most of us, to own a pet is a pleasurable addition to our lives

Verbs

What the sentence says or asks about the subject is called the verb .

1. The verb is sometimes an action word, such as "eat", "think", "participate", or "decide".

Examples:

\* Pets bring a lot of pleasure and companionship to their owners.

\* Some people with disabilities rely on pets to help them navigate their surroundings.

\* Even the best animal becomes a problem when not cared for correctly.

2. The verb may indicate the subject's state of being or nonaction. These verbs - be, is, am, are, was, were, been , and being - may be used in combination with auxiliary verbs such as have or has .

Examples

\* Snakes' live feeding needs are unattractive to some prospective pet owners.

\* Hopefully, pet store owners have been careful about sales of unusual or high maintenance animals.

3. When the verb contains more than one item, it is a compound verb .

Examples

\* specially trained animals track and retrieve game for hunters

\* Large breed dogs provide some home security and offer companionship to their owners

Expresses a Complete Thought

1. Sometimes a group of words contains a subject/verb pair but does not express a complete thought. If the reader needs more information in order to understand the writer's message, then the group of words is not a sentence.

Examples

\* When a person decides to select a pet.

(This contains a subject/verb pair, but leaves the ideas unfinished, so it is not a sentence.)

\* Although a bird can learn to talk and whistle.

(This contains a subject/verb pair, but leaves the idea unfinished, so it is not a sentence.)

A group of words that contains a subject/verb pair but does not express a complete thought is called a Fragment . (For more help identifying and correcting this type of error, see the grammar module Fragments .)

1. Punctuation of a sentence

\* Sentences begin with a capital letter and end with one of three end marks:

o a period

o a question mark

o an exclamation point

How to Find a Subject

The first approach to locating the subject of a sentence is to ask, "Who or what is this sentence about?"

1.

Example

\* Varying greatly by breed, adult dogs range in size from less than five to over one hundred fifty pounds.

(This is a statement about "dogs"; therefore, "dogs" is the subject.)

2. If the verb of a sentence is easier to identify, then locate the subject by asking "Who or what is performing the action in this sentence?"

Examples

\* With the reasoning capacity of a five year old child, African Gray Parrots surprise the visitors in many pet shops.

(Asking "What is surprising the visitors?" in this sentence leads us to identify "African Gray Parrots" as the subject.)

\* Maintaining a salt-water aquarium challenges even the most careful fish lover.

(Asking, "What challenges those careful fish lovers?" in this sentence leads us to identify the verbal "maintaining" as the subject.

1. A noun or noun substitute that is the object of a prepositional phrase cannot be the subject of a sentence. Eliminating prepositional phrases from consideration often helps with identification of subjects.

Examples

\* Boxes of cuddly kittens can attract both young and old people alike.

(The answer to the question, "What can attract people?" seems to be "kittens". However, in this sentence, "of cuddly kittens" is a prepositional phrase; therefore, kittens cannot be the subject.

\* Boxes of cuddly kittens can attract both young and old people alike.

(Eliminating the prepositional phrase enables us to identify "boxes" as the true subject of this sentence.)

\* Some commonly used prepositions are about, across, after, along, at, before, by, for, from, in, into, of, over, through, under, and until. For a more comprehensive list of prepositions, click Links on the action menu.

1. The words there and here are almost never the subject of the sentence. When either of these words appears to be the subject, either ask "who or what" or use the verb to question for the true subject.

Examples

\* There are many know health benefits from owning pets.

(Asking, "Who or what is this sentence about?" leads to the identification of "benefits" as the subject.)

\* Here comes another devoted cat lover with her favorite pet, "Rusty".

(Asking, "Who or what comes" in this sentence leads to the identification of "cat lover" as the subject.)

How to Find a Verb

\* The first approach to finding a verb is to ask, "What action is taking place in this sentence?"

Example

o Some tropical fish may attack other fish housed in the same aquarium.

(The action word in this sentence is "attack".)

o Mollies, guppies, and many other types of tropical fish give birth to live young.

(The action in this sentence is "give birth".)

\* If the subject of a sentence is easier to identify, then locate the verb by asking "What is the subject doing in this sentence?" or "What is being said about the subject in this sentence?"

Examples

o A ferret is a poor choice of pets for a small child

(Asking the question, "What is being said of the ferret?" yields the answer, "It is something (a poor choice)."

o The choice of appropriate food for any pet requires knowledge of the animal's basic nutritional needs.

(Asking the question, "What is being said of the choice?" yields the answer, "It requires knowledge...", leading us to the verb "requires" in this sentence.)

**Simple Sentence Grammar Module Activities**

1 page long (ELC charges 10 cents/page for print jobs)

Instructions: Read the Guidelines Sheet for Simple Sentences before you complete the following activities. The Extended Learning Center provides all the videos and books you will need to complete these activities.

Tutoring: You may see a tutor for help with understanding any of the following activities.

Activities:

Grammar textbook work: Do not write in the textbooks. Either photocopy the exercise pages from the text or complete the assignments on your own paper (Note: to utilize your time effectively, write short answers whenever possible, rather than copying entire sentences).

1. Odyssey (3rd edition): Read Chapter 17 (pages 264-274). Practice identifying verbs by completing Exercise 17.1 on page 266-267. Practice identifying subjects by completing Exercises 17.3 and 17.4 on pages 270-271.

2. Writer’s Choice: Read page 489 and complete Exercise 1 at the bottom of the page. Read page 492 and complete Exercise 5 at the bottom of the page. For additional practice, you may choose to complete Exercise 6 at the top of page 493.

3. Sentence Essentials: Read “Subjects in Simple Sentences” on pages. 65-66. Complete Practice 1 on pages 66-67. Read “Compound Subject” on page 69 and complete Practice 3 on page 70. Read “Verbs in Simple Sentences” on pages 72-74 and complete Practice 6 on page 74. Read “Compound Verb”on pages 77-78 and complete Practice 8 on pages 78-79. Read “Verb Phrase”on pages 79-82.

4. The Little, Brown Handbook (8th edition):

Read Section 12a (pages 255-263) and complete Exercise 1 (p. 258)

Turn in all work assigned by your instructor before you take the Simple Sentence Test.

**The Simple Sentence PRACTICE TEST**

(3 pages, 10¢/page for print jobs in ELC)

PART I: Identify the underlined word(s) in each of the sentences below.

1. Margaret finally admitted the truth about her brother’s annoying habit.

(a) subject

(b) compound subject

(c) verb

(d) compound verb

(e) none of the above

2. They yelled and waved their hats to get the mayor’s attention.

(a) subject

(b) compound subject

(c) verb

(d) compound verb

(e) none of the above

3. Behind the cabinet was a huge roach.

(a) subject

(b) compound subject

(c) verb

(d) compound verb

(e) none of the above

4. Reckless driving can cause a wreck and ruin a reputation.

(a) subject

(b) compound subject

(c) verb

(d) compound verb

(e) none of the above

5. The rain storm moved through the southern counties and surprised the residents with record low temperatures.

(a) subject

(b) compound subject

(c) verb

(d) compound verb

(e) none of the above

6. Ben and I always work hard to make good grades in our courses.

(a) subject

(b) compound subject

(c) verb

(d) compound verb

(e) none of the above

7. Planning and scheming will not replace lost opportunities.

(a) subject

(b) compound subject

(c) verb

(d) compound verb

(e) none of the above

8. Credit card companies advertise through direct mail and on the radio.

(a) subject

(b) compound subject

(c) verb

(d) compound verb

(e) none of the above

9. My brother and the woman from across the street built a covered patio on the back of her house.

(a) subject

(b) compound subject

(c) verb

(d) compound verb

(e) none of the above

10. Away from the reporters and out of sight of the judge sat the witness.

(a) subject

(b) compound subject

(c) verb

(d) compound verb

(e) none of the above

PART II: Identify the word or words that make up the basic subject in each of the sentences below. (You may need to mark more than one item.)

11. In the back of the attic are a box with old photographs and a sack with paperback books in it.

(a) back (b) attic (c) box (d) photographs (e) sack

12. Two of the easiest things in the world are avoiding work and making excuses for failures.

(a) Two (b) things (c) world (d) work (e) excuses

13. The flickering light from the bad bulb distracts my thoughts from my homework.

(a) flickering (b) light (c) bulb (d) distracts (e) homework

14. The stack of papers revealed a budget problem to the financial auditors.

(a) stack (b) papers (c) revealed (d) problem (e) auditors

15. To run the Boston Marathon has always been considered a great accomplishment for a runner.

(a) To run (b) Boston Marathon (c) considered (d) great (e) accomplishment

16. On the first day of spring break, I was carefree.

(a) first (b) day (c) break (d) I (e) carefree

PART III: Identify the word or words that make up the verb in each of the sentences below.

(You may need to mark more than one item.)

17. DVDs hold an amazing amount of movie footage and contain numerous extra features.

(a) DVDs (b) hold (c) amazing (d) footage (e) contain

18. The sweeper and the other cleaning supplies are stored in the closet in the back room.

(a) sweeper (b) cleaning (c) supplies (d) are (e) stored

19. After the block party, my neighbors will return the borrowed chairs to the community center.

(a) party (b) neighbors (c) will return (d) borrowed (e) community

20. My study partner, Angela, is a nursing major.

(a) partner (b)Angela (c) is (d) nursing (e) major

Answer Key: Simple Sentence Practice Test

Part I:

1. A

2. D

3. E

4. A

5. D

6. C

7. B

8. C

9. B

10. A

Part II:

11. C and E

12. A

13. B

14. A

15. A

16. D

Part III:

17. B and E

18. D and E

19. C

20. C