

# Sentences, Complete Subjects, and Complete Predicates!

A **sentence** is a group of words that expresses a complete thought. To express a complete thought, a sentence has to have two parts: a **subject** and a **predicate**. You can make sure that you have a sentence in front of you if you can answer the question *who did what?* The “who” is your **subject**. The “did what” is the **predicate**. If you’re missing one or the other part of that question, you have a sentence fragment and it doesn’t express a complete thought.

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The **complete subject** is the **main word** (noun or pronoun usually) of a sentence plus all of the words that tell *whom* or *what* the sentence is about.

- The fat cat
  - The Statue of Liberty
  - The beautiful eagle
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The **complete predicate** is the **main verb** of a sentence plus all of the words that tell *what the subject is, what the subject does, or what happened to the subject*.

- ate all of its food.
  - stood proudly by the water.
  - soared over the deep canyon.
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Combining a **complete subject** with a **complete predicate** will give you a sentence that expresses a complete thought:

- The fat cat ate all of its food.
- The Statue of Liberty stood proudly by the water.
- The beautiful eagle soared over the deep canyon.

As long as you have a subject and a predicate, you can make a sentence with only *two words*. All of the other words in sentences add detail and make them more specific or more beautiful. Take a look at these tiny sentences that express a complete thought:

- We ate.
- Meredith sang.
- Clarence played.
- School ended.

Power tip for finding where the complete subject ends and the complete predicate starts: find the verb. In most cases, when you find the verb, you have found the beginning of the complete predicate. Take a look at these examples from the novel *The Summer of the Swans* by Betsy Byars.

- The dog shifted uneasily without opening his eyes. (*shifted* is the verb)
- She put the stick in and handed it to him. (*put* and *handed* are the verbs)
- Sara lifted them out of the sink with two spoons. (*lifted* is the verb)
- Aunt Willie left the room abruptly. (*left* is the verb)
- Sara paused again. (*paused* is the verb)

Don't forget that there aren't only action verbs! There are also "state of being" verbs, also known as "linking verbs", since they link a word in the subject with a word in the predicate. Just like with action verbs, when you find the state of being verb, you have found the beginning of the complete predicate.

The most common state of being verbs are the forms of the irregular verb "to be". Memorize these eight right now to make your life lovely:

am	is	are
was	were	
be	being	been

Take a look at these examples from the novel *Flora and Ulysses* by Kate DiCamillo.

- Flora Belle Buckman was in her room at her desk. (*was* is the verb)
- Those were the exact words of the contract. (*were* is the verb)
- For a cynic, I am a surprisingly helpful person. (*am* is the verb)
- He was just so happy. (*was* is the verb)
- Flora is very lonely. (*is* is the verb)