Two very important elements in every clause are the subject and the verb. **The verb is the action part, and the subject has to do with who or what is performing the action.**

**EXAMPLE:** The black bear pulled the honey from the tree.

Which word tells you something you could do? In other words, which word is action? Yes, **pulled** is the verb.

Now, look at the same sentence. Who did the pulling? Yes, the bear did it! **Bear**, then, is the subject.

**TRY THIS ONE:** The tired old dog wobbled down the road.

Which is the action word? Yes, it’s **wobbled**. Who did the wobbling? Yes, the **dog** did it!

**NOW IT’S YOUR TURN. PLEASE UNDERLINE THE SUBJECT ONCE AND THE VERB TWICE.**

1. The wind blew through the trees.
2. The clerk typed the letter.
3. Her husband caught the thief.
4. He gave me a gift.
5. Dr. Doolittle talked to animals.
6. My friend baked the cookies.
7. Henry drove to his appointment.
8. Sue dropped an egg.
9. The woman drank the juice.
10. The children laughed loudly.

*YOU MAY CHECK YOUR ANSWERS AT THE END OF THE PACKET.*

**HELPING VERBS**

Often in sentences (independent clauses) action words get help; thus, we have the term, helping verbs. **Following are some commonly used helping verbs:** will, shall, has, had, have, can, may, might, do, does, did, just, could, should, would, and all forms of the verb be.
Check the following list:

be  shall be  should be
being  will be  would be
has been  can be  can be
is  have been  could be
are  had been  should have been
was  shall have been  would have been
were  will have been  could have been

DIRECTIONS: Underline the subject of each sentence and the verb phrase. The verb phrase is the action verb and the helping verb(s).

1. Carol has chosen her career carefully.
2. Everyone was holding his card.
3. Sarah was hiding the new toy.
4. The instructors were disappointed by the news.
5. The long wait could have caused him to become nervous.
6. That little tale never should have been told.
7. This book has been read frequently.
8. The class must have been dismissed early.
9. Paul can make multiple copies very quickly.
10. Jane is being helped by the tutor.

Some verbs do not show action. They are called “be” words: be, am, is, are, was, were, and been.

EXAMPLE #1: This is good news.
The pronoun “this” is the subject. The verb in the sentence is “is.” Certainly, none of the “be” words express action; however, they do link the subject with another word in the sentence.

EXAMPLE #2: I am glad to hear it.
The pronoun “I” is the subject. The verb “am” links the subject with the word “glad” which describes “I.”
TRY THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES. UNDERLINE THE SUBJECT ONCE AND THE LINKING VERB TWICE.

1. He was certain of the election.
2. A party is always fun.
3. The plane is late.
4. A crew is in the plane.
5. Faster travel will be possible soon.
6. The cost was high.
7. That train has been late every night.
8. I am sad today.
9. The students were not happy about their grades.
10. Some actors are just fun to watch.

If you haven’t studied prepositional phrases, it’s time for you to ask an advisor for advice because you will need to understand prepositional phrases to be successful in identifying subjects and verbs in sentences. Often prepositional phrases come between the subject and the verb.

EXAMPLE: The plate on the shelf fell. (Plate is the subject; fell is the verb.)

NOW TRY THE FOLLOWING SET OF SENTENCES BY UNDERLINING THE SUBJECT ONCE AND THE VERB TWICE. DRAW A CIRCLE AROUND THE PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES.

1. The new student from France entered the classroom.
2. The children from the school caught a snake.
3. A flock of geese perched on the fence.
4. The scarf around her neck is beautiful.
5. The interest in the letter about the proposal amazed me.
6. Sarah’s reflection on her school experiences entertained everyone.
7. The exciting life of the student interested all of us.
8. The bushes along the path were breathtakingly beautiful.
9. The time for dinner has been set.
10. The chairs between the two tables have been reserved.

Remember that pronouns can be the subject of your sentence, and often a pronoun subject will be followed by a prepositional phrase.

EXAMPLE: None of the girls laughed. (None is the subject; laughed is the verb.)

YOUR TURN! DRAW ONE LINE UNDER THE SUBJECT, TWO LINES UNDER THE VERB, AND A CIRCLE AROUND THE PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE.

1. Some of the teachers were absent this morning.
2. All of the students are good writers.
3. How many of you are taking algebra?
4. Which of the books are on reserve?
5. Most of them have come from another country.
6. Will one of you put this in the box?
7. Both of the trains ran late today.
8. None of the patients had taken the flu shot.
9. Each of the characters has acted before.
10. None of their friends will volunteer to help.

COMPOUND SUBJECTS AND COMPOUND VERBS

In some sentences, two subjects do the action of the verb. (The dog and the cat fought.) In some sentences, the subject performs two actions. (The cat stopped and scratched). In the following sentences, you may practice by drawing one line under the subject(s) and two lines under the verb(s). Remember propositional phrases!!

1. The pilot and the passengers survive the crash.
2. The teacher gave the tests to the students and left the room.
3. Mr. Jones and Ms. Smith will be married Saturday.
4. The mother of the groom will stay with them and cook their meals.
5. Their courage and advice convinced us to follow them.
6. The orchestra and the chorus rose and bowed.
7. Some of the kids in that class yelled and screamed.
8. Bunny and Joan have moved to another city.
9. Tennis, swimming, and golf have been and will be my favorite sports.
10. The president of the college visited our lab and praised the students.

ANSWERS FOR SUBJECT, VERB IDENTIFICATION

Exercise 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECTS</th>
<th>VERBS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wind</td>
<td>blew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clerk</td>
<td>typed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>husband</td>
<td>caught</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he</td>
<td>gave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Doolittle</td>
<td>talked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>friend</td>
<td>baked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>henry</td>
<td>drove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she</td>
<td>dropped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>woman</td>
<td>drank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children</td>
<td>laughed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exercise 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carol</th>
<th>has chosen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyone</td>
<td>was holding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>was hiding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instructors</td>
<td>were disappointed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wait</td>
<td>could have caused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tale</td>
<td>should have been told</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>book</td>
<td>has been read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>class</td>
<td>must have been dismissed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>can make</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>is being helped</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUBJECT AND VERB IDENTIFICATION

Exercise 3

1. He was
2. party is
3. plane is
4. crew is
5. travel will be
6. cost was
7. train has been
8. I am
9. students were
10. actors are

Exercise 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECTS</th>
<th>VERBS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>student (from France)</td>
<td>entered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children (from the school)</td>
<td>caught</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flock (of geese)</td>
<td>perched (on the fence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scarf (around her neck)</td>
<td>is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interest (in the letter)</td>
<td>(about the proposal) amazed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reflection</td>
<td>entertained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(on her school experiences)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>life (of the students)</td>
<td>interested (of us)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bushes (along the path)</td>
<td>were</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time (for dinner)</td>
<td>has been set</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chairs</td>
<td>have been reserved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(between the two tables)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exercise 5

1. Some (of the teachers) were
2. all (of the students) are
3. many (of you) are taking
4. which (of the books) are (on reserve)
5. most (of them) have come (from another country)
6. one (of you) will put (in the box)
7. both (of the trains) ran
8. none (of the patients) had taken

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9. each (of the characters) has acted
10. none (on their friends) will volunteer

1. pilot, passengers survived
2. teacher gave, left
3. Mr. Jones, Mr. Smith will be married
4. mother will stay, cook
5. courage, advice convinced
6. orchestra, chorus rose, bowed
7. some yelled, screamed
8. Bunny, Joan have moved
9. tennis, swimming, golf have been, will be
10. president visited, praised

Website for Practice

http://wwwnew.towson.edu/ows/indexexercises.htm
Towson Education Online Exercises – Go to Parts of Speech/Grammar.