

The Sentence Core

Every complete sentence contains a **subject** and an **inflected verb**. These two sentence components, along with any other essential parts of the sentence's predicate, form the sentence core.

The Subject

The subject is the person, place, or thing about whom the sentence is written.

- Example: *The dog outside is barking again.*

The subject of this sentence is "The dog outside."

Sometimes the subject is just a single noun, as in this example:

- Example: *Thomas cooks bacon and eggs with tomatoes every morning for breakfast.*

The subject of the above sentence is "Thomas."



Sometimes the subject is a noun phrase, like in this example:

- Example: *My mother and father are coming to dinner on Friday.*

The subject here is "My mother and father."

Sometimes the subject is more complex. It might not even look much like a noun at all, as in this example.

- Example: *How I behave at my in-laws' house is no concern of yours.*

"How I behave at my in-laws' house" is the subject. It is a clause, functioning as the subject of this sentence.

How can we tell that this clause is the subject?

1. We can substitute a single word like *That* or *This* for the clause and the sentence would still be grammatically complete.
 - Example: *This is no concern of yours.*
2. This clause comes before the inflected verb, "is." In our English grammar system, subjects usually precede verbs.

Exception: Inverted Sentences

Sometimes, a sentence's basic structure can be inverted, often by placing the word *There* at the beginning of the sentence:

- Example: *A lot of people are visiting our campus today.*
- Inverted: *There are a lot of people visiting our campus today.*

So what's the subject of an inverted sentence? The subject of the sentence "*There are a lot of people visiting our campus today*" is the same as the subject of the original sentence, "*A lot of people are visiting our campus today.*"

The Inflected Verb

An inflected verb is a verb that has been given tense (present, past, future) and agrees with its subject (plural or singular).

Here's an example of a verb that is NOT inflected.

- Example: *Jake run to the store.*

We can inflect this verb by changing it so that it has tense and agrees with its subject.

- Example: *Jake runs to the store.* Now the verb agrees with the subject, and it's in present tense.

We could also make the verb past tense...

- Example: *Jake ran to the store.*

Or future tense.

- Example: *Jake will run to the store.*

Note: Words like *will, can, do, would, should, could, must, may, and might* are what we call modals. They also can be part of the inflected verb, as can forms of the verbs *be* and *have*.



- Example: *Jake is running to the store.* (form of *be* + verb)
- Example: *Jake has run to the store.* (form of *have* + verb).

Once you are able to consistently identify the subject and the inflected verb, you will more easily recognize when a sentence is grammatically complete and when it is not.