

18.5 Complements

Often, a subject and verb alone can express a complete thought. For example, ***Buds fly*** can stand by itself as a sentence. Even though it contains only two words, a subject and a verb. Other times, however, the thought begun by a subject and its verb must be completed with other words. For example, ***Toni bought***, ***The eyewitness told***, ***Our mechanic is***, ***Richard feels***, and ***Marco seems*** all contain a subject and verb, but none expresses a complete thought. All these ideas need complements.

18.5.1: A complement is a word or group of words that completes the meaning of a sentence.

Complements are usually nouns, pronouns, or adjectives. They are located right after or very close to the verb. The complements answer questions about the subject or verb in order to complete the sentence.

S = SUBJECT, AV = ACTION VERB, LV = LINKING VERB, IO = INDIRECT OBJECT, DO = DIRECT OBJECT, PA = PREDICATE ADJECTIVE, PN = PREDICATE NOUN (NOMINATIVE)

Toni bought cars. S – AV – DO.

The eyewitness told us the story. S – AV – IO – DO.

Our mechanic is a genius. S – LV – PN.

Richard feels sad. S – LV – PA.

Direct Objects

18.5.2 A direct object is a noun or pronoun that receives the action of a verb.

You can find a direct object by asking **What?** or **Whom?** after an action verb.

My dog Champ likes a good scratch.

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Compound Direct Objects

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The lizard eats crickets and other bugs. S – AV – DO + DO.

18.5.3 A direct object is never an adverb or the noun or pronoun at the end of a prepositional phrase.

Joanne drove her new sports car. S – AV – DO.

Joanne drove quickly. S – AV – ADVERB.

Joanne drove through the town. S – AV – PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE

18.5.4: A direct object in a question will sometimes be found before the verb.

In normal word order, a direct object follows a verb. In questions that are in inverted word order, however, the direct object often appears before the verb and subject.

Question: What did Mary play at her recital?

Reworded in normal word order: Mary did play what at her recital.

Indirect Object

18.5.5: An **indirect object** is a noun or pronoun that comes after an action verb and before a direct object. It names the person or thing to which something is given or for which something is done.

Sentences with a direct object may also contain another kind of complement, called an **indirect object**. A sentence cannot have an indirect object unless it has a direct object.

An indirect object answers the questions **To** or **for whom?** or **To** or **for what?** after an action verb. To find an indirect object, find the direct object first. Then, ask the appropriate question.

Jane told them the story. S – AV – IO – DO.

(Told **what?** [story]) – (Told the story **to whom?** [them])

Keep in mind the following pattern: **Subject - Verb - Indirect Object - Direct Object**.

An **indirect object** will almost always come between the **verb** and the **direct object** in a sentence.

Compound Indirect Objects

Like a subject, verb, or direct object, an indirect object can be compound.

Dave assigned each car and truck a new parking place. S – AV – IO + IO – DO.

18.5.6: An Indirect object never follows the preposition to or for in a sentence.

Father bought him a car. S – AV – IO – DO.

Father bought a car for him. S – AV – DO – PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE.

Paul gave a sandwich to Jerome. S – AV – DO – PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE.

Subject Compliments

Both direct objects and indirect objects are complements used with action verbs. Linking verbs, however, have a different kind of complement called a subject complement. Like direct and indirect objects, subject complements add information to a sentence. However, subject complements give readers more information about the subject of the sentence, not the verb.

18.5.7: A subject complement is a noun, pronoun, or adjective that follows a linking verb and provides important details about the subject.

Predicate Nouns and Pronouns

Both nouns and pronouns are sometimes used as subject complements after linking verbs.

18.5.8: A predicate noun or predicate pronoun follows a linking verb and renames or identifies the subject of the sentence.

It is easy to recognize predicate nouns and predicate pronouns. The linking verb acts much like an equal sign between the subject and the noun or pronoun that follows the verb. Both the subject and the predicate noun or pronoun refer to the same person or thing.

Ronnie will be the captain of our team. (The predicate noun *captain* renames the subject *Ronnie*.)

Predicate Adjectives

A predicate adjective can also follow a linking verb.

18.5.9: A predicate adjective follows a linking verb and describes the subject of the sentence.

A predicate adjective is considered part of the complete predicate of a sentence because it comes after a linking verb. In spite of this, a predicate adjective does not modify the words in the predicate. Instead, it describes the noun or pronoun that serves as the subject of the linking verb.

The flight to Houston was swift. S – PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE – LV – PA.

Predicate Adjectives and Their Comparative and Superlative Forms

The *comparative form* of the predicate adjective is used when two items are being compared. The *superlative form* is used when three or more items are being compared.

Use *-er* or *more* to form the comparative degree of most one- or two-syllable predicate adjectives.

Use *-est* or *most* to form the superlative of most one- or two-syllable predicate adjectives. When the superlative form is used, the article *the* is often added.

The flight to Houston was swifter than the flight to Dallas.

(For adjectives ending in *y*, replace *they* with *-ier* and *-iest*.)