

ESSENTIAL ENGLISH GRAMMAR

All the grammar really needed for speech and comprehension, without trivia or archaic material, clearly presented with many shortcuts, timesavers . . . self-study or class use, for a beginner, as a refresher . . . an ideal supplement to phrase study . . . the most efficient system for adults with limited learning time.

PHILIP GUCKER

Essential English Grammar

By
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Part I

THE ESSENTIALS
OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR

In Part I you will find a clear and concise summary of English grammar: its forms, principles, and basic terminology. The material is presented in non-technical language and in easy, natural steps, beginning with the structure of the simple sentence, and continuing through the various parts of speech and other common sentence elements to the more difficult constructions. All terms and forms are amply illustrated with models and practice exercises. The section ends with “A Dictionary of Grammatical Terms,” in Chapter 20, which will be useful for ready reference.

This section provides the basic principles which you will be able to apply in Part II.

I

THE SENTENCE: SUBJECT AND PREDICATE

Subject and Predicate

The basic unit of written expression is the sentence.

A sentence is a group of words that says something, all by itself. It is complete; it can stand alone. It is followed by a period (or, in certain cases, a question mark or an exclamation point).

In grammatical terms, a sentence is a group of words that contains a *subject* and a *predicate*. The subject is the person or thing you're talking about. The predicate (to predicate means to say or declare) is what you're saying about it. For example:

We won.

The subject is *we*; the predicate is *won*.

Mr. Canby's house is at the end of the road.

The subject is *Mr. Canby's house*; the predicate is *is at the end of the road*.

It is fundamental that a subject or a predicate by itself doesn't say anything. It isn't a sentence. In order to form a sentence you must have *both a subject and a predicate*.

My favorite program	has been discontinued for the summer.
---------------------	---------------------------------------

She	is always busy doing odd jobs around the house.
-----	---

Many of the members	have resigned.
---------------------	----------------

The proof of the pudding	is in the eating.
--------------------------	-------------------

Transposed Order

You notice, of course, that in these sentences the subject comes first; that's the normal order. But you can't depend upon that. Often, for emphasis or variety, we put the predicate first (transposed order—turned around).

The winning run came across the plate. (normal order)

Across the plate came the winning run. (transposed order)

In such a sentence either way is possible; the writer has his choice.

Each example below of transposed order has been rewritten to indicate the more usual subject-predicate order:

Down the street came a ragged procession of children.

(A ragged procession of children came down the street.)

Now comes the fun.

(The fun comes now.)

On the other side of the tracks was a car dump.

(A car dump was on the other side of the tracks.)

Even more commonly the predicate may be split up, part of it coming at the beginning of the sentence, part at the end. This order is sometimes called *mixed*.

At the beginning of the season Klein was benched for weak hitting.

(Klein was benched at the beginning of the season for weak hitting.)

Suddenly I heard a voice.

(I suddenly heard a voice.)

Common sense tells you that the expressions "at the beginning of the season" and "suddenly" are not part of the person you're talking about (the subject), but part of what you're saying about him (the predicate).

Practice in Recognizing Subjects and Predicates

Draw a single line under any word that belongs with the subject, a double line under any word that belongs with the predicate.

Every word in the sentence must be underlined. Example: After dinner we all sat around and told stories. (Answers on page 151)

1. One of the covers is missing.
2. Mrs. Wilkinson settled down comfortably in her favorite rocker.
3. Many years ago I heard the same story with a different ending.
4. New countries in Africa and the Near East have become very important in the U.N.
5. The possibility of a voyage to the moon is no longer remote.
6. Experience is the best teacher.
7. Stamped at the head of the appeal was the single word: "Refused."
8. After many years his father returned.
9. Slowly, but with increasing speed, the water began to seep through the cracks.
10. One of the most important men in the community has gone.

KINDS OF SENTENCES

Declarative, Interrogative, Imperative, and Exclamatory Sentences*

So far, every sentence you have been working with has stated or *declared* something. Such a sentence is called *declarative*. It is followed by a period.

That is a picture of my father.

A car has just stopped in front of the house.

There are three other kinds of sentences.

An *interrogative* sentence asks a question:

Is that a picture of your father?

Has the car stopped?

Note that a question mark is used.

An *imperative* sentence commands or requests:

Please show me the picture of your father.

Look at the license plate.

Use a period after an imperative sentence.

An *exclamatory* sentence expresses strong and sudden emotion:

Stop that car!

What a picture!

How old he looks!

Isn't that a shame!

How terrible!

* Classified according to the purpose for which a sentence is used. Classification according to structure will be discussed in Chapter 18.

The exclamatory sentence is different from the others: it doesn't follow any rules for sentence structure. In fact, as you see in these examples, it may look like a question or a command. There are only three things you can say about it:

1. It is usually short.
2. It is always dramatic or emotional.
3. It takes an exclamation point.

At this point we're going to ignore it, since the rules for subject and predicate do not apply.

Finding the Subject and Predicate

Interrogative and imperative sentences introduce some interesting problems in finding subject and predicate.

Interrogative sentences are often in transposed order. To find the subject and predicate of such a sentence you must rephrase it as a statement (the answer expected):

Was that man at the game?
(that man was at the game)

This was partly transposed. The subject is *that man*.

Who took my pencil?
(he took my pencil)

This was in normal order. The subject is *who*.

Where is the best road from here to the coast?
(the best road from here to the coast is . . .)

Transposed. The subject is *the best road from here to the coast*.

How many times must we do this?
(we must do this . . . times)

Partly transposed. The subject is *we*.

Imperative sentences also have a slight peculiarity. The subject is nearly always the word *you*, even though it isn't expressed. It is called *you understood*.

- (you) Please mail this letter for me.
- (you) Take your time.
- (you) Let me off at Canal Street.

Practice in Identifying Kinds of Sentences

Label the following sentences *D* for declarative, *Int* for interrogative, or *Imp* for imperative. Example: Please leave your wraps at the door. (*Imp*) (Answers on page 151)

1. It is very important to remember this date. ()
2. Remember this date. ()
3. Why did you take the book? ()
4. He asked me about the book. ()
5. In a situation of this kind you should take extra precautions. ()
6. Take extra precautions. ()
7. Please don't waste my time. ()
8. Why has there been so much controversy about the identity of the criminal? ()
9. Who will be the first man on the moon? ()
10. He wants to know why. ()

More Practice in Recognizing Subjects and Predicates

Draw a single line under any word that belongs with the subject, a double line under any word that belongs with the predicate. If the subject is *you* understood, write the word in. Example: Which of the pencils has soft lead? (Answers on page 151)

1. Take cover.
2. Only one of his many former followers remained loyal.
3. Which road will take me to the coast?
4. After Labor Day the rates are lowered considerably.
5. Where does your friend Stanley keep his car?
6. You will need a great many more tools for such a job.
7. Arrange the cards in alphabetical order.
8. Please don't bother with any of my things.
9. When does the last train for Baldwin leave today?
10. Only then did we realize the seriousness of our predicament.