



Grammar Help Sheet: Subjects and Predicates

Every sentence has two parts. One part tells what we are speaking about, and the other part tells what we say about the first part. One part is called the subject, and the other part is called the predicate.

The subject of a sentence represents that of which something is said.

The predicate of a sentence tells what is said of the subject.

Let's study the following sentences for subjects and predicates.

1. Two little ragged boys play in the yard.
2. Under the tree was a brown squirrel.
3. Send the package by mail.
4. Is English history a difficult subject?

Sentence 1

What is the subject? What are we talking about in this sentence? Two little ragged boys. This is the complete subject. Now, which word in the complete subject is the subject substantive or simple subject? Boys is the simple subject. Two, little, and ragged are simply words that describe the principal word boys.

What is the predicate of this sentence? What does the subject do? Play in the yard. This is the complete predicate. Now, which word in the complete predicate is the verb? Play. In the yard merely tells where they play. Words or groups of words that tell where, how, or when an action is done belong in the complete predicate.

Sentence 2

This is a little more difficult to divide because the subject does not come before the predicate, as in the first sentence. What is the subject? A brown squirrel. This is the complete subject. Squirrel is the simple subject. What is said about the subject? Was under the tree. This is the complete predicate. Was is the verb. Under the tree tells where it was, so it is part of the complete predicate.

Sentence 3

This is an imperative sentence. In an imperative sentence, the complete and simple subject you is understood.

What is the subject supposed to do? Send the package by mail. This is the complete predicate. Send is the verb. The package by mail tells what to send and how to send it.

Sentence 4

This is an interrogative sentence in which the subject follows the predicate verb. The complete subject is English history. The simple subject is history.

What is asked about the subject? Is a difficult subject. This is the complete predicate. Is is the predicate verb.

Remember that every word in a sentence is either a part of the complete subject or a part of the complete predicate. All that belongs to the complete subject should have one line drawn under it, and all that belongs to the complete predicate should have two lines drawn under it.

Remember also that the simple subject is a part of the complete subject and that the predicate verb is a part of the complete predicate.

Remember that is, are, was, has, and have are always predicate verbs or parts of verb phrases.