

## Parts of Speech: Verb

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You will become better at knowing and using different parts of speech. This activity will sharpen your skills with verbs, including verb tense and subject-verb agreement.

### Why are we doing this?

- ◆ Parts of speech (verb, noun, adjective, etc.) are the “tools of the trade” in writing. Not knowing what they are and how to identify and use them is like being a plumber and not knowing what a pipe and a faucet are.
- ◆ As you write in this course, the teacher will talk to you about the verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and other parts of speech you use in your writing. If you don't know what he's talking about, you won't be able to improve your writing.

### When you're finished, you will be able to:

- ◆ Identify verbs in sentences.
- ◆ Understand subject-verb agreement and use proper subject-verb agreement in writing.
- ◆ Understand verb tense and use proper verb tense in writing.

### What you will do:

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1. Complete the three major activities in this learning activity, including 1) verbs, 2) subject-verb agreement, and 3) verb tense.
2. When finished, turn in this entire packet.
2. Complete the three homework assignments in this activity.

## Part of speech: VERB



You've heard it for years: "a verb is an action word", like "run", "jump", "play". But there are verbs that don't indicate action, like "think" and "see". You also heard that a verb can indicate "a state of being". What does that mean, anyway?

Here's an easier definition. There are two parts:

1. If a **noun** (a person, a dog, a car, a tornado, fire, cold, depression, etc.):

- ◆ did it,
- ◆ does it,
- ◆ is **doing** it, or
- ◆ **will do** it, it's a verb.

2. Also, these words are verbs: **am, are, is, was, were, will be, would be.**

That's it! When you want to know if a word is a verb, ask yourself: Can something (a noun) do it? If yes, it's a verb.

Every sentence must have a verb. In English, the verb usually comes after the noun that did it. Here are some examples:

### If a noun did it, it's a verb

Look at the verb in these sentences. In each case, the noun (usually before it) did it. (Verbs that happened in the past are called past tense verbs.)

- ◆ <sup>N</sup> Rick <sup>V</sup> jumped on the table. (Rick is the noun, and he jumped.)
- ◆ <sup>N</sup> Rachel and Angie <sup>N</sup> <sup>V</sup> sang in the school choir. (You can have more than one noun together; in this case "Rachel and Angie" are the nouns.)
- ◆ The drummer's <sup>N</sup> depression <sup>V</sup> made him <sup>V</sup> quit the band. (The depression is the noun, and it is the depression that made him quit.)
- ◆ <sup>N</sup> The hurricane <sup>V</sup> broke the gas pipeline. (The hurricane is the noun. It broke the pipeline.)

## If a noun does it, it's a verb

Here are some examples of verbs that a noun does now, or usually does. (This is called “present tense”.)

- ◆ Birds fly.
- ◆ Dogs like steaks.
- ◆ Kindness brings out the best in us.
- ◆ Mary walks two miles every morning.

## If a noun is doing it, it's a verb

If a noun is doing something now, it's called the present progressive tense of the verb. Here are some examples.

- ◆ The candle is flickering in the wind.
- ◆ The bird is flying far over my head.
- ◆ Mary is walking quickly as she is talking on the phone.
- ◆ The fire is consuming the house.

## If a noun will do it, it's a verb

If a noun will do something in the future (or could, or might), it's called the future tense of the verb. The word “will” shows future tense in English. Here are some examples.

- ◆ Jeff will wash his truck tomorrow.
- ◆ Honesty will get you an awful lot of respect. (“Honesty” is the noun.)
- ◆ Tomorrow it will be cloudy, and it will rain heavily.

## These are also verbs: am, are, is, was, were

The verb “to be” means “to exist”, or “to take place”. The interesting (or annoying) thing about “to be” is that it totally changes the way it looks depending on how it's used. “To be” can change to **am**, **are**, **is**, **was**, **were**, or **will be**. You already know how they change; you know what these words mean: I **am**, you **are**, he **is**, she **is**, we **are**, they **are**, I **was**, you **were**, he **was**, she **was**, they **were**, we **were**. Just keep in mind that **am**, **are**, **is**, **was**, **were**, and **will be** are verbs.

Here are some examples of the forms of the verb “to be”. Even though it’s a verb, it doesn’t always show action. But, according to grammar, they’re still verbs. Every sentence must have a verb.

- ◆ I **am** educated.
- ◆ The barbecue grill **is** rusty.
- ◆ The students **were** exhausted after the spelling bee.
- ◆ Marcia **was** thrilled when she received the job offer.

### More examples of verbs:

Howard **V** walked down the street, **V** trying to convince himself **V** that everything would be all right. A few minutes ago, **V** Margaret, his daughter, **V** burst into tears because her **V** hamster died. She **V** blamed her father. “You killed him!” she **V** screamed, **V** slamming her bedroom door. But, Howard **V** knew **V** better. He **V** fed little Hattie right on schedule. He **V** knew he **V** gave the little furry beast half a stalk of celery, and also **V** put some hamster food in the cage. Howard **V** was worried, **V** however. His daughter and his wife **V** were really angry and it **V** was too late to **V** buy another hamster.

## Identify verbs:

### Instructions:

Read the following sentences. Identify the verbs by putting a little “V” in a circle above each noun. (10 points total)

### Example:

Edward <sup>(V)</sup> loves orchids. Suzanne, however, <sup>(V)</sup> strives for perfection in music.

1. Cats have fur and sharp claws.
2. Even though my pet rat chewed a hole in my jeans, I still love watching him eat raisins and sniff around for an olive which I hide under the newspaper in his cage.
3. My car needs a lot of work. Oil is leaking from the engine, and the power steering pump squeaks like a crazed mouse in a cheese factory.
4. Henry and Maria bought a big brown house near Wilmington.
5. The cashier put some money in the drawer, and some money in his pockets. He was caught on camera, arrested by the police, and sent to prison in Phoenix.
6. Football is a popular sport in the United States. You can feel the excitement in the crowd at a game; the soft glow of moonlight contrasts with the brilliant plays of the two teams in their battle on the field.
7. Love, fear, and guilt can be powerful emotions. Unfortunately, so is hate. Music and art reflect these emotions. The canvas, the paintbrush, the violin, and the piano are some media through which people express their feelings.
8. It's difficult to tell the sex of a rhinoceros. A woman once asked a zookeeper, "Is that a male or a female rhinoceros?" The zookeeper replied, "That, madam, is a question that should concern only another rhinoceros."



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Due: \_\_\_\_\_

### English Homework: Identifying verbs

TEAR  
OFF  
AND  
TURN IN

#### Instructions:

Create ten sentences (5 shorter and 5 longer). Identify each verb by putting a "V" in a circle above each verb.

#### Examples:

The fireworks <sup>(V)</sup> exploded in the sky.  
It was a <sup>(V)</sup> beautiful sight.

HOMWORK

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_





## Subject - verb agreement

Subject-verb agreement is an important part of writing correctly in English. Here are some sentences with incorrect subject-verb agreement:

My mother were born in New York.  
 Steve and Tony is good friends.  
 Sharon are always talking on the phone.  
 The three little dogs plays in the back yard every day.  
 My computer, even though it's old, work very well.

You might immediately see the problem with these simple sentences. The problem is that the subjects and verbs don't agree. But what about a more complicated sentence, like this:

Because of the many years they were forced apart by the war, my mother and sister, each and every night regardless of the weather, get together, forget about their problems, talk about the day's events, and tells each other little jokes.

Can you spot the problem? It's still subject-verb agreement. Let's learn a little more.

We just learned what a verb is. Every sentence must have a verb. But, what's a sentence subject?

### Sentence subjects

The subject of a sentence is the "who" or "what" the sentence is about.

Most of the time, the subject of a sentence is the first thing (or things) mentioned in a sentence. For example, if you're going to tell me about a friend of yours named Jose, the first thing you'll probably say is "My friend Jose..." Jose is the subject of the sentence. If you're going to tell me about your dog, the first thing you'll probably say is "My dog..." Your dog is the subject of the sentence. By the way, these two example sentences have singular subjects. That will be very important later.

vocabulary: **ADJECTIVE**

**singular**

In grammar, when there's **one** of something.

The subject isn't always the first thing in a sentence. Read these examples; the subject in each sentence is underlined.

Every month, the moon is full.  
 Without warning, the roof collapsed.  
 Running down the street, little Ronnie started crying.

Even though the subject is not the first thing in the sentence, you can still figure out the subject by asking *who* or *what* the sentence is talking about.

So far, we've been talking about singular subjects. However, you might have two friends named Jose and Julie. In that case, you'd say "Jose and Julie..." Or, you might have four dogs. In that case, you'd say "My four dogs..." These sentences have plural subjects.

vocabulary: **ADJECTIVE**

### plural

In grammar, when there's **more than one** of something.

In order to get subject-verb agreement right, you **must** figure out if the subject of the sentence is singular or plural. Let's practice now.

### Instructions:

Read the following sentences. Figure out the subject of each sentence: *who* or *what* the sentence is about. Identify the subject of each sentence by underlining it. Then circle "singular subject" or "plural subject" for each sentence.

### Example:

1. John's car is red.

circle one: singular subject      plural subject

2. Tweety, Sylvester, and Bugs Bunny are famous cartoon characters.

circle one: singular subject      plural subject

1. The dog barked all night long.

circle one:    singular subject      plural subject

2. Katie, Janice, and Veronica have been friends for almost ten years.

circle one:    singular subject      plural subject

3. Rain is good for flowers and trees, but not so good for a Saturday afternoon softball game.

circle one:    singular subject      plural subject

4. Eventually, my parents saw that it was useless to argue with me.

circle one:    singular subject      plural subject

5. At the end of the block, by the entrance to the park, stood the big purple house.

circle one:    singular subject      plural subject

6. Of course, my little sister started crying when the movie got scary.

circle one:    singular subject    plural subject

7. The fenceposts have rotted from years of neglect.

circle one:    singular subject    plural subject

8. My neighbor's piano is a beautiful instrument; it is over seven feet long and has a case that has been polished shiny black.

circle one:    singular subject    plural subject

9. Eventually, after the dust had settled and everybody calmed down, the two boys shook hands and promised never to fight again; within a month, ironically, they were fast friends and went fishing on the river by their house every weekend.

circle one:    singular subject    plural subject

10. Leaving a trail of destruction behind it, the powerful, merciless, writhing tornado disappeared into the clouds as quickly as it appeared.

circle one:    singular subject    plural subject

Okay, now you're an expert at identifying the subject of sentences. This brings us to the next topic of making sure that the verbs in your sentences agree with the subjects.

## Making verbs agree with subjects

Verbs can be singular or plural, just like subjects. (Subjects are always nouns.) This brings us to one of the illogical things about the English language: verbs are the opposite of nouns (subjects) when it comes to making them plural. Singular verbs end with "s" or "es", and plural verbs don't:

| <u>Plural verbs</u> | <u>Singular verbs</u> |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| run                 | run <b>s</b>          |
| think               | think <b>s</b>        |
| learn               | learn <b>s</b>        |
| stretch             | stretch <b>es</b>     |
| brush               | brush <b>es</b>       |
| (they) are          | is, am, (you) are     |
| were                | was                   |

vocabulary: **ADJECTIVE**

### logical

When something works or happens the way you expect it to. If you drop an egg, it's **logical** to expect that it will break.

vocabulary: **ADJECTIVE**

### illogical

Not logical; not working or happening the way you'd expect. If you never change the oil in your car, it's **illogical** to expect the engine will last for 100,000 miles.

So, here's the big rule: **when a subject is singular, you must use a singular verb. When a subject is plural, you must use a plural verb.** Remember that the "s" and "es" thing are the opposite for subjects and verbs.

**Singular subject**  
(verbs must have “s” or “es”)

The dog barks.  
My father cooks a big breakfast.  
The machine always breaks down.  
Mike, my friend, likes telescopes.  
The girl brushes her cat every day.

**Plural subject**  
(verbs do not have “s” or “es”)

The dogs bark.  
My parents cook dinner together.  
Machines always break down.  
Mike and Steve, my friends, like baseball.  
The children brush the floor to keep it clean.

Let's take another look at the five problem sentences from page 8:

**LEARNING PLAN**

My mother were born in New York.  
Steve and Tony is good friends.  
Sharon are always talking on the phone.  
The three little dogs plays in the back yard every day.  
My computer, even though it's old, work very well.

As you now see, the problem with these sentences is that the subject of the sentence doesn't agree with the verb in the sentence. There are two ways to fix this problem: you can either change the subject or change the verb. Here's how to do it:

Sentences fixed by changing the subject:

My mother **and father** were born in New York.  
**Steve is** a good friend.  
Sharon **and her sister** are always talking on the phone.  
The **little dog** plays in the back yard every day.  
My **two computers**, even though they're old, **work** very well.

Sentences fixed by changing the verb: (in most cases, when you're fixing your grammar, you will fix subject-verb agreement this way)

My mother **was** born in New York.  
Steve and Tony **are** good friends.  
Sharon **is** always talking on the phone.  
The three little dogs **play** in the back yard every day.  
My computer, even though it's old, **works** very well.

Now it's your turn to try it!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Your turn to create!

### Instructions:

Think up five sentences and write them so they have a subject-verb agreement problem. Then, under each sentence, rewrite it so it is correct. (5 points total)

### Example:

1. I is learning more in this class than I thought possible.

corrected: I am learning more in this class than I thought possible.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

corrected: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

corrected: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

corrected: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

corrected: \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

corrected: \_\_\_\_\_

Congratulations! You are now an expert on subject-verb agreement. Do the homework on the next page & turn it in.

## English Homework: Subject-verb agreement

### Instructions:

Read this short story and circle all the verbs that don't agree with the subjects of their sentences. Not all the sentences have subject-verb agreement problems.

TEAR  
OFF  
AND  
TURN IN

Some people think the moon has the power to affect the behavior of animals. Who knows if that's true? My dog usually bark more during certain times of the month, but I never really noticed the moon when she bark her head off. My two sisters, who are younger and less sophisticated than me, thinks that the dogs bark because they hear things that we can't. But, if that were the case, why would the dog bark more during certain times of the month?

I always likes learning new things, so I try to ask more people about this issue. My grandmother says that it's because the dogs go into heat, whatever that means. How could the dogs be hot during the middle of the winter? I think that she doesn't respects me enough to give me the real answer. But, because she make such delicious cookies, I don't let this bother me.

Other friends give me no help, either. Little Billy just look at me when I ask him about monthly dog barking. And you can forget my older brother; he doesn't gives me the time of day even if he is wearing three watches and standing in a grandfather clock store.

It look like it's time for me to do a little research. My dad have a calendar with the phase of the moon written on it. I'll write down how much barking the dog does each day for a few months. Then, maybe I'll figure out whether it is really the moon that makes little Fido barks at nobody and nothing.





## Verb tense

Verb **tense** means whether the verb is talking about:

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| what's happening now: | <b>present tense</b> (Today I walk)               |
| what happened before: | <b>past tense</b> (Yesterday I walk <b>ed</b> )   |
| what will happen:     | <b>future tense</b> (Tomorrow I <b>will</b> walk) |

You could also think of it this way:

|                        |                     |                    |
|------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Past tense -----       | Present tense ----- | Future tense       |
| Before -----           | Now -----           | After              |
| <u>Yesterday</u> ----- | <u>Today</u> -----  | <u>Tomorrow</u>    |
| I ran                  | I run               | I will run         |
| Sharon studied         | Sharon studies      | Sharon will study  |
| The boys played        | The boys play       | The boys will play |

One of the most common mistakes that writers make is to mix up past and present tense. **When you write, make sure all the verbs are in the same tense.** Here's an example of the sort of mistake that a lot of writers make. Past tense is in **green**, and present tense is in **red**.

The snow **started** falling heavily. Little kids **played** in the snow and **have** snowball fights. The older adults **watched** them, thinking about when they were little, too. All the kids **play** for a long time.

The story starts out in past tense, but uses a few present tense verbs. Don't mix verb tense like that. Double check to ensure that all the verbs you write are in the same tense.

In most cases, when you write a story or a business letter, you will use the past tense.

Keeping this in mind, here's how to fix the "snow" story, above: Change all the verbs to past tense.

The snow **started** falling heavily. Little kids **played** in the snow and **had** snowball fights. The older adults **watched** them, thinking about when they were little, too. All the kids **played** for a long time.

### Past tense often ends in "ed"

Many verbs in English end in "ed" when they are in the past tense, but not all of them, unfortunately. It's another illogical characteristic of English, but we still love the language, don't we?

Verbs that don't end in "ed" when they're in past tense are called "irregular" verbs, and there are hundreds of them. Here are some examples of regular and irregular verbs:

| Regular verbs (past tense ends in "ed") |               |            |
|---|---------------|------------|
| Verb                                    | Present tense | Past tense |
| to learn                                | learn         | learned    |
| to walk                                 | walk          | walked     |
| to talk                                 | talk          | talked     |
| to shovel                               | shovel        | shoveled   |
| to nail                                 | nail          | nailed     |
| to paint                                | paint         | painted    |
| to fix                                  | fix           | fixed      |

| Irregular verbs (past tense doesn't end in "ed") |               |            |
|--|---------------|------------|
| Verb   | Present tense | Past tense |
| to run   | run           | ran        |
| to see   | see           | saw        |
| to be  | am            | was        |
| to build   | build         | built      |
| to eat   | eat           | ate        |
| to feel  | feel          | felt       |
| to sit   | sit           | sat        |
| to speak   | speak         | spoke      |
| ...and there are hundreds more irregular verbs   |               |            |

In almost all cases, when you're asked to write something, you'll use the past tense. Of course, you could choose, as a writer, to use the present tense when writing something short, like the following example. In this case, you have to be careful to make all the verbs be in the present tense:

Gary happens to look out of his window to check on his new car, and sees a strange woman walking suspiciously close to it. He continues to peer out the window and sees the short, red-haired, tense-looking woman slip a small piece of paper under the wiper and run off. Is she truly a stranger? Gary bounds down the steps and runs outside to try to catch the woman, but she is gone. He quickly walks to his car, pulls the paper from under the windshield, nervously reads it, and drops the paper in shock when he sees what it says. Under his breath, he mutters, "Oh my God, it's her." His heart starts pounding in his chest when he realizes, at that moment, that his life has changed forever.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Due: \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:**

Rewrite the story on page 18 about Gary and the mysterious redheaded stranger so that it occurs in the past. You will change all the verbs in the story from present tense to past tense. (10 points total)

**Examples:**

*Gary happened to look out of his window to check on his new car, and saw a strange...*

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