Introduction to sentences and clauses

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The sentence is normally considered to be the largest unit of grammar. Longer stretches of text, such as paragraphs and segments of conversations, are usually regarded as units of discourse. The sentence is principally a unit of written grammar and is normally easily identified by an initial capital letter on the first word and a full stop after the last word. For spoken language, the sentence as a grammatical unit is more problematic (\( \text{\textsuperscript{272a}} \) below).

Sentences are composed of clauses. The clause is the core unit of grammar. A sentence must include at least one main clause (\( \text{\textsuperscript{270}} \) below). A clause consists of two parts: a subject and a predicate. The subject is a noun phrase or its equivalent (e.g. a nominal clause: *writing novels is not easy*) which indicates the doer or agent of an action, state or event, and the predicate is a verb phrase and any other accompanying elements (e.g. an object or complement):

\[
\text{subject} \hspace{1cm} \text{predicate}
\]

\[
\text{We} \hspace{1cm} \text{baked some potatoes in the fire.}
\]

The subject can be seen as representing a topic (who/what the clause is about – in this case *we*) and the predicate can be seen as representing a comment (what is said about the topic – that we *baked some potatoes in the fire*). The topic and comment together constitute a proposition. Clauses combined together as sentences express various types of relation between propositions.

The clause centres around a verb phrase (in the example above, *baked*), since it is the verb phrase which largely determines what else must or may occur in the clause. A clause most typically consists of a subject (which is a noun phrase), a verb, and other elements which may or may not be necessary, such as an object (which is a noun phrase), a predicative complement (most typically an adjective or noun phrase), or an adjunct (which is typically an adverb phrase or a prepositional phrase):

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\text{S} & \text{V} & \text{O} & \text{A} \\
\text{noun phrase} & \text{verb phrase} & \text{noun phrase} & \text{prepositional phrase} \\
I & \text{’ve got} & \text{a parcel for you} & \text{in my car.}
\end{array}
\]

Examples of clauses and non-clauses.

- Clauses (verbs in bold):

  \textit{He wrote a couple of novels.}  
  (one clause: one verb)
  \textit{Did you say tea or coffee?}  
  (one clause: auxiliary verb \textit{did} and lexical verb \textit{say})
When you get there, ring me.
(two clauses: two lexical verbs with their own accompanying structures)

- Non-clauses:
  
  - the green sofa
  (noun phrase)
  
  - in the garden
  (prepositional phrase)
  
  - Hello
  (greeting formula)
  
  - hopefully
  (adverb)

**MAIN AND SUBORDINATE CLAUSES**

The two main types of clause which can combine to form sentences are main clauses and subordinate clauses. Main clauses are not dependent on any other clause in the sentence, and a sentence must have at least one main clause.

The following are sentences, since they contain at least one main clause.

- Sentences (main clauses in bold):
  
  - *I went to speak to them.*
  (whole sentence is one main clause)
  
  - *I went down to the fish and chip shop and I got fish and chips.*
  (two main clauses joined by and)
  
  - *If I went down there, I could use the computer and the laser printer.*
  (one subordinate clause [if-clause] and one main clause)

The following are not sentences, since they do not contain a main clause. They consist of subordinate clauses, which need to be accompanied by a main clause in order to form a sentence.

- Non-sentences (no main clause):
  
  - before I went
  
  - when I went to Southampton for the day with my friend
  
  - which arrived yesterday

- Further examples of main clauses (in green) with verbs in bold:
  
  - Oh, she’s left some money for you.
  
  - Richard got up and walked over to the window.
  
  - I’ve done a lot of thinking while you were asleep.
  
  - As her confidence grew, she started to get careless.
The clauses *while you were asleep* and *as her confidence grew* are dependent on other clauses and cannot be sentences on their own. They are therefore not main clauses.

The table below shows examples of sentences with one, two and three clauses. The clauses in the shaded boxes are main clauses; they could form sentences on their own. The clauses in the clear boxes are subordinate clauses; they could not form sentences on their own.

### Examples of main and subordinate clauses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>clause</th>
<th>clause</th>
<th>clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>She took her duties seriously.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>That was a few years ago</em> but <em>my feelings have not changed one bit.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>When I left college,</em> <em>I couldn’t find any work.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>He turned round,</em> <em>someone pushed him and he fell.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>As soon as she opened the envelope,</em> <em>she knew something was wrong.</em> <em>For the first lines of Richard’s letter were full of apologies and regrets.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><em>The water begins to freeze and, as it does so,</em> <em>it expands.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the table, *but* and *and* are coordinating conjunctions joining clauses of equal status to one another (in this case main clauses). *When,* *as soon as,* *for* and *as* are subordinating conjunctions, indicating a dependent relationship between the clauses they introduce and the main clauses. Coordination (↔ 307) and subordination (↔ 310) are two principal ways in which clauses are combined to form sentences.

Relative clauses (typically clauses with *who,* *which,* *that* modifying nouns) and nominal clauses are also types of dependent clause. In these cases they are embedded within larger structures:

- subject → verb complement

  *The points that I’m talking about are similar.*

- subject → verb complement

  *What we need is more time.*
A sentence with a main clause and one or more subordinate clauses is called a complex sentence. In the example below, || indicates clause boundaries. Subordinate clauses are in green; the main clause is in bold:

[automatic customer-answering-service at a company]
Welcome to [name of company]. || If you have a touch-tone telephone, || please
listen carefully to all the following options || before you make your choice.

also sentence 3 in the table in 270

506 Appendix: Punctuation on the punctuation of sentences in writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SENTENCE AND UTTERANCE</th>
<th>272</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The sentence in spoken language</td>
<td>272a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sentences in spoken language are more problematic than in written language. Speakers take turns to speak, and turns are a basic unit of conversation. A turn ends when the speaker changes.

Many turns in everyday speech consist of long strings of clauses (e.g. when someone is telling a story), unfinished sentences, or just noun phrases, adjective phrases or adverb phrases standing alone. We also find yes, no, interjections and other miscellaneous word-types standing alone, or sentences ‘jointly constructed’ by more than one speaker.

A typical transcript of everyday conversation contains many complete and communicatively sufficient units which are not sentences:

[speaker A is telling speaker B about a computer problem]
1 A: But he's trying to send us an email and I'm having some trouble with the computer you see.
2 B: Right.
3 A: You know.
4 B: Yeah.
5 A: On my computer when I try to get anything on it.
6 B: Mm.
7 A: It's just saying that it's not in the files. I don't know if …
8 B: Mm.
9 A: And I'll have to get a disk.

Speakers often begin new topics or sub-topics with conjunctions such as but (turn 1) and and (turn 9), even after considerable silences.

A turn may consist of just a word or phrase indicating a response or acknowledgement (turns 2 and 4).

It may not be clear which independent unit a dependent unit is attached to. The prepositional phrase in turn 5 could be treated as attached to turn 1 or turn 7, or simply as a free-standing and communicatively self-sufficient element.

The ‘sentence’ is therefore a problematic concept to apply to oral communication.
Problems with identifying sentences in informal spoken language mean that it is often useful to distinguish between a sentence and an utterance. The sentence is a unit of grammar, and must be grammatically complete (i.e. it must have at least one main clause). The utterance is a unit of communication. It must be communicatively and pragmatically complete, but it does not need to be grammatically complete. Communicative means that the utterance communicates a meaningful message, and pragmatic means that it is fully interpretable in its context. Thus a string of words standing alone such as over to you, though not a sentence, can be communicative and pragmatically interpretable (e.g. telling someone it’s their turn to take over the main speaking role), while a string of words such as you if on is unlikely to be either communicatively or pragmatically adequate.

Right and you know (turns 2 and 3 in the conversation extract in 272a), although they are not grammatically sentences, are complete utterances since each one is communicatively and pragmatically complete.

However, in spoken language the general principles for combining clauses can still be seen to operate in broad terms (but ➥ 87b Subordinate clauses).

**SENTENCE TYPES**

The sentence types take their names from the names of the different types of main clause. The four major types of sentence are:

\[(X = \text{other elements e.g. objects, complements})\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>type</th>
<th>structure of the main clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>declaratives</td>
<td>subject + verb + x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interrogatives</td>
<td>auxiliary/modal verb + subject + verb + x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imperatives</td>
<td>verb + x; no overt subject (subject is understood)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exclamatives</td>
<td>introduced by a phrase with what or how and followed by a subject + verb + x construction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BASIC FEATURES OF CLAUSES**

Polarity, whether the clause is affirmative or negative, is an important feature of clauses. The polarity of the main clause determines the overall polarity of the sentence.

Cambridge Grammar of English
**Examples of affirmative and negative polarity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main clause</th>
<th>Clause polarity</th>
<th>Subordinate clause</th>
<th>Clause polarity</th>
<th>Sentence polarity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She looked really offended.</td>
<td>affirmative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>affirmative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They don’t do it during the summer.</td>
<td>negative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I might want you to do something for me</td>
<td>affirmative</td>
<td>while I’m away.</td>
<td>affirmative</td>
<td>affirmative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ll have it if you don’t want it.</td>
<td>affirmative</td>
<td>if you don’t want it.</td>
<td>negative</td>
<td>affirmative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m not going if he goes.</td>
<td>negative</td>
<td>if he goes.</td>
<td>affirmative</td>
<td>negative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Participants, processes and circumstances**

Clauses express the relationship between processes (actions, states or events), participants (the people and things who act or are involved in or affected by actions, states and events) and circumstances (e.g. the time, place, manner and surrounding circumstances of an action, state or event).

The process is typically expressed by a verb phrase:

_I’ll post the letter tonight._

The participants are most typically expressed by noun phrases:

_I’ll post the letter tonight._

The circumstances are most typically expressed by adverb phrases or prepositional phrases:

_I’ll post the letter tonight._
(adverb phrase)

_Let’s go there after lunch._
(prepositional phrase)

Clauses consist of various arrangements of these types of phrase fulfilling the functions of subject, verb, object, predicative complement and adjunct.

**Subjects, verbs, objects, complements, adjuncts**

A clause centres around a verb phrase and most typically consists of a subject (which is a noun phrase), a verb (which is a verb phrase), and other elements which may or may not be necessary or present. These other elements include an object (which is a noun phrase), a predicative complement (which can be a noun/adverb/prepositional/adjective phrase) or an adjunct (which is typically an adverb phrase or prepositional phrase):

(subject) verb (object) adjunct
_I’ll post the letter tonight._

(subject) verb (complement)
_I feel very tired._
A clause may consist minimally of a verb in the imperative:

\[ \text{Run!} \]

(imperative clause)

Arrangements of subjects, verbs, complements and adjuncts in clauses vary, depending on the pattern of complementation required by the verb (281–289 Verb complementation). The variations in the table below typically occur.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example of verb complementation</th>
<th>Pattern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No one</td>
<td>laughed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She</td>
<td>took</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>’ll give</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He</td>
<td>’s working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We</td>
<td>signed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He</td>
<td>’ll get</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It</td>
<td>made</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Verb complementation

Central and peripheral elements

Central elements

The verb is the most central element in the clause as it tends to determine what else must or may occur in the clause. Next in importance come the subject and object or predicative complement, which express the relationship between participants and the process expressed by the verb.

The central elements subject and verb are the basic obligatory elements of a simple declarative clause. Central elements have a relatively fixed word order in English. The verb, for example, cannot usually be moved:

\[ \text{You know the problem.} \]

(You the problem know.)

Objects and predicative complements have slightly more flexibility and occasionally occur in untypical positions for reasons of emphasis:

\[ \text{Every computer that we looked at was near two thousand pounds. But this one I got for twelve hundred, with two hundred pounds’ worth of software.} \]

(object (this one) placed before subject (I) for emphasis/contrast)

\[ \text{Well, rich they may be, but I’m not sure they’re happy.} \]

(complement (rich) placed before subject (they) for emphasis/contrast)

Peripheral elements

Adjuncts are normally regarded as peripheral elements in the clause; they are always optional, they are the most mobile elements (they can occupy different positions), and they do not determine what else must occur in the clause.
Adjuncts are even more flexible than objects and predicative complements, and may occur in a variety of positions:

*In the morning we had to pretend nothing happened.*
(adjunct in front position; also possible: We had to pretend nothing happened in the morning.)

*We sometimes go to Rochester.*
(adjunct between subject and verb; also possible: Sometimes we go to Rochester.)

*That young guy seems to deliver the post quite often these days.*
(adjuncts in final position; also possible: Quite often that young guy seems to deliver the post these days./These days that young guy seems to deliver the post quite often.)

**Elements outside of the clause structure**

Sometimes, especially in informal spoken language, elements occur which are not contained within the clause structure. Items may occasionally occur before or after the clause for emphasis and be repeated in some form within the clause (most typically by a pronoun):

*Joe, I've known him for years.*
(object placed outside the clause, repeated in the clause by pronoun *him*)

*It's a great city, Dublin.*
(subject *it* repeated after the clause as a full noun phrase)

**96 Headers and 97 Tails**

Pragmatic markers are also normally considered to be outside of the clause structure. These include discourse markers (words and phrases indicating boundaries in the discourse or words that monitor the state of the discourse in some way), stance markers (words and phrases indicating a stance or attitude to a segment or section of discourse) and interjections:

*Well, what are you going to do with it?*
(discourse marker)

*Susie does aerobics, you know.*
(discourse marker)

*To be honest, I don’t think I’ll go this year.*
(stance marker)

*Frankly, I couldn’t care less.*
(stance marker)

*Gosh, that’s very cheap.*
(interjection)
Vocatives (addressing someone directly with a name or title) are also considered to be outside of the clause structure:

Would you like another drink, Molly?

### BASIC CLAUSE STRUCTURE

In this and the following sections we deal with the basic structure of clauses, focusing on simple declarative main clauses. A simple declarative clause consists of a subject phrase, a verb phrase, any object or predicative complement phrases and optional adjunct phrases.

#### Examples of simple declarative clauses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>subject</th>
<th>verb</th>
<th>object</th>
<th>complement</th>
<th>adjunct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyone</td>
<td>laughed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She</td>
<td>stole</td>
<td>some money</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He</td>
<td>'s</td>
<td></td>
<td>my brother-in-law</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>travelled</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>for a year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subject + verb is the minimal structure for declarative clauses.

### CENTRAL CLAUSE FUNCTIONS

The following sections (276–279) deal principally with the central clause functions of subject, verb (focusing on verb complementation), object and predicative complement. Adjuncts, the other main function in the clause, are optional, mobile elements describing the circumstances of the action or event (280 below) and are peripheral to the structure of the clause.

A separate chapter deals with adjuncts (319–337).

#### Subject

As indicated above (269), the clause may be divided into two main parts: the subject and the predicate.

The subject in an active-voice declarative clause is the noun phrase which precedes the verb, and which indicates the ‘doer’ or agent of an action, or the participant that an event or state happens to or refers to. The subject noun phrase agrees with the verb in person and number. The predicate in a declarative clause is the rest of the clause after the subject, where what the subject is, does or experiences is elaborated.

#### Examples of clauses showing subject and predicate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>subject</th>
<th>predicate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My mother</td>
<td>was a friend of hers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>ate too much last night.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their dog</td>
<td>died last week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The garden</td>
<td>looks lovely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They</td>
<td>made him a member of their gang.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The predicate consists of the verb phrase followed by objects and predicative complements (\textsuperscript{278} and \textsuperscript{279}).

The subject is most typically a noun phrase, though it may sometimes be a \textit{wh}-nominal clause, or, very occasionally, a prepositional phrase. The subject (in green in the examples below) determines the person and number of the verb:

\textit{My sister does} singing lessons.
(noun phrase: determiner + noun)

\textit{They have} a matter-of-fact approach to everything.
(noun phrase: pronoun)

\textit{Skiing doesn’t appeal to me.}
(noun phrase: the gerund -\textit{ing} form of a verb functioning as a noun)

\textit{What we’re doing} is offering a scholarship.
(\textit{wh}-nominal clause)

A: \textit{When shall I} ring you?
B: \textit{After six would be best.}
(prepositional phrase; less common)

The subject comes before the verb in a simple declarative clause, and it is obligatory, except in high-context, informal situations where it may be unnecessary and omitted if it is obvious to the participants:

A: \textit{Have you been back to the ‘Shanghai Palace’?}
B: \textit{Yeah, I went a few weeks ago. It’s a really nice restaurant.}
(\textit{Yeah, I went a few weeks ago. Is a really nice restaurant.})

A: \textit{Need a hammer. Is there one in the garage?}
B: \textit{Yeah, think so.}
(subjects are obvious to the speakers in the context; more explicit forms: I need a hammer/I think so)

\textbf{\textit{94 Situational ellipsis}}

Subject pronouns are nominative in form: \textit{I, you, he, she, it, one, we, they}.

\begin{quote}
**Dummy subjects** 276b
Since there must be a subject, ‘dummy’ subjects sometimes have to be used. Dummy subjects, consisting of \textit{it} or \textit{there}, are subjects considered to have no semantic content but which simply fill the necessary subject slot:

\textit{It’s interesting the way these dresses are so similar.}
(Is interesting the way these dresses are so similar.)

\textit{There are many ways in which you can use that.}
(Are many ways in which you can use that.)
\end{quote}

\textbf{\textit{45f, 45g}.}

\textbf{\textit{539 Glossary}} for any unfamiliar terms
Subject-verb concord

Concord refers to the way words match each other in terms of number, tense, etc. A present tense verb shows concord of number with a third person singular subject by having a final -s on the verb:

- *It takes up a lot of energy.*
  (It take up a lot of energy.)
- *My dad works there.*

In the present tense, all other persons are followed by the uninflected form of the verb:

- *We love Dublin.*
  (We loves Dublin.)
- *They never watch TV.*

In the past tense, all persons are followed by the past tense form of the verb, with no special indication of number. Only the verb be has special forms for different persons and number: *am, are, is, was, were.*

The head noun of a subject noun phrase determines number, not other nouns in the noun phrase:

- *The general quality of supermarket vegetables is very poor.*
  (The general quality of supermarket vegetables are very poor.)

VERB COMPLEMENTATION

Complementation is concerned with elements which follow the verb in a declarative clause and which are necessary to complete the meaning of the verb in some way.

Some verbs are complete in themselves and require no complementation (they are used as intransitive verbs), others require single complementation or dual complementation and are used as transitive verbs:

- *She laughed.*
  (intransitive: no complement needed; the verb is complete in itself)
- *I spotted a taxi.*
  (transitive: single complementation needed; the speaker must say what was spotted)
- *He put it in the rubbish bin.*
  (transitive: dual complementation needed; speaker must say what was put and where it was put)
The different patterns of complementation (below, the tables in 277c and 277d) are dealt with in greater detail in 281–289 Verb complementation.

**No complementation** 277b

Some verbs require no complementation. This is known as intransitive use:

*She died last week.*

*House prices have risen.*

**Single complementation** 277c

Some verbs are used with single complementation. There are several common types, as shown in the table below.

### Examples of single complementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>structure of complementation</th>
<th>example</th>
<th>function of complementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>noun phrase</td>
<td>I hate hospitals.</td>
<td>object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noun phrase</td>
<td>I was the winner.</td>
<td>subject complement (gives more information in the predicate about the subject)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adjective phrase</td>
<td>She seemed very nice.</td>
<td>predicate complement of place/measure/time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prepositional phrase</td>
<td>It's near the Boulevard.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noun phrase</td>
<td>He lives next door.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noun phrase</td>
<td>It weighed about two and a half pounds.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prepositional phrase</td>
<td>It lasted for 18 hours.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clause</td>
<td>I know you think I'm crazy.</td>
<td>object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clause</td>
<td>I'm where you should be.</td>
<td>subject complement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dual complementation** 277d

Some verbs require dual complementation. There are several common types, as shown in the table below.

### Examples of dual complementation (direct objects in green)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>structure of complementation</th>
<th>example</th>
<th>function of complementation</th>
<th>type of complementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>noun phrase + noun phrase</td>
<td>He gave me his number.</td>
<td>two objects, indirect and direct</td>
<td>ditransitive (i.e. two complements)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noun phrase + prepositional phrase</td>
<td>She sent a letter to Ivy Bolton.</td>
<td>object and prepositional complement</td>
<td>transitive-oblique (i.e. the recipient is referred to ‘obliquely’ in a prepositional phrase)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

continued overleaf

539 Glossary for any unfamiliar terms
Objects are most typically noun phrases. They follow the verb. They may be direct or indirect.

Direct objects indicate the person or thing that undergoes the action denoted by the verb, or the participant directly affected by the action:

\[
\text{I like that restaurant.} \\
\text{She kicked him.} \\
\text{They stole a van and then they robbed a bank.}
\]

Indirect objects indicate the recipient of a direct object. They are usually people or animals. An indirect object (bold) is always accompanied by a direct object (in green):

\[
\text{They handed me a pile of forms.} \\
\text{Her mother sent her a cheque for her birthday.}
\]

Direct objects are always noun phrases (or their equivalents, e.g. nominal clauses). The direct object of an active clause can typically become the subject of a passive clause:

\[
\text{Everybody hated the teacher. (active: the teacher is direct object)} \\
\text{The teacher was hated by everybody. (passive: the teacher is subject)}
\]
### Examples of direct objects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Verb (+ indirect object where required)</th>
<th>Direct object</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She</td>
<td>murdered</td>
<td>her husband.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He</td>
<td>missed</td>
<td>this morning's class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The police</td>
<td>came and arrested</td>
<td>them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He</td>
<td>loves</td>
<td>cycling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We</td>
<td>gave her</td>
<td>the tickets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>understand</td>
<td>what you mean.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adjuncts (in green) are not normally placed between the verb and the object:

*Mum noticed* a difference quite quickly.

(Mum noticed quite quickly a difference.)

However, in the case of longer phrases or clauses acting as objects, adjuncts may sometimes occur before the object:

*It was a bright room and I noticed immediately the door which opened on to the balcony.*

Also 322

### Indirect objects

The indirect object (io) is the recipient of a direct object (do), and is most typically an animate being:

IO  DO

She gave | him | a large envelope.

An indirect object always has a direct object accompanying it.

### Examples of indirect objects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Indirect object</th>
<th>Direct object</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diana</td>
<td>is going to buy</td>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>a present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ll</td>
<td>give</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>a ring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremy</td>
<td>had handed</td>
<td>her</td>
<td>a card.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Indirect object or prepositional complement?

With verbs such as *give, buy, send, hand*, when the recipient of the object is expressed as a full noun phrase and the object is an unstressed pronoun, the structure object + prepositional complement is used, not indirect object + direct object:

*I gave it to Frank.*

(I gave Frank it.)

*They handed them to the teacher.*

(They handed the teacher them.)

Also 277d on transitive-oblique in the table

539 Glossary for any unfamiliar terms
Predicative complements are most typically noun phrases and adjective phrases which follow the verb and give further information about a subject (subject complement) or an object (object complement):

- **He’s my brother-in-law.**
  (subject complement: gives information about the subject)

- **The students seem pretty bright.**
  (subject complement)

- **They labelled him a coward.**
  (object complement: gives information about the object)

- **It made me seasick.**
  (object complement)

Complements may also be adverb phrases or prepositional phrases:

- **She’s upstairs.**
- **The bus stop is near the shop.**
- **The lecture is at three-thirty.**

### Subject complements

A predicative subject complement adds information about the subject:

- **He’s a maths teacher.**
  (gives information about the subject, *he*)

The subject complement here is not the same as an object. *He* and the *maths teacher* are the same person. Compare *He married/visited/interviewed a maths teacher*, where *maths teacher* is the object, and a different person from *he*.

Subject complements are most typically noun phrases or adjective phrases.

#### Examples of subject complements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>subject</th>
<th>verb</th>
<th>subject complement</th>
<th>type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We</td>
<td>became</td>
<td>friends.</td>
<td>noun phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He</td>
<td>died</td>
<td>a very rich man.</td>
<td>noun phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She</td>
<td>’s</td>
<td>very lucky.</td>
<td>adjective phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That</td>
<td>smells</td>
<td>good.</td>
<td>adjective phrase</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Verbs which do not take objects are followed by subject complements. These are verbs such as the copular verb *be*, sense verbs such as *feel, look, taste, smell, sound*, verbs of perception such as *seem* and *appear*, change-of-state verbs such as *become, grow, get, go, turn.*
Pronouns
Pronoun subject complements following the copular verb *be* are normally in the object form (*me, you, him, her, it, us, them*):

A: *Who did that?*
B: *It was* *me*, sorry.
(It was *I*, sorry.)

*There’s his mother now, that’s her.*
(…, that’s she.)

However, in very formal styles, pronoun subject complements with *be* may occur in the subject form, especially in cleft sentences:

*It was* *I* *who told him to go.*
(compare the more informal: It was me who told him to go.)

---

**Number concord with subject complements**

In informal spoken language, speakers sometimes have a choice whether to use a singular or plural verb when there is a difference in number between the subject and the complement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>singular subject</th>
<th>plural complement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Another topic of course is words that have changed their meaning.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[talking of a car that is proving difficult to sell]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The only good thing are the tyres.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Normally, and in more formal styles, the subject determines the number of the verb.

---

**Apposition**

Adjective and noun phrases separated from the rest of the clause by punctuation or intonation may function in a way very similar to a subject complement:

*The crowd pressed closer, unwilling to miss a thing.*
*We’d just sit there, a couple trying to make it in the world.*

---

**Object complements**

An object complement adds information in the predicate about the object:

*All that hard work has left* *me* *exhausted.*
(gives information about the object, *me*)

An object complement is most typically a noun phrase or an adjective phrase. The object complement follows the object.
Examples of object complements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>subject</th>
<th>verb</th>
<th>object</th>
<th>object complement</th>
<th>type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ryan</td>
<td>had (always) called</td>
<td>her</td>
<td>Katy</td>
<td>noun phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He</td>
<td>makes</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>happy</td>
<td>adjective phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This</td>
<td>makes</td>
<td>the time factor</td>
<td>even more pressing</td>
<td>adjective phrase</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*473b Predicative complements* for marked (untypical) positions of complements

**ADJUNCTS**

All other elements in basic clauses which are not subjects, verbs, objects or complements may be classified as adjuncts. Adjuncts are peripheral, optional elements in the clause, and have a variety of functions. They most typically relate to the circumstances of an action or event, e.g. its time, place, manner, degree, frequency, intensity:

*In the summer* we *often* make our own ice cream.

*He* wrote a *letter* *every day*.

*She* was in love with *him* *in a big way*.

Adjuncts can occupy a variety of positions in the clause, either front position (*In the summer*, above), mid position (*often*, above) or end position (*every day, in a big way*, above).

**Adjuncts and complements**

Adjuncts modify the verb or the clause but, unlike complements, they do not complete the meaning of the verb and are not required elements:

*It rained in the afternoon.*
(adjunct: indicates the circumstances, i.e. the time when it rained)

*I’ll put it in my diary now.*
(complement: completes the meaning of *put*, which must specify both an object and a location)

*319–337 Adjuncts* for a full account of the different functions and positions of adjuncts

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Cambridge Grammar of English