

2.1 Clauses: Identifying Subjects

key words: clause, independent clause, subject, pronouns, case, subordinate clause
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.1a Explain the function of nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in general and their functions in particular sentences.

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/3/1/a>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.1i Produce simple, compound, and complex sentences.

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/3/1/i>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.1f Produce complete sentences, recognizing and correcting inappropriate fragments and run-ons. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/4/1/f>

A clause contains a subject, which is a noun phrase, and a predicate, which is a verb phrase. These noun phrase subjects and verb phrase predicates can be short:

She likes eggplant.

Or long:

The girl with the striped pants who I met yesterday adores eggplant fresh from the garden.

Each of these clauses is made up of a subject (NP) and a predicate (VP), but in the second example, each phrase is simply longer.

A clause is distinct from a sentence since a single sentence can contain multiple clauses.

I like eggs.

one clause, one sentence

I like eggs, but I don't like bacon.

two independent clauses, one sentence)

I like eggs that are cooked well. (two clauses (one is a relative clause), one sentence)

(In Lesson 5.3 and 5.4, you can learn more about combining such clauses into coordinated clauses, and the varied ways such clauses can be punctuated.)

For the most part, identifying subjects is easy. We all make use of them all the time in our speech and writing, and we all have subconscious knowledge that a subject is a necessary element in a clause. But sometimes we may need to double check for a subject (since in most writing, every sentence needs at least one subject), and a really useful test to help identify a subject is through the use of what is called a **tag question**. Tag questions attach to the end of a sentence and use a pronoun that refers back to the subject of the independent clause. In writing, we set off the tag question with a comma.

The student could write more quickly, couldn't she?

The pronoun *she* refers back to the subject, *the student*. So, tag questions are useful little questions; they not only turn statements into questions, but they also pick out the subject of the sentence. No matter how long or how short the subject is, the pronoun will refer back to the whole segment:

The student with the really heavy backpack who usually takes the bus should be here soon.

→ The student with the really heavy backpack who usually takes the bus should be here soon, shouldn't he?

And when there is a subordinate clause (Lesson 2.3), the pronoun in the tag question **cannot** refer back to that subject, only to the subject of the independent clause:

Sue thinks Bob will eat shrimp, doesn't she?

not

*Sue thinks that Bob will eat shrimp, doesn't he?

Even though *Bob* is a subject, it's not the subject of the main/independent clause, so the pronoun in the tag question cannot refer back to it, only to *Sue*.

Using a book or other text, find the subjects by using tag questions. Identify the whole noun phrase subject, not just the head noun. Discuss your answers in a group.

[Understanding the difference between independent and dependent (or subordinate) clauses is important in learning how to punctuate, how to not write in fragments or run-ons, how to make sure the verb agrees with the subject. Using this test, along with the Subject-Auxiliary Inversion Test in 2.2 will allow students to always be able to identify the subjects in their writing.]

2.3 Subordinate Clauses

key words: clause, subordinate clause, subordinating preposition, subordinating conjunction, dependent clause

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.1h Use coordinating and subordinating conjunctions.

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/3/1/h>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.1e Form and use prepositional phrases.

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/4/1/e>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.1f Produce complete sentences, recognizing and correcting inappropriate fragments and run-ons. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/4/1/f>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.1a Explain the function of conjunctions, prepositions, and interjections in general and their function in particular sentences.

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/5/1/a>

The independent clauses, introduced in 2.1, are clauses that are not dependent on some other part of a sentence. Both of the following are independent clauses.

She likes eggplant.

The girl with the striped pants who I met yesterday adores eggplant fresh from the garden.

In Lesson 5.3 and 5.4, you can learn more about combining such clauses into coordinated clauses, and the varied ways such clauses can be punctuated.

But here, let's examine when one clause is **subordinate** to or **dependent** on another clause.

So take the clause

She likes eggplant.

and you can attach it to

I think that....

to make

I think that she likes eggplant.

Here, *she likes eggplant* is subordinate to or depends on the first part of the sentence, *I think that*. We see that the **subordinator** *that* above links the subordinate clause to the main clause. *Whether* and *if* can do this too. Also, there is a subtype of prepositions called **subordinating prepositions** that introduce subordinate clauses. (Sometimes these are called subordinating conjunctions, but they don't conjoin similar kinds of clauses, and they are a subtype of preposition. See the *Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* for a discussion.)

although, because, before, even though, since, when, while,

If a subordinate clause is not connected to its main clause, it is considered a **fragment**. These are quite common in speech, but in most writing, the extra information needs to be filled in. See Lessons 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3.

Because she is tired.

That she likes eggplant.

Use each of these subordinating prepositions to adjoin a subordinate clause to a main clause.
Here are some introductory pieces of sentences to get you started.

She wants to swim
My uncle ate a squid
I want to shower
The dog rolled in the mud
The whole team is really tired

Now use the subordinators (also called complementizers) to make complete sentences from the following:

I know that...
She wonders whether...
Do you know if...

2.4 Movable Modifiers and Introductory Elements

key words: parts of speech, introductory elements, commas, punctuation, modifiers, adverbs

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.1a: Explain the function of nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in general and their functions in particular sentences.

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/3/1/a>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.6 Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate conversational, general academic, and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal spatial and temporal relationships (e.g., *After dinner that night we went looking for them*). <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/3/6>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.2b Use a comma to separate an introductory element from the rest of the sentence. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/5/2/b>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.3a Expand, combine, and reduce sentences for meaning, reader/listener interest, and style. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/5/3/a>

We can call phrases and clauses that add non-essential information about time, manner, reason, cause, etc. **movable modifiers** because they can occur in a variety of positions in a sentence. Adverbs are well-known modifying phrases that can move around:

She carefully picked up the kitten.

She picked up the kitten carefully.

Carefully, she picked up the kitten.

He often forgets to bring his lunch.

He forgets to bring his lunch often.

Often, he forgets to bring his lunch.

Do the different positions of the adverb in each of these examples affect the meaning? If so, how?

Note that when the modifying phrase occurs at the beginning of the sentence, it is typically set off by a comma.

Movable modifiers are not just adverbs; they can also be noun phrases, prepositional phrases, certain types of verb phrases, adjective phrases, and even clauses.

Movable Noun Phrase Modifiers

I don't want to be late this time.

Yesterday I went shopping.

We leave for vacation tomorrow.

(Sometimes these kinds of NPs are called adverbs, but they function more like nouns. Try some of the noun tests to see how they act like nouns.)

Movable Prepositional Phrase Modifiers

At noon, she took the train to Seattle.

Jack went home after his soccer game.

subordinating PP modifiers (modifiers that include a subordinate clause):

Mary went to bed late, though she had to get up early.

When she gets a chance, Lil will finish the extra assignment.

Movable Adjective Phrase Modifiers

Totally excited, Beulah left her rehearsal.

Ella hung up her phone, shocked.

(Adjectives frequently function as modifiers (inside NP, for example: *the green chair*), but when APs are movable modifiers, they modify NPs, and occur in clause-initial or clause-final position (rather than within the noun phrase).)

Movable VP Modifiers

Participial - the verb in these VP modifiers is either a present or past participle

Driven by the desire to win, the runners pushed themselves to the limit.

Ivy woke from a nightmare, screaming.

Infinitival – the verb in these VP modifiers is an infinitive (a tenseless verb, *to* + verb)

Hugh wore a fluorescent vest (in order) to be seen.

(In order) to be at school on time, the teenagers get up at 6 a.m.

Movable Participial Clause Modifiers

Her eyes squinting in the sun, Beulah watched the tennis match.

Ike read the morning paper, his dog curled up at his feet.

(These clauses have a subject and a verb, but the verb is not a tensed verb; it is participial.)

Take the following simple sentence and add an example of the listed movable modifiers to the beginning of each.

I brushed my teeth.

(participial VP movable modifier)

We went to buy sunglasses.

(movable participial clause modifier)

Sue want to read her book.

(PP movable modifier)

Bill wanted to change his itchy pants.

(AP movable modifier)

My friends went to the mall.

(NP movable modifier expressing time)

I won't be going on the trip.

(AdvP movable modifier)

2.5 Movable Modifiers and Sentence Combining

key words: parts of speech, introductory elements, commas, punctuation, modifiers, adverbs

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.1i Produce simple, compound, and complex sentences.

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/3/1/i>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.3c Differentiate between contexts that call for formal English (e.g., presenting ideas) and situations where informal discourse is appropriate (e.g., small-group discussion). <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/4/3/c>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.3a Expand, combine, and reduce sentences for meaning, reader/listener interest, and style. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/5/3/a>

The modifiers discussed in Lesson 2.5 allow us to add non-essential but important information to a sentence. They also give us with a way to combine clauses and make our writing more interesting. Consider the two independent clauses below:

Bo talked quietly to his kitten. He didn't want to scare it.

Or we can use one of the movable modifiers to combine the two independent clauses into one:

Bo talked quietly to his kitten because he didn't want to scare it.

Because he didn't want to scare it, Bo talked quietly to his kitten.

Here are some other examples:

Sue tapped Lou. Lou jumped.

Sue tapped Lou and Lou jumped. – combining with *and* (See also Lesson 5.3)

When Sue tapped Lou, Lou jumped. – combining with a clausal modifier

Movable modifiers therefore provide ways to vary clause structure and sentence style. We can combine these three sentences

Sue tapped Lou very lightly on her way to her seat.

Sue wanted Lou to know she wasn't mad at him.

Lou knew that Sue wasn't mad.

in various ways. Here's one way:

On her way to her seat, Sue tapped Lou, very lightly, because she wanted him to know she wasn't mad at him, even though Lou probably knew that.

We usually use commas to set off movable modifiers. You can usually hear the “comma intonation” when you say the sentence aloud. They are marked by a downward intonation and sometimes a slight pause.

We see movable modifiers in written texts quite frequently, and it may well be the case that they are much more of a feature of written language than of spoken language.

Combine the following short sentences into a single longer, more complex one, which maintains essentially the same meaning.

The cat chased the rat. The rat was probably scared.

I stood on the deck. It was dusk. I saw the sunset. The sunset was beautiful.

My sister doesn't like eggs. She eats eggs anyway. They have protein.

2.6 Relative Clauses: Clauses that Modify Nouns

key words: relative clauses, relative pronouns, sentence combining

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.1i Produce simple, compound, and complex sentences.

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/3/1/i>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.1a Use relative pronouns (*who, whose, whom, which, that*) and relative adverbs (*where, when, why*). <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/4/1/a>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.3a Expand, combine, and reduce sentences for meaning, reader/listener interest, and style. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/5/3/a>

Relative clauses are clauses (so they have a subject and a predicate) that give us more information about the noun.

Relative clauses, bracketed below, follow the noun that they modify and are usually introduced by **relative pronouns** (*that, who, which, when, where*).

The store was out of those beans [that I like in my soup].

relative clause modifies *those beans*

The girl [who I met last week] was at the game too.

relative clause modifies *the girl*

We're having the fish [that we caught] for dinner.

relative clause modifies *the fish*

That man [who is standing over there] is my uncle.

relative clause modifies *that man*

The relative pronouns, *who, what, which, whose*, as well as those sometimes called relative adverbs, like *where* and *when*, stand in for the noun that each is describing, as pronouns do. In the following example, *who* refers back to *that man*, but *that man* is not part of the relative clause itself. Instead, *who* functions as the **subject** of the clause, replacing, or referring back to, *that man*.

That man [who is standing over there] is my uncle.

And in this example *who* (or *whom*) refers back to *the girl* and functions as the **direct object** of the relative clause.

The girl [who I met last week] was at the game too.

We can use relative clauses to combine information that could otherwise be expressed in separate clauses into a single, complex sentence:

My friend tells a lot of jokes. He makes me laugh.

My friend, who makes me laugh, tells a lot of jokes.

Such combining of simple sentences can make your writing more interesting and more fluid. Combine the following simple sentences using relative clauses. What kinds of changes do you have to make?

I like peanut butter. My dad bought some peanut butter yesterday.

We drove to Yellowstone. We saw three bears in Yellowstone.

My dog is a beagle. My dog's name is Barney.

**[Teacher notes. Introduce restrictive and nonrestrictive relative clauses. Intonation and punctuation and intuitions...and talk about other ways of combining – other lesson on that]

2.7 Future Tense

key words: verbs, future, modals, context

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.1e Form and use the simple (e.g., *I walked; I walk; I will walk*) verb tenses. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/3/1/e>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.1c Use modal auxiliaries (e.g., *can, may, must*) to convey various conditions. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/4/1/c>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.1c Use verb tense to convey various times, sequences, states, and conditions. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/5/1/c>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.1d Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb tense. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/5/1/d>

English doesn't have a future tense form of the verb. A lot of languages do have a different form of the verb that indicates future. Spanish does, for example; you add one of six different endings to the **infinitive** form of the verb:

hablaré	'I will speak'	hablaremos	'we will speak'
hablarás	'you will speak'	hablaréis	'you (all) will speak'
hablará	'he/she will speak'	hablarán	'they will speak'

And in Arabic, you simply add the prefix "sa" to the present tense verb.

But in English, we indicate that something is happening in the future not by changing the main verb, but by adding a modal, usually *will*, to the verb string.

We will drive to Seattle tomorrow. (future tense)

We also use the combination of auxiliary and main verb *be + going*, a verb string that expresses future:

We are going to drive to Seattle tomorrow.

In speech, we have long (like, for hundreds of years) been using *am-going-to* as the single unit it functions as. Since these words have a single meaning indicating future, that tends to make it run together in our speech. Sometimes we write it this way too, as *gonna*. Eventually this form might become standard, but now *gonna* is still used only in informal writing.

Because English doesn't have a distinct marking for future on the main verb, the language sometimes allows context to suggest that something is happening in the future. Discuss these.

I can come over tomorrow.

She leaves on the noon train tomorrow.

We should learn about fractions soon.

2.8 Tense and Aspect

key words: verbs, tense, aspect, auxiliary verbs, progressive, perfect

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.3.1a Explain the function of nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in general and their functions in particular sentences.

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/3/1/a>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.4.1b Form and use the progressive (e.g., *I was walking; I am walking; I will be walking*) verb tenses. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/4/1/b>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.5.1b Form and use the perfect (e.g., *I had walked; I have walked; I will have walked*) verb tenses. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/5/1/b>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.5.1c Use verb tense to convey various times, sequences, states, and conditions. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/5/1/c>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.5.1d Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb tense. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/5/1/d>

It's important to understand that tense and aspect are distinct grammatical systems. Aspect has to do with the way a verb is viewed in relation to the discourse. The **progressive** aspect presents an action (the term *action* is used loosely here) as continuing and ongoing with respect to the time being talked about. The **perfect** suggests an end to an action or series of actions, and by implication focuses on the resulting state or action.

Remember from lessons in 1.4 that each verb has a unique form; present and past tense forms are two of the five forms.

She ate. (past)

We see. (present)

In order to indicate aspect, however, there must be both an auxiliary verb and a main verb present, and together they express a more complex relationship not only about the time, but about other kinds of interactions between events over time.

Think about and then try to describe when you would use each of the following.

We eat. present tense

We ate. past tense

We are eating. progressive aspect (auxiliary verb *be* is present tense)

We were eating. progressive aspect (auxiliary verb *be* is past tense)

We have eaten. perfect aspect (auxiliary verb *have* is present tense)

We had eaten. (auxiliary verb *have* is past tense)

Traditional grammar uses the terms present progressive, past progressive, present perfect, and past perfect, so you may encounter those. Such terms should not imply that the aspect itself is either present or past, but that the verb string (auxiliary and main verb together) is expressing both tense and aspect.

Below are some examples with each verb labeled and with each verb string labeled. You may want to first refer back to Lesson 1.4c (past tense), 1.4d (present tense), 1.4e (present participles), and 1.4f (past participle),.

My brother is being loud.

is – present tense
being – present participle
is being – progressive aspect

Already, the children had eaten their lunch.

had – past tense
eaten – past participle
had eaten – perfect aspect

More than two verbs can occur in a string.

The girl had been helping her mother.

had – past tense
been – past participle
helping – present participle
had been – perfect aspect
been helping – progressive aspect

For the following sentences, label the form of each verb (present, past tense, present participle, past participle) and the aspect of each two-word verb string, as in the examples above.

My friend is singing in the choir.
Your uncle has been waiting in the car for you.
Your cousin sings really well.
That dog has chewed through its leash.
I am reading a great book.
The athlete ran the race in record time.
I have run 12 miles this week.

2.9 Correlative Conjunctions (and Subject-Verb Agreement)

key words: punctuation, subject-verb agreement, conjunctions, correlative conjunctions
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.1h Use coordinating and subordinating conjunctions.

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/3/1/h>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.1i Produce simple, compound, and complex sentences.

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/3/1/i>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.1f Produce complete sentences, recognizing and correcting inappropriate fragments and run-ons <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/4/1/f>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.2c Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction in a compound sentence. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/4/2/c>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.1a Explain the function of conjunctions, prepositions, and interjections in general and their function in particular sentences.

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/5/1/a>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.1e Use correlative conjunctions (e.g., *either/or*, *neither/nor*).

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/5/1/e>

Like regular conjunctions (the FANBOYS, see 5.3), correlative conjunctions also conjoin two phrases of the same type.

The underlined verb phrases are conjoined.

In the summer, Jo will **either** take ballet **or** travel to Oregon.

The underlined noun phrases are conjoined.

Neither your mother **nor** your father signed the permission slip.

The underlined participial verb phrases are conjoined.

She is **not only** running for president, **but also** starting a new business.

When you used correlative conjunctions to conjoin subjects, there is variation in how writers (and speakers) select the verb form. If both parts of the subject are singular, writers will typically used the verb form that agrees with a singular subject:

Either the cat or the dog **wakes** me up early.

(3rd person singular verb form, agreeing with *the cat* or *the dog*, but not both)

Rather than the form of the verb, *wakes*, that would agree with a plural subject:

Either the cat or the dog **wake** me up early.

But when the two parts of the subject differ in number – one is singular and one is plural – there is more than one way to make the verb agree, and not everyone agrees on which is more acceptable. The grammar of the language really has more than one way of resolving this, and you'll find the variations even in edited written English.

Either June or I **am** going. (verb agrees with the part of the subject closest to the verb, *I*)

Either June or I **is** going. (verb agrees with the first part of the subject, *June*)

Either June or I **are** going. (verb agrees with the conjoined plural subject, *June, I*)

Most usage guides will suggest simply revising the sentence to something like this:

Either June is going, or I am.

It's important to note that making the verb agree with the part of the subject closest to the verb is a common strategy, but is not a rule of grammar. This kind of construction is one of the few places in the grammar of the language where one is left with no option sounding quite right. So you can revise completely, or you can use a modal verb (*can, could, will*, etc. – see Lesson 1.4g) since these do not require agreement and always have the same form:

Select the verb that you think sounds the best in the following. If you differ in your judgments, discuss! If you cannot agree on the verb, revise the sentence altogether.

Either my parents or I ____ going to pick you up.

Neither your cousins nor your aunt _____ coming to the dance recital.

I wonder whether my dog or one of my cats _____ eating the trash.

[Teacher note: There's a fairly good discussion of this issue with more examples at <http://english.stackexchange.com/questions/68235/my-brother-or-one-of-my-sisters-singular-or-plural>]