

# *Proofreading Skills Tutorial*

## **Introductory Tutorial: Recognizing Verbs and Subjects**

### **Recognizing Verbs Recognizing Subjects Recognizing Verbs and Subjects**

This Tutorial includes two files:

- **Lesson (00a\_Recognizing\_Verbs\_and\_Subjects\_Lesson)**

In order to learn the material presented in this tutorial more effectively, as you read you should take notes in a place that you can reference later. If it is convenient, you could print the tutorial and annotate it so you can keep it for future reference.

- **Exercises (00b\_Recognizing\_Verbs\_and\_Subjects\_Exercises** – located in the same area as the lesson)

- It has highlighted areas for you to answer the exercises using an application such as Adobe Acrobat Reader.
- Download and save this file as your own; you will share it with an instructor after you complete the lesson and exercises.

Please contact the Writing Center with any questions or difficulties:

[csmtwc@smccd.edu](mailto:csmtwc@smccd.edu) or 650-574-6436.

## **Recognizing Verbs and Subjects**

Sentences are the building blocks of writing. To improve your writing, you must understand the sentence and its two main parts, **the verb and the subject**.

### ***Recognizing Verbs***

The verb of the sentence tells what the subject **does** or **is**. It changes when the time of the sentence changes.

Verbs can also describe a state of being. Common verbs that describe the state of being are forms of **to be** (am, is, are, was, were), **to seem**, **to appear**, and **to become**.

### **How to Find the Verb:**

A useful way to find the verb(s) is to read the sentence three times:

- The first time, add the word **today** to the beginning of the sentence.
- The second time, add **yesterday** to the beginning of the sentence.
- Finally, add the word **tomorrow** to the beginning of the sentence.

Depending on what tense the sentence is written in, words in two of the three sentences will change. The words that change are the verbs.

Look at this sentence: **Hiking is my favorite summertime activity.**

Follow the steps to find the verb listed above.

*Yesterday* hiking was my favorite summertime activity. (past)

*Today* hiking is my favorite summertime activity. (present)

*Tomorrow* hiking will be my favorite summertime activity. (future)

Although “hiking” is an action word, “hiking” does not change if you add the words, *yesterday*, *today*, and *tomorrow*. “Is” is the verb since it changed in each sentence.

### **Tips:**

1. The main verb of a sentence will not have “to” before it.  
**Example:** Jamal **rented** a stretch limo to impress his girlfriend. (“**rented**” is the main verb.)
2. Any verb ending in “ing” will only be the verb of that sentence if it follows a “to be” verb (**is, am, are, was, and were**).  
**Example:** Carmen **is helping** her mother with the grocery shopping. (“**is helping**” is the main verb.)

**Please open your 00b exercises file and complete Exercises 1 and 2.**

## Recognizing Subjects

The subject of the sentence usually refers to something or someone.

Once you have identified the verb, form a question using *who* or *what* to find the subject.

Examples:

- The wave crashes on the beach. *What* crashes? The **wave** crashes. (**wave** = subject)
- Linda is slicing the mango. *Who* is slicing? **Linda** is slicing. (**Linda** = subject)
- The cat in the tree is mine. *What* is mine? The **cat** is mine. (**Cat** = subject)
- Frank and Jack are no longer friends. *Who* are no longer friends? **Frank and Jack** are no longer friends. (**Frank and Jack** = subjects)

**Please open your 00b exercises file and complete Exercise 3.**

Subjects may be more difficult to identify when there is more than one noun before the verb.

- **The shoes on my feet are made of leather.**

Usually the “who or what” question will solve the problem. *Who* or *what* is made of leather—the *shoes* or the *feet*? In this case it is obvious, but sometimes the question can be misleading.

- **The hole in my shoes will have to be fixed.**

1. *Who* or *what* will have to be fixed-- *hole* or *shoes*?
2. In this situation, the noun nearer the front of the sentence—*hole*—is the subject, not *shoes*.
3. *Shoes* is part of a group of words that tells what kind of hole.
4. These special groups of words like "on my feet" and "in my shoes" are called **prepositional phrases**.

### **Identifying Prepositional Phrases:**

The first word of a prepositional phrase is the preposition. The prepositions are boldfaced.

<b>about</b> the book	<b>below</b> the belt	<b>of</b> his class
<b>above</b> the building	<b>beside</b> the desk	<b>on</b> the building
<b>according to</b> my mother	<b>beyond</b> the hill	<b>outside</b> the classroom
<b>across</b> the street	<b>by</b> the classroom	<b>over</b> the building
<b>after</b> spring break	<b>during</b> his class	<b>through</b> the country
<b>against</b> the war	<b>for</b> my teacher	<b>to</b> my teacher
<b>among</b> my friends	<b>from</b> my teacher	<b>toward</b> the city
<b>around</b> the corner	<b>in</b> the classroom	<b>under</b> the desk

<b>at</b> the store	<b>inside</b> the desk	<b>until</b> spring break
<b>before</b> this class	<b>into</b> the classroom	<b>upon</b> the table
<b>behind</b> closed doors	<b>near</b> the building	<b>with</b> his sister

Prepositional phrases usually come in between the subject and the verb. In the following sentence, the prepositional phrases are underlined.

*subject*
*verb*

During spring break, one of my classmates flew in a jet over the city with the Blue Angels.

One method to find the subject and verb is to cross out the prepositional phrase in this sentence. You will end up with a shorter sentence, in this case with only the subject and the verb.

~~During spring break~~, one ~~of my classmates~~ flew ~~in a jet over the city with the Blue Angels~~.

**Subject:** One

**Verb:** Flew

Note: The noun *after* a preposition cannot be the subject of a sentence or clause. That is, no word in a prepositional phrase can be the subject or the verb.

**Please open your 00b exercises file and complete Exercises 4-6.**

### Final Activity

#### Instructions:

1. Review a classroom essay that you are working on and be prepared identify the subjects and verbs in your writing.
2. Make an appointment for a conference with an instructor working in the Writing Center. To make this appointment, sign up using the same method you use to make essay conference appointments. Be sure to include a comment or note that you are meeting about a tutorial.
3. During this appointment, the instructor will make sure you understand the concepts covered in this tutorial, answer any questions that you might have, review your answers to the exercises, and check to see if you can incorporate the skill into your writing.