

Complements

Direct and Indirect Objects, Subject Complements

Diagnostic Preview

Identifying Complements

Identify each italicized word in the following paragraphs as a *direct object*, an *indirect object*, a *predicate nominative*, or a *predicate adjective*.

EXAMPLES I enjoy [1] *cooking* but it can be hard [2] *work*.

1. *cooking*—direct object
2. *work*—predicate nominative

My dad has been giving [1] *me* cooking [2] *lessons* since last summer. At first, I was [3] *reluctant* to tell the guys because some of them think that cooking is a girl's [4] *job*. Dad told me to remind them that we guys eat [5] *meals* just as often as girls do. He also said that cooking is an excellent [6] *way* for us to do our share of the work around the house.

When I began, I could hardly boil [7] *water* without fouling up, but Dad remained [8] *patient* and showed [9] *me* the correct and easiest ways to do things. For example, did you know that water will boil faster if it has a little [10] *salt* in it or that cornstarch can be an excellent thickening [11] *agent* in everything from batter to gravy?

My first attempts tasted [12] *awful*, but gradually I've become a fairly good [13] *cook*. My best main dish is chicken [14] *stew*. Although stew doesn't require the highest [15] *grade* of chicken,

a good baking hen will give [16] *it* a much better taste. I am always very [17] *careful* about choosing the vegetables, too. Maybe I am too [18] *picky*, but I use only the best [19] *ingredients*. I know, though, that when I serve my [20] *family* my stew, they say it is their favorite dish.

Recognizing Complements

4a. A complement is a word or a word group that completes the meaning of a verb.

Every sentence has at least one subject and verb. Often a verb also needs a complement to make the sentence complete.

	S	V	
INCOMPLETE	Marlene	brought	[what?]

	S	V	C
COMPLETE	Marlene	brought	sandwiches.

	S	V	
INCOMPLETE	Carlos	thanked	[whom?]

	S	V	C
COMPLETE	Carlos	thanked	her.

	S	V	
INCOMPLETE	We	were	[what?]

	S	V	C
COMPLETE	We	were	hungry.

As you can see, a complement may be a noun, a pronoun, or an adjective.

EXAMPLES My uncle sent **me** a **postcard**. [The pronoun *me* and the noun *postcard* complete the meaning of the verb by telling *what* was sent and to *whom* it was sent.]

The Ephron sisters are **writers**. [The noun *writers* completes the meaning of the verb *are* by identifying the sisters.]

This story is **exciting**. [The adjective *exciting* completes the meaning of the verb *is* by describing the story.]

SKILLS FOCUS

Identify complements in sentences.

Reference Note

For information on **adverbs**, see page 107.
For information on **prepositional phrases**, see page 114.

TIPS & TRICKS

If you have trouble finding the complement in a sentence, try this trick. Cross out all the prepositional phrases first. Then, look for the subject, verb, and complement in the rest of the sentence.

EXAMPLE

Juanita wrote the letter ~~on a sheet of plain note-book paper~~. [The subject is *Juanita*. The verb is *wrote*. *Sheet* and *paper* cannot be complements because they are both in prepositional phrases. The complement is *letter*.]



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An adverb is never a complement.

- ADVERB The dog is **outside**. [*Outside* modifies the verb by telling where the dog is.]
COMPLEMENT The dog is **friendly**. [*The adjective friendly* modifies the subject by telling what kind of dog.]

A complement is never part of a prepositional phrase.

- OBJECT OF PREPOSITION Ben is studying for his geography **test**.
[*Test* is the object of the preposition *for*.]
COMPLEMENT Ben is studying his geography **notes**.

Exercise 1 Identifying Subjects, Verbs, and Complements

Identify the subject, verb, and complement in each of the following sentences.

- EXAMPLE**
- William Shakespeare was one of the owners of the Globe Theatre.
1. *William Shakespeare*—subject; *was*—verb; *one*—complement
 - During Shakespeare's time, plays were a common form of entertainment in England.
 - A great many people watched plays at the most popular playhouse in London—the Globe Theatre.
 - Richard and Cuthbert Burbage built the Globe in 1599.
 - In this drawing, you can see many of the differences between the Globe and most modern theaters.
 - The Globe Theatre was a building with eight sides.
 - The building enclosed a spacious inner courtyard.
 - The stage was a raised platform at one end of the courtyard.
 - Some of the audience watched the play from seats around the courtyard.
 - Many playgoers, however, did not have seats during a performance.
 - These people filled the courtyard in front of the stage.

Exercise 2 Writing Sentences with Complements

Write ten sentences by adding a different complement to each of the following subject-verb pairs.

	Subject	Verb
EXAMPLE	1. kittens	like
	1. <i>The kittens like cream.</i>	

	Subject	Verb
	1. men	asked
	2. days	are
	3. Pam	sent
	4. runner	seemed
	5. weather	will be
	6. girls	climbed
	7. letter	contained
	8. elephant	is
	9. neighbors	kept
	10. dog	wants

Objects of Verbs

Direct objects and *indirect objects* complete the meaning of transitive verbs.

Direct Objects

4b. A *direct object* is a noun, pronoun, or word group that tells who or what receives the action of the verb.

A direct object answers the question “Whom?” or “What?” after a transitive verb.

EXAMPLES Our history class built a **model** of the Alamo. [The noun *model* receives the action of the verb *built* and tells *what* the class built.]

Has the freeze destroyed **some** of the crops? [The pronoun *some* receives the action of the verb *Has destroyed* and tells *what* the freeze has destroyed.]

Mr. Ito greets **whoever comes into the shop**. [The noun clause *whoever comes into the shop* receives the action of the verb *greet* and tells *whom* Mr. Ito greets.]

Reference Note

For more information about **transitive verbs**, see page 105.

TIPS & TRICKS

To find the direct object in a sentence, say the verb and then ask “What?” or “Whom?”

EXAMPLE

Ed writes stories.

[Writes what? Stories.]

Stories is the direct object.

SKILLS FOCUS

Identify direct objects in sentences.

Reference Note

For more about **linking verbs**, see page 100.

Reference Note

For more information about **prepositional phrases**, see page 114.

HELP

One sentence in Exercise 3 contains a compound direct object.



NOTE A direct object can never complete the meaning of a linking verb because a linking verb does not express action.

LINKING VERB William Wordsworth **became** poet laureate of England in 1843. [The verb *became* does not express action. Therefore, it has no direct object.]

A direct object is never part of a prepositional phrase.

EXAMPLE He walked for hours in the English countryside. [Hours is not a direct object of the verb *walked*. It is the object of the preposition *for*. Countryside is not a direct object either. It is the object of the preposition *in*. The sentence has no direct object.]

NOTE A direct object may be compound.

EXAMPLES Mrs. Neiman planted **tulips** and **daffodils**.

The man wore a white **beard**, a red **suit**, and black **boots**.

Exercise 3 Identifying Verbs and Direct Objects

Identify the verb and its direct object in each of the following sentences.

- EXAMPLE**
- Volunteers distributed food and water to the flood victims.
1. *distributed—food, water*
 - On the plains of the American West, the Cheyenne hunted buffalo for food and clothing.
 - We watched a performance of Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*.
 - During most of its history, the United States has welcomed refugees from other countries.
 - The leading man wore a hat with a large plume.
 - Are you recycling bottles and cans?
 - After the game, the coach answered questions from the sports reporters.
 - Did you see her performance on television?
 - The researchers followed the birds' migration from Mexico to Canada.

9. Mayor Fiorello La Guardia governed New York City during the Depression.
10. Have the movie theaters announced the special discount for teenagers yet?

Indirect Objects

4c. An *indirect object* is a noun, pronoun, or word group that sometimes appears in sentences containing direct objects.

An indirect object tells *to whom* or *to what* or *for whom* or *for what* the action of the verb is done.

EXAMPLES Luke showed the **class** his collection of comic books. [The noun *class* tells *to whom* Luke showed his collection.]

Sarita bought **us** a chess set. [The pronoun *us* tells *for whom* Sarita bought a chess set.]

Dad gave **whatever needed fixing** his full attention. [The noun clause *whatever needed fixing* tells *to what* Dad gave his attention.]

NOTE Linking verbs do not have indirect objects.

LINKING VERB Her mother **was** a collector of rare books. [The linking verb *was* does not express action, so it cannot have an indirect object.]

An indirect object, like a direct object, is never in a prepositional phrase. A noun or pronoun that follows *to* or *for* is the object of the preposition, not an indirect object.

OBJECT OF PREPOSITION He gave some flowers to his **sister**.
[*Sister* is the object of the preposition *to*.]
INDIRECT OBJECT He gave his **sister** some flowers.

NOTE Like a direct object, an indirect object may be compound.

EXAMPLES Uncle Alphonso bought my **brother and me** an aquarium.
Tanya sent **Kim, Raymond, and him** invitations.

TIPS & TRICKS

A sentence with an indirect object will always have a direct object, too. What are the direct objects in the examples following Rule 4c?

Reference Note

For more about **noun clauses**, see page 176.

HELP

An indirect object usually comes between a verb and a direct object.

SKILLS FOCUS

Identify indirect objects in sentences.

HELP

Not every sentence in Exercise 4 has an indirect object.



HELP

Not every sentence in Review A has an indirect object.



Exercise 4 Identifying Direct Objects and Indirect Objects

Identify the direct objects and the indirect objects in the following sentences.

EXAMPLE

1. They gave us their solemn promise.
1. *promise*—direct object; *us*—indirect object

1. They sent me on a wild-goose chase.
2. Gloria mailed the company a check yesterday.
3. The speaker showed the audience the slides of Zimbabwe.
4. Juan would not deliberately tell you and me a lie.
5. The coach praised the students for their school spirit.
6. I sent my cousins some embroidered pillows for their new apartment in New York.
7. The art teacher displayed the students' paintings.
8. Sue's parents shipped her the books and the magazines.
9. Carly, Mary Ellen, and Doreen taught themselves the importance of hard work.
10. In most foreign countries, United States citizens must carry their passports for identification.

Review A Identifying Direct Objects and Indirect Objects

Identify the direct objects and the indirect objects in each of the following sentences.

EXAMPLE

1. The spring rodeo gives our town an exciting weekend.
1. *weekend*—direct object; *town*—indirect object

1. This year Mrs. Perez taught our class many interesting facts about rodeos.
2. She told us stories about the earliest rodeos, which were held more than a hundred years ago.
3. The word *rodeo* means "roundup" in Spanish.
4. Mrs. Perez also showed us drawings and pictures of some well-known rodeo performers.
5. The Choctaw roper Clyde Burk especially caught the interest of our class.
6. The Rodeo Cowboys Association awarded Burk four world championships during his career.
7. For years, Burk entertained audiences with his roping skill.

8. He also trained some of the best rodeo horses available.
9. The picture on the previous page shows Clyde Burk on his horse Baldy.
10. Burk often gave Baldy credit for their success.

Subject Complements

4d. A subject complement is a word or word group that completes the meaning of a linking verb and that identifies or describes the subject.

EXAMPLES Alice Eng is a dedicated **teacher**. [The noun *teacher* completes the meaning of the linking verb *is* and identifies the subject *Alice Eng*.]

The lemonade tastes **sour**. [*Sour* completes the meaning of the linking verb *tastes* and describes the subject *lemonade*.]

The new pliers were **what she wanted**. [The noun clause *what she wanted* completes the meaning of the linking verb *were* and identifies the subject *pliers*.]

There are two kinds of subject complements—the *predicate nominative* and the *predicate adjective*.

Predicate Nominatives

4e. A predicate nominative is a word or word group that is in the predicate and that identifies the subject or refers to it.

A predicate nominative may be a noun, a pronoun, or a word group that functions as a noun. A predicate nominative completes the meaning of a linking verb.

EXAMPLES Mr. Richards became **mayor** of a small town in Ohio. [The noun *mayor* identifies the subject *Mr. Richards*.]

My aunt's niece is **she**. [The pronoun *she* identifies *niece*.]

Is the winner **whoever gets the most votes**? [The noun clause *whoever gets the most votes* identifies the subject *winner*.]

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GRAMMAR

Reference Note

For more about **linking verbs**, see page 100.

TIPS & TRICKS

To find the subject complement in an interrogative sentence, rearrange the sentence to make a statement.

EXAMPLE

Was the dog muddy?
The dog was **muddy**.

To find the subject complement in an imperative sentence, insert the understood subject *you*.

EXAMPLE

Stay still.
(You) stay **still**.

SKILLS FOCUS

Identify complements in sentences. Identify predicate nominatives in sentences.

Predicate nominatives do not appear in prepositional phrases.

EXAMPLE Sophia is **one** of my closest friends. [*One is the predicate nominative. Friends is the object of the preposition of, not the predicate nominative.*]

NOTE Predicate nominatives may be compound.

EXAMPLE Hernando de Soto was a **soldier** and a **diplomat**.

Exercise 5 Identifying Predicate Nominatives

Identify the predicate nominatives in each of the following sentences.

EXAMPLE 1. Botany, a branch of biology, is the study of plants.

1. *study*

1. Horticulture is the art or science of growing flowers, fruits, vegetables, and other plants.
2. Through germination, a seed becomes a plant.
3. The developing plant is a seedling.
4. Growing plants is a pleasure for many people.
5. With light and moisture, seedlings will become healthy plants.
6. Nasturtiums are flowers that can be eaten.
7. Rain is a welcome sight for gardeners.
8. *Helio*, from the Greek language, is a word meaning "sun."
9. Some flowers that turn to the sun, like sunflowers, are heliotropes.
10. Some other flowers always remain shade lovers.



Predicate Adjectives

4f. A predicate adjective is an adjective that is in the predicate and that describes the subject.

A predicate adjective completes the meaning of a linking verb.

EXAMPLES A nuclear reactor is very **powerful**. [The adjective *powerful* completes the meaning of the linking verb *is* and describes the subject *reactor*.]

This chili tastes **spicy**. [The adjective *spicy* completes the meaning of the linking verb *tastes* and describes the subject *chili*.]

How **cheerful** the baby is! [The adjective *cheerful* completes the meaning of the verb *is* and describes the subject *baby*.]

NOTE Predicate adjectives may be compound.

EXAMPLE A computer can be **fun, helpful**, and sometimes **frustrating**.

Exercise 6 Identifying Predicate Adjectives

Identify the predicate adjective or adjectives in each of the following sentences.

EXAMPLE 1. San Francisco's Chinatown is large and colorful.
1. *large, colorful*

1. The great stone dogs that guard the entrance to Chinatown look a bit frightening.
2. The streets there are crowded and full of bustling activity.
3. The special foods and beverages at the tearooms and restaurants smell wonderful.
4. To an outsider, the mixture of Chinese and English languages can sound both mysterious and intriguing.
5. The art at the Chinese Culture Center is impressive.
6. The Chinese Historical Society of America is fascinating.
7. Taking a walking tour of Chinatown is tiring.
8. Chinatown appears huge, and it is; it covers about sixteen square blocks.
9. To be in the midst of it feels exciting.
10. After a while, the surroundings become familiar.

Think as a Reader/Writer

Overusing the linking verb *be* can make writing dull and lifeless. As you review your writing, you may get the feeling that nothing is happening, that nobody is doing anything. That feeling is one sign that your writing may contain too many *be* verbs. Wherever possible, replace a dull *be* verb with a verb that expresses action.

BE VERB

A secret hope **was** in his heart.

ACTION VERB

A secret hope **surged** in his heart.

SKILLS FOCUS

Identify predicate adjectives in sentences.

Some verbs, such as *look*, *grow*, and *feel*, may be used as either linking verbs or action verbs.

- LINKING VERB** The gardener **grew** tired. [*Grew* is a linking verb; it links the predicate adjective *tired* to the subject *gardener*.]
- ACTION VERB** The gardener **grew** carrots. [*Grew* is an action verb; it is followed by the direct object *carrots*, which tells what the gardener grew.]

Review B Identifying Linking Verbs and Subject Complements

Identify the linking verb and the subject complement in each of the following sentences. Then, identify each complement as a *predicate nominative* or a *predicate adjective*.

EXAMPLE 1. The raincoat looked too short for me.

1. *looked*; *short*—predicate adjective

1. The package from Aunt Janice felt light.
2. I am the one who called you yesterday.
3. Many public buildings in the East are proof of I. M. Pei's architectural skill.
4. The downtown mall appeared especially busy today.
5. Sally Ride sounded excited and confident during the television interview.
6. The actress playing the lead is she.
7. These questions seem easier to me than the ones on the last two tests.
8. The singer's clothing became a symbol that her fans imitated.
9. Some poems, such as "The Bells" and "The Raven," are delightfully rhythmical.
10. While the mountain lion looked around for food, the fawn remained perfectly still.

Review C Identifying Subject Complements

Each of the following sentences has at least one subject complement. Identify each complement as a *predicate nominative* or a *predicate adjective*.

EXAMPLE 1. All the food at the Spanish Club dinner was terrific.

1. *terrific*—predicate adjective

1. Of the Mexican foods brought to the dinner, the tacos and Juan's fajitas were the most popular dishes.
2. The *ensalada campesina*, or peasant salad of Chile, which contained chickpeas, was Rosalinda's contribution.
3. The Ecuadorean tamales not only looked good but also tasted great.
4. The baked fish fillets from Bolivia were spicy and quite appetizing.
5. Peru is famous for its soups, and the shrimp soup was a winner.
6. The noodles with mushroom sauce are a specialty of Paraguay.
7. The Spanish cauliflower with garlic and onions was a treat but seemed too exotic for some students.
8. However, the pan of *hallacas*, the national cornmeal dish of Venezuela, was soon empty.
9. *Arroz con coco*, or coconut rice, from Puerto Rico quickly became the most requested dessert.
10. After dinner, all of us certainly felt full and much more knowledgeable about foods from Spanish-speaking countries.



Review D Identifying Complements

For each of the following sentences, identify each italicized complement as a *direct object*, an *indirect object*, a *predicate nominative*, or a *predicate adjective*.

- EXAMPLE**
1. Because they want artistic *freedom*, many people from other countries become United States *citizens*.
1. *freedom*—direct object; *citizens*—predicate nominative
 1. Gilberto Zaldivar's story is a good *example*.
 2. Zaldivar was an *accountant* and a community theater *producer* in Havana, Cuba, in 1961.
 3. He became *unhappy* and *frustrated* with the Cuban government's control over the arts.
 4. He left his *job* and his *hometown* and started a new *life* in New York City.
 5. The change brought Zaldivar many *opportunities*.
 6. It also gave *audiences* in the United States a new entertainment *experience*.

7. Zaldivar was a *cofounder* of the Repertorio Español in 1968.
8. This company quickly established a *reputation* as the country's best Spanish-language theater troupe.
9. Their productions were *fresh* and *unfamiliar* to audiences.
10. Throughout the years, the company has performed numerous Spanish *classics* as well as new plays.

Review E Writing Sentences with Complements

Write sentences according to the following guidelines. Underline each direct object, indirect object, predicate nominative, or predicate adjective that you write.

- EXAMPLE** 1. Write a sentence with a three-part compound predicate adjective.
1. The fire is warm, cheery, and fragrant.
1. Write a sentence with a direct object.
 2. Write a sentence with a predicate nominative.
 3. Write a sentence with a predicate adjective.
 4. Write a sentence with an indirect object and a direct object.
 5. Write a sentence without a complement.
 6. Write a sentence with a compound indirect object and a direct object.
 7. Write a sentence with a compound predicate nominative.
 8. Write a sentence with a compound direct object.
 9. Write a sentence with a compound predicate adjective.
 10. Write a sentence with a three-part compound direct object.