

## STEPS IN FINDING THE SUBJECT AND VERB

- **Locate and eliminate prepositional phrases** because prepositional phrases will NEVER contain a subject or verb.

The <sup>subject</sup>**children** [*in the choir*] <sup>verb</sup>sang the song [*during the recital*].

- **Locate the verb or verb phrase.** Be sure to include all helping verbs.  
(Remember: NOT, NEVER, EVER, ALWAYS, OFTEN, and other adverbs [most *-ly* words] are NOT part of the verb.)

<sup>subject</sup>**Marty and Mary** [*in my class*][*at school*] <sup>verb</sup>have *never* <sup>verb</sup>participated [*in a fire drill*].

- **Finally, find the subject.** Ask yourself *who* or *what* is doing the action of the verb or *who* or *what* is the sentence about (in the case of linking verbs).

The young <sup>subject</sup>**children** [*in the choir*] <sup>verb</sup>sang the song [*during the recital*].

Question: Who sang the song? Answer: *children*, so it is the subject. (*Be careful* - *song* is the object of the verb because it receives the action.) Please note: articles (*a, an, the*) and adjectives (*young*) are not part of the subject.

## THINGS TO WATCH OUT FOR IN LOCATING THE SUBJECT:

- **Possessives** (nouns with an apostrophe or the possessive pronouns *his, her, its, their, my, your, our*) are never the subject.

*John's paper* received an A.

[What received the A? The *paper*, not *John*; *John's* becomes a modifier to tell which paper.]

*My paper, on the other hand, was* late.

[Again, *paper* is the subject, never *my* - a possessive.]

- Remember that the **subject of a sentence will never be in a prepositional phrase.**

*Joe, along with the other students, was* caught in traffic.

[The subject is *Joe*; since *students* is in a prepositional phrase, it cannot be part of the subject.]

*Three of the students were* not in class.

[Since *students* is in a prepositional phrase, *three* is the subject.]

- **-ing words** can be a subject.

*Being on time to class* takes discipline. [*Being* in this sentence is the subject of the verb *takes*.]

- Don't forget **compound subjects**.

*Reading and writing* are both activities of this class.

[The verb *are* has two subjects - *reading* and *writing*.]

- **Here** and **there** are never the subject, but cause the subject to follow the verb.

*Here are the books* for the class.

[Since *here* is not the subject, *books* follows the verb *are*.]

- In a **question**, the subject usually follows the verb or helping verb.

*Have you* finished your homework yet?

[*You* is the subject; *have finished* is the verb.]

- In a **command**, the subject is an understood *you*.

Please hand me those papers on the desk.

[An understood *you* is the subject: *You hand me the papers*.]

## THINGS TO WATCH OUT FOR IN LOCATING THE VERB:

- **Helping verbs** must be included in the complete verb phrase.

In a verb phrase, the following are always helping verbs:

*can/could*                      *will/would*                      *shall/should*                      *may/might/must*

[If these verbs are alone, the main verb is understood.]

*Who will bake the bread? I will.* [Bake is understood.]

*Be, been, being* cannot stand alone as verbs, but are always part of a verb phrase.

*He has been studying a lot lately.*

The forms of **do** (*do, does, did*), **have** (*have, has, had*), **be** (*am, is, are, was, were*) can be helping verbs or stand alone as verbs, but they are **always** verbs.

*Sheila is always on time for class.* [*Is* is the verb standing alone in the sentence.]

*Shelby is always running late for class.* [*is* is a helping verb for *running* in this sentence.]

- Verbals [**infinitives** (to + verb) & **-ing words** without helping verbs] are **never** the verb of the sentence.

*Typing papers on a computer saves time.* [*Typing* cannot be a verb because it has no helping verb; also, *typing* is the subject because it is doing the verb - *saves*.]

*We are ready **to begin** our assignment.*

[*begin* cannot be a verb because it has *to* in front of it.]

- **Adverbs** are **never** part of the verb phrase even though they often appear in the middle of it. The most common of these adverbs are **not, never, very, always, often, almost, quite, soon, seldom**, + **-ly** words.

*I have truly never seen a more beautiful sunrise.*

[The verb is *have seen*; *truly* and *never* are adverbs and therefore not part of the verb.]

*Your bad **habits** will always be your downfall.*

[The verb is *will be*; *always* is an adverb and therefore not part of the verb.]

- Remember - in a **question**, the first word is often a verb or helping verb.

*Were you in class yesterday?*

[*You* is the subject; *were* is the verb.]

*Did you take notes for the test?*

[*You* is the subject; *did take* is the verb.]

- Don't forget **compound verbs**, in which there are two actions or verbs of being.

*The **flock** of geese gathered at the lake and began to honk loudly.*

[The subject *flock* has two actions - *gathered* and *began*.]

- Remember that an **-ing word** cannot be a verb without a helping verb in front of it.

*Concentrating on her homework, **Sara** did not hear her mother come into the room.*

[*Concentrating* cannot be the verb because it does not have a helping verb; also, it is not what the subject *Sara* is doing.]

***Concentrating** is difficult for Sara late in the evening.*

[In this sentence, *Concentrating* is the subject of the verb *is*.]