

THE SUBJECT AND THE PREDICATE: THE BASIC SENTENCE PARTS

“Just to write a good sentence--that’s the postulate I go by. I guess I’ve always felt that if you keep a kind of fidelity toward the individual sentence, that you could work toward the rest.” - Richard Ford

Question: What is a **subject**?

The **subject** is the person, place, or thing that acts, is acted on, or is described in the sentence. Three types of subjects exist:

Simple subject: a noun or a pronoun

- he
- she
- dog
- house

Complete subject: a noun or a pronoun plus any modifiers

- the black dog
- the trees across the bay
- his dog house

Compound subject: two or more subjects joined by a conjunction

- Mitch or Amy
- the dog and the house
- he and I

Question: What is a **predicate**?

The **predicate** is the action or description that occurs in the sentence. As with subjects, three types of predicates exist:

Simple predicate: a complete verb (a verb and any helping verbs)

- sit
- was singing
- could have danced

Complete predicate: a simple predicate plus all modifiers

- sit on the couch
- was singing quietly
- could have danced across the room

Compound predicate: two or more predicates with the same subject

- was singing quietly and smiling to himself
- could have danced across the room and stayed awake all night
- sit on the couch or sit on the floor

Question: Do all sentences need both a **subject** and a **predicate**?

Yes, most complete sentences need both.

	Simple	Complete	Compound
Subject	James	My friend James	James and I
Predicate	jumped	jumped on the bed	jumped on the bed and fell on the floor

Subject + Predicate =

James jumped.
James and I jumped.
My friend James jumped on the bed.
James jumped on the bed and fell on the floor.
James and I jumped on the bed.

Exception: A **command** is the only type of sentence that has no subject. The subject (“you”) is implied:

Stop.

- **Implied subject:** you
- **Predicate:** stop

Read the book.

- **Implied subject:** you
- **Predicate:** read the book

Walk the dogs and get the mail.

- **Implied subject:** you
- **Predicate:** walk the dogs and get the mail