

Five basic sentence structures

There are five basic sentence structures in the English language.

1. Subject-Verb

Examples:

- The boy plays.
 - Jack eats.
 - Sara sits.
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2. Subject-Verb-Object

Examples:

- The girl pets the cat.
- I love apples.
- Bill kicks the ball.

3. Subject-Verb-Adjective

Examples:

- Lisa is pretty.
- They are nice.
- I am sad.

4. Subject-Verb-Adverb

Examples:

- Maria laughs loudly.
- The dog jumps high.
- Apples are everywhere.

5. Subject-Verb-Noun

Examples:

- I am the teacher.
- Jon is a carpenter.
- The boy is a student.

Expanding Sentences

The examples above are basic sentences. Basic sentences can be expanded, or lengthened, by adding adjectives, adverbs and objects.

1. Subject-Verb

- Jack eats.
This is the basic subject-verb pattern.
- Jack quickly eats.
An adverb is added (quickly) to tell how Jack eats.
- Jack quickly eats carrots.
An object is added (carrots) to tell what Jack eats.
- Jack quickly eats carrots at home.
Another adverb is added (at home) to tell where Jack eats.
- Jack quickly eats fresh carrots at home.
An adjective is added (fresh) to tell what kind of carrots Jack eats.

2. Subject-Verb-Object

- Bill kicks the ball.
This is a basic subject-verb-object pattern.
- Bill kicks the red ball.
An adjective is added (red) to tell the color of the ball.
- Bill kicks the red ball hard.
An adverb is added (hard) to tell how Bill kicks the ball.
- Bill kicks the red ball hard every day.
Another adverb is added (every day) to tell when Bill kicks the ball.

3. Subject-Verb-Adjective

- She looks pretty.
This is the basic subject-verb-adjective pattern.
- She looks pretty tonight.
An adverb is added (tonight) to tell when she looks pretty.
- Lisa looks pretty tonight.
The subject is identified with a name (Lisa).

4. Subject-Verb-Adverb

- Apples are everywhere.
This is the basic subject-verb-adverb pattern.

- Green apples are everywhere.
An adjective is added (green) to describe the apples.
- Ripe, green apples are everywhere.
A series of adjectives are added (ripe and green) to describe the apples.

5. Subject-Verb-Noun

- The boy is a student.
This is the basic subject-verb-noun sentence pattern.
- Jon is a student.
The subject is identified with a name (Jon).
- Jon is a smart student.
An adjective is added (smart) to tell what kind of student Jon is.
- Jon is a smart student at school.
An adverb is added (at school) to tell where Jon is a smart student.

14.12 Summary of Sentence Patterns

CLAUSES AND SIMPLE SENTENCES

SUBJECT	PREDICATE	
subject	intransitive verb	adverb or prepositional phrase
My grandfather	walks	slowly. to the store.

subject	linking verb	complement		
That recipe	sounds/looks	delicious.	← adjective	
Bill	seems	a little worried.	← adjective phrase	
Sasha	is becoming	a lawyer.	← noun phrase	only with <i>be</i> or <i>become</i>
My sister	is	in Chicago.	← prepositional phrase	only with <i>be</i>

subject	transitive verb	direct object
Hiro	sold	the house.

subject	transitive verb	indirect object	direct object
The lecture	gave	me	an interesting idea.

subject	transitive verb	direct object	to/for phrase (indirect object)
Rolando	brought	presents	for the children.

PASSIVE SENTENCES

subject	passive verb		
The trash	is picked up	at 6:00.	← simple present
His house	was damaged	in the storm.	← simple past
The street	hasn't been cleaned	yet.	← present perfect
You	will be taken care of	as soon as possible.	← future with will
Broccoli	can be eaten	cooked or raw.	← modal
Plans	are being made	to improve the city.	← present progressive

LINKING EXPRESSIONS

SENTENCE	LINKING EXPRESSION + CLAUSE
He lost his job and had no savings.	As a result , he couldn't pay his rent.
Many of her hobbies seem very dangerous to me.	For instance , she likes to go mountain climbing alone.

COMPOUND SENTENCES

MAIN/INDEPENDENT CLAUSE	COORDINATOR	MAIN/INDEPENDENT CLAUSE
They came early,	so	they got the best seats.
He lost his wallet,	but	someone returned it.

COMPLEX SENTENCES

ADVERB/DEPENDENT CLAUSE	MAIN/INDEPENDENT CLAUSE
Before you decide,	look at all the facts.
If you want more dessert,	just help yourself.

MAIN/INDEPENDENT CLAUSE	DEPENDENT CLAUSE
You can watch TV	if you get home early.

BEGINNING OF MAIN CLAUSE	ADJECTIVE/DEPENDENT CLAUSE	END OF MAIN CLAUSE
The woman	that Maria introduced us to	was really smart.