

The Construction of the Sentence

SUBJECTS AND PREDICATES

Subjects are linked with the main noun of the sentence, and predicates are concerned with the main verb of the sentence. Every sentence will have a subject and a predicate (otherwise it is a fragment). A basic example is “Spot runs.” In this case, “Spot” is the subject and “runs” is the verb. A more complicated example is “The famed Spot mightily sped across the track and left his opponents to eat his dust,” wherein the subject is “The famed Spot” and the predicate is “mightily sped across the track and left his opponents to eat his dust.”

DIRECT AND INDIRECT OBJECTS

- The term “**direct object**” refers to a noun or pronoun that is directly receiving action. Ask yourself “who or what is receiving the action”? “They named *him*” (Who did they name? They named *him*). If the sentence read “They named *him* Spot,” then *him* would still be the direct object, and *Spot* would be what is called an “object complement.”
- To find an “**indirect object**,” ask look between the action verb and the direct object. “To/for whom” or “to/for what” is the action being performed? It should be a noun or pronoun. In the sentence, “Spot gave Joe a chance,” *Chance* would be the direct object and *Joe* would be the indirect object since he is receiving the action.

***Hint:** Look for direct objects first.

***Hint:** A direct or indirect object will never be in a prepositional phrase; mark out prepositional phrases from the beginning if it will help you avoid this error!

PREDICATE NOMINATIVES AND PREDICATE ADJECTIVES

Predicate nominatives and predicate adjectives are found in sentences with linking verbs.

- What is a **predicate nominative**? A predicate nominative is a *subject* (a noun; kind of sounds like nominative?) found in the *predicate*. All that a predicate nominative does is rename the subject of the sentence proper. In the sentence “Spot is a *runner*,” the word *runner* is the predicate nominative because it renames spot. Predicate nominatives are kind of like creative pronouns!
- **Predicate adjectives**, like predicate nominatives, are located in the sentence predicate and found after linking verbs. The difference is that the predicate adjective does not rename—it describes (because it is an adjective!). In the sentence “The Spot analogy is *old*,” *old* is the predicate adjective because it comes after a linking verb and describes the subject, *analogy*. Does the description “old analogy” make sense? Yes!