

Parts of the Sentence

Subjects, predicates

Size matters not.

There are no boundaries on the length of a sentence. Some sentences are short, some are long. As long as a sentence has both a subject and a predicate, it is complete.



Subject

That part about which something is being said, the “who” or “what”

- **The most dangerous saltwater fish** is probably the great barracuda.
- Sleek and sharp-eyed are the **members of this species**.

The doer of the action

- **The quarterback** threw the football for the winning touchdown.

(sometimes left out of the sentence and so understood but not expressed)

- Close the door. (Subject: (you))

Simple Subject: the main word

Complete Subject: the groups of words

- The cost of paper has increased. (*The cost of paper* is the complete subject; simple subject is *cost*)

Predicate

That part of the sentence which says something about the subject, “what about it?”

The action of the sentence

Simple predicate: the principal verb

Complete predicate: a group of words that includes the verb but also the words that follow it (the entire back half of the sentence!)

- Dolphins communicate with each other by high-pitched whistles and grunts. (Complete predicate: *communicate with each other by high-pitched whistles and grunts*; Simple predicate: *communicate*)

Verb phrase: includes a helping word (*are walking, will walk, has walked, might have walked*)

- Has Jane arrived? (verb phrase: *has arrived*)
- The new stadium will certainly contain many more seats. (verb phrase *will contain*)

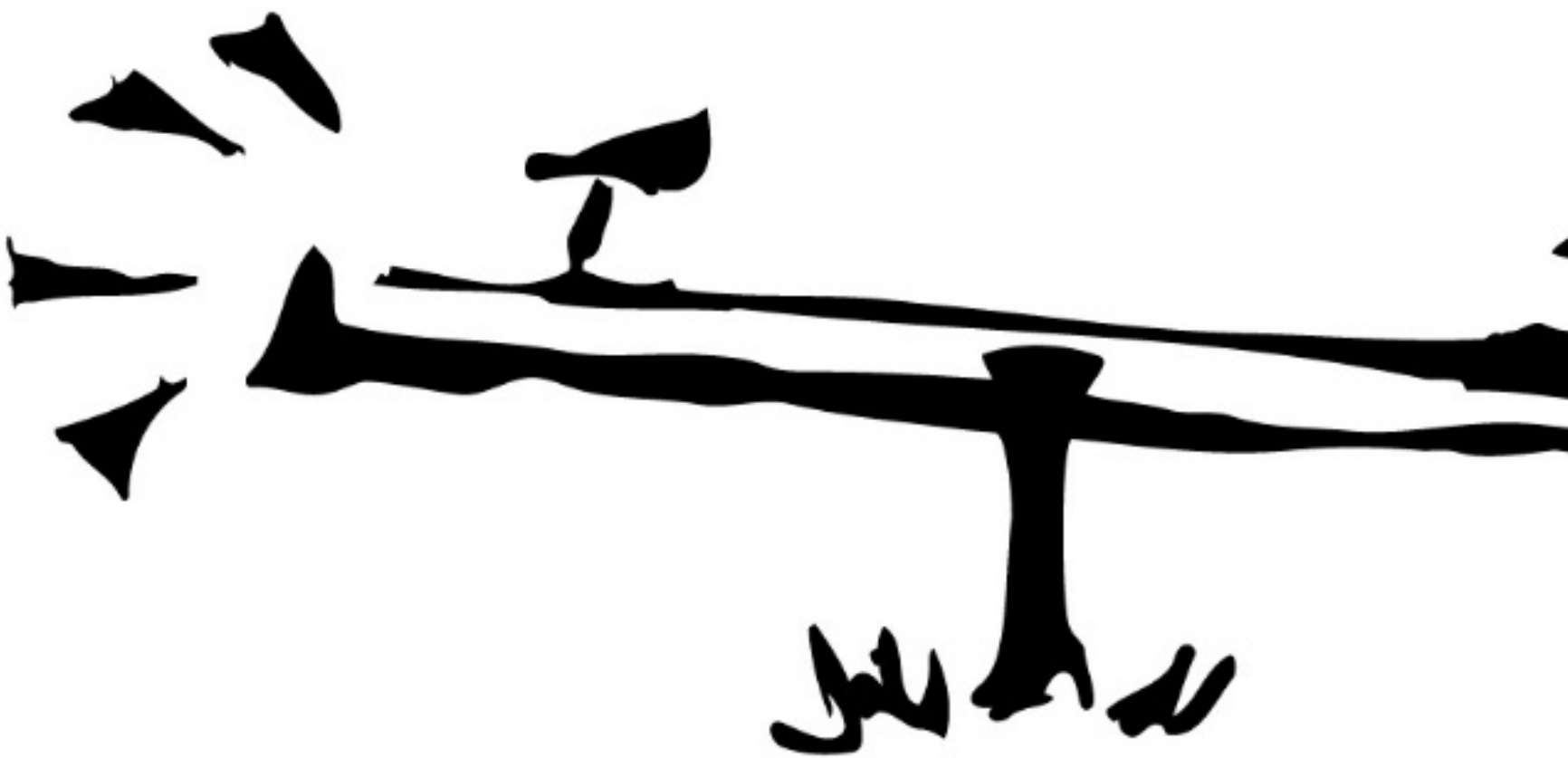
Compound subjects and verbs

Two or more subjects connected by **and** or **or/nor** which have the same verb: compound subject

- **Betsy** and **Nick** are taking ski lessons this winter.
- Neither **Betsy** nor **Nick** have skied before.

Two or more verbs joined by a connecting word and having the same subject are called a compound verb

- Ski lessons **scare** and **thrill** me.



How to find the subject

Because the subject may appear at almost any point in the sentence, you might find it easier to locate the verb first!

- The leaders of the troops **were** carefully **chosen**. (verb: were chosen)

Then ask yourself: “Who or what is doing the action?”

- Who or what was chosen? Leaders.

Some sentences begin with *There* or *Here*. In this case, the subject will be located elsewhere in the sentence, not at the beginning. Ask yourself “who or what” to find the subject.

Other sentences ask questions, which usually begin with a verb, verb helper, or interrogatives like what, when, where, how, why. The subject usually follows the verb.

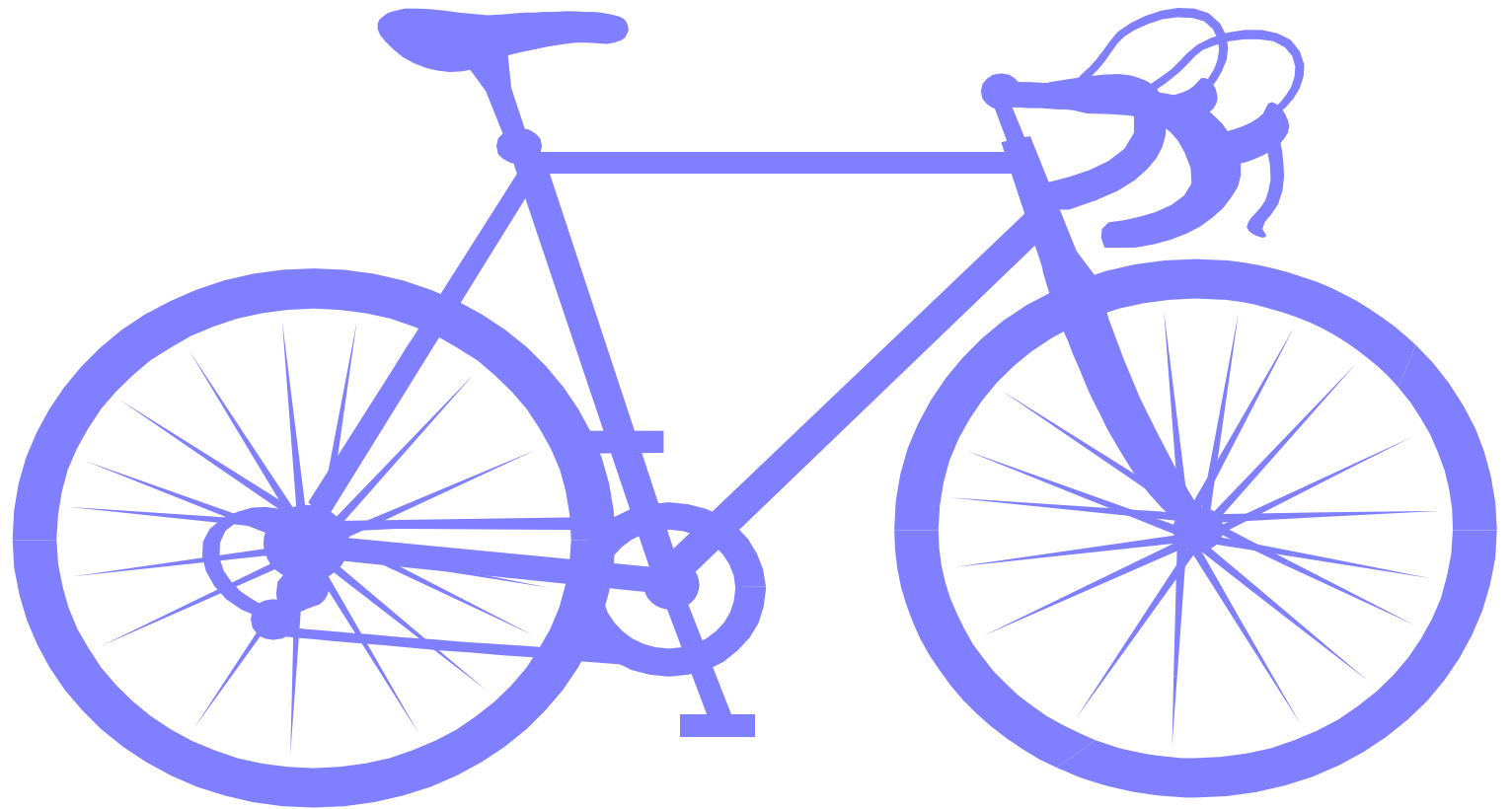
Don't separate.....!

Subjects and predicates connect directly. Do NOT separate them by a comma (even if you “take a breath”).

- Incorrect: Betsy and her family, plan to visit Colonial Williamsburg again.
- Correct: Betsy and her family plan to visit Colonial Williamsburg again.

A sentence is like.....

A bike.



Sentence variety

Sentences aren't always evenly balanced. Sometimes there is more detail in the subject part...

- Old copies of This Old House Magazine overflowed t...



Sentence variety

...and sometimes there is more information in the predicate....

- In the sport of rowing, athletes **race against each other by propelling shells (or boats) in rivers or lakes using oars and the principle of leverage.**



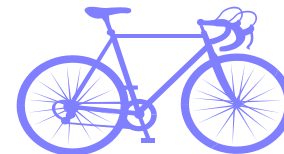
A look ahead....to Dependent clauses

Dependent clauses cannot stand alone. They are like baskets that need to be attached to a basic sentence.

Sometimes these clauses will begin with a subordinating conjunction.

Think of dependent clauses as baskets to  to the bicycle.

- When the music began
- Everyone started to dance.



When the music began, everyone started to dance.

Everyone started to dance when the music began.