

SENTENCE PATTERNS

At the very simplest level, sentences have two parts: a subject (the actor) and a verb (the action or state of being) which, taken together, express a complete thought. Although most sentences are more complex and contain more words, even the most complex sentence will include these two parts. Since writers often wish to express ideas which require more information, such as descriptions of the actor or the action or conditions, sentences typically do include other elements.

When writing sentences, the following are common sentence patterns. Note the sentence components and the word order.

S – V – SC (Subject-Verb-Subject Complement)

Sometimes another word is added to the sentence to complete the meaning of the subject or the verb. This word is called a **complement**. Complements have different names. A subject complement—typically a noun or an adjective—**follows a linking verb and renames or better describes the subject**.

*The fish were **happy**.*
S LV SC

*She is **the leader**.*
S LV SC

*Some students are **scholarship recipients**.*
S LV SC

*The children are **intelligent**.*
S LV SC

Verb complements—also known as objects—focus on the actor/action relationship of the subject and verb. There are two types: direct and indirect objects.

S – V – DO (Subject-Verb-Direct Object)

A **direct object** is a noun or pronoun which receives the action of the verb. The **subject performs the action directly on the object**, so the direct object answers the question “who?” or “what?”. **NOTE:** A linking verb can never have a direct object, and a direct object will never be within a prepositional phrase.

*The dog caught **the Frisbee**.*
S V DO

*John stole **the food**.*
S V DO

*He drove **the car**.*
S V DO

*Selena hates **biting her fingernails**.*
S V DO

S – V – IDO – DO (Subject-Verb-Indirect Object-Direct Object)

Indirect objects are also commonly used to enhance sentence meaning. They are the nouns or pronouns that **receive the direct object**, answering the questions “to whom?”, “for whom?”, “to what?” or “for what?”.

*My boss gave me **a raise**.*
S V IDO DO

*George gave Martha **a new dress**.*
S V IDO DO

*The teacher gave the class **a difficult test**.*
S V IDO DO

*Kelly left him **the mail**.*
S V IDO DO