



Basic Sentence Structure

All sentences contain a subject (usually a noun or a pronoun) and a verb (predicate) which tells what the subject is or does. The following chart presents the different types of subjects and predicates.

Subject	<i>A subject is the part of the sentence that takes action and shows who or what the sentence is about.</i>
Simple Subject	<i>Maria</i> baked chocolate chip cookies. <i>My friend</i> is a wonderful cook. <i>My mother</i> likes to cook spaghetti.
Complete Subject	<i>A complete subject is the noun or pronoun and all the words which describe it.</i> <i>My best friend</i> baked chocolate chip cookies.
Compound Subject	<i>A compound subject is made up of two or more simple subjects.</i> <i>Sarah, Jesse, and Sam</i> like to decorate wedding cakes. (<i>Sarah, Jesse, and Sam</i> are all parts of the subject.)
Verb	<i>The verb or predicate is the part of the sentence which tells what the subject is or does.</i>
Simple Verb or Predicate	<i>Thomas is</i> a good cook. <i>Maria baked</i> the cake for my dad’s birthday.
Complete Verb Phrase or Predicate	<i>The complete verb phrase or predicate is the simple verb with all the words which describe it.</i> <i>Thomas has been a good cook since he was eleven years old.</i> <i>Maria baked the cake yesterday afternoon.</i>
Compound Verb or Predicate	<i>A compound verb or predicate is made up of two or more simple verbs.</i> <i>Maria frosted and decorated</i> the cake.

- The usual sentence structure in English is Subject—Verb—Object.
- When this structure is changed, the punctuation helps guide the reader. For example:
 - ◊ *If a word or phrase comes before the subject*, it [S] is [V] usually followed by a comma. [as in this sentence]
 - ◊ *Therefore*, this [S] rule [V] can be important to remember.
 - ◊ Words [S], *occasionally*, may come [V] between the subject and the verb, and they are also set off by commas.
- When two sentences are joined, but have different subjects, a comma comes before the joining word:
 - ◊ *Maria* baked the cake for my dad’s birthday, but *Thomas* cooked the rest of the dinner.
- When one subject does two different actions, no comma is used:
 - ◊ *Maria loves* to bake cakes and cookies but never *makes* pies.