

Lesson 1 - Understanding Sentence Structure**How to Navigate a Lesson****To move from one page in the lesson to another**

- Click the continue button at the bottom of the page. See the one at the bottom of this page.
- Click a link in the lesson menu on the left. Each link is the title of a page in the lesson.

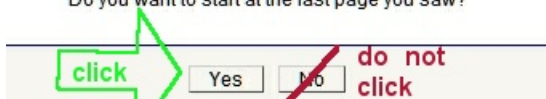
To work through a lesson

You will have the best success with the exercises if you read each page of each lesson and the assigned pages in your textbook. To work through a lesson, you will move from one page to another, as described above. Read through the lesson in the order in which it is presented. On any page where you are instructed to read from a textbook, complete textbook material, follow a link to an exercise, or any similar task, do so, and complete it to the best of your ability, using what you have learned up until that point in addition to the directions given on that page.

To resume a lesson

If you leave a lesson before you complete it -- for example to do an exercise, or to comment in a discussion, or just because it's time for bed -- when you return, the lesson will ask you

You have seen more than one page of this lesson already.
Do you want to start at the last page you saw?



Nearly always, you should click "Yes." You only want to click "No" if you are certain that you have already concluded the lesson.

To conclude a lesson

You conclude a lesson by viewing the very last page of the lesson. On that page, you will see

Congratulations - end of lesson reached**TEXTBOOK PURCHASE REQUIRED**

Rhetorical Grammar: Grammatical Choices, Rhetorical Effects, 6th edition, by Martha Kolln and Loretta Gray, Longman Publishers (www.pearsonhighered.com). Compare prices online with ISBN 9780205706754, but delivery is slower and unreliable. Make sure that you have the SIXTH edition. Earlier editions are quite different. Order at least two weeks before the start date.

Where are we going?

In this first lesson, we are going to discuss sentence structure. Some questions we will explore include:

- What are the required elements of a sentence?
- How can complicated sentences be broken down into smaller parts?
- How can we combine sentence elements grammatically?

Why is it important to study sentence structure?

Although as native speakers of English we instinctively know how to speak grammatically, as writers we can make errors if we don't fully understand how the parts of a sentence work together. For writers, another important issue is knowing how we can manipulate or play with these sentence elements to make our writing more lively. Varying our sentence structure can make our writing more rhythmic or emphasize certain information.

THE REQUIRED ELEMENTS

To begin, let's take a look at the two required elements of every sentence, the subject and predicate. There is a thorough discussion of these in your textbook.

Before continuing with this lesson, read pages 6-12, 19-21, 30-31 in *Rhetorical Grammar*, by Martha Kolln.

[Click here to answer three short questions about the reading in Kolln.](#)

Branch Table

Description 1: I answered the questions, and I'm ready to go forward in this lesson.

Jump 1: Next page

Subject/Predicate vs. Noun Phrase/ Verb Phrase:

As Kolln explains, another way to think about sentence structure is to imagine a complete sentence as containing a noun phrase subject and a verb phrase predicate. A noun phrase (which can be as short as one word) is the subject, whereas the verb phrase is the rest of the sentence containing the main verb. The verb phrase can be as short as one word, as in the sentence:

Jason *laughed.*

noun phrase verb phrase

subject predicate

However, it is usually much longer, containing many shorter phrases such as

Jason *laughed cheerfully when the substitute teacher mispronounced his last name.*

noun phrase verb phrase

subject predicate

Noun Phrase and Verb Phrase Definitions

One way to define noun and verb phrases is as follows:

Noun phrase: Main noun (your book calls this a headword noun) + modifying words

For example, in the sentence, *My fuzzy black poodle barks too much*, "poodle" is the main or headword noun, while "my," "fuzzy," and "black" are the words modifying or describing the main noun.

Subject = subject complement

*linking verb (noun phrase)**

Arielle is studious

Subject = subject complement

*linking verb (adjectival)**

Some examples of linking verbs include *be*, *look*, *remains*, and *become*:

- *Cats are predators.*
- *The firefighter remained calm when the roof collapsed.*
- *Leslie looks happy today.*
- *Her mother became concerned.*

* Grammar terminology sometimes differs between books. Kolln uses the term subject complements, but you might have learned other names. Noun phrase subject complements are sometimes called *predicate nouns* or *predicate nominatives*. Adjectival subject complements are sometimes called *predicate adjectives*. If you encounter different terminology in a textbook or in school, just understand that different names exist for the same thing.

Exercise 2: Identifying Noun Phrases

Directions: Identify the noun phrases in the following sentences.

Hint: Watch out! There may be more than one of each type. If you have trouble identifying the nouns, divide the sentence between subject and predicate. Also, notice if there are two verbs in the sentence. If so, that could mean that you have two subjects or two direct objects.

See the examples under each section.

Part A: Find the direct object (DO).

Remember, a DO is most often the noun which directly follows the verb. Again, watch out; there might be more than one per sentence.

Please write the answer in all lowercase letters. Exception: **C**apitalize the first letter of proper nouns.

Example: *Jim repairs computers in his spare time.*

Answer: *computers*

Click here to go to [Lesson 1 - Exercise 2](#).

Knowing Your Subject Prevents Errors

Read pages 61-63 (Subject-Verb Agreement).

A subject/verb agreement error occurs when the predicate does not agree with the subject headword in number. An obvious example is

The runner are getting tired.

This subject/verb agreement error is easily identifiable by any native speaker. We can quickly see that the subject headword *runner* is singular while the predicate headword *are* is a plural form of the verb *be*.

Some subject/verb agreement errors are less obvious, however. Writers tend to make errors when the complete subject

contains multiple noun phrases. The farther the subject headword is from the predicate headword, the more likelihood there is for error. Which verb is correct in the following sentence?

Even for advanced writers, no part of writing essays seem/seems more daunting than coming up with effective beginnings and endings.

Which form of the verb did you choose? What is the subject headword? If you chose *seems* to agree with the subject headword *part*, you are correct. A common error would be to treat *essays* as the headword; however, this noun is the object of a prepositional phrase modifying *part*. If you are a native speaker of English, many of these pitfalls can be avoided by reading your drafts out loud; however, if you find that you still don't catch all the errors, you must rely on your grammatical knowledge.

Writing Tip

To improve clarity, eliminate words between the subject and predicate headwords.

Exercise 3: Proofreading

In the following excerpt, the author discusses a new exhibition of ancient artifacts. Although the original does not contain any subject-verb agreement errors, we have added some. Can you find them? Look for the **subject-verb agreement errors** in the following paragraph.

- **Identify** each one.
- **Explain** why it might be a common error.
- Copy and paste this exercise into a Word document. Follow the instructions. Save your document on your hard drive in a safe place where you will be able to find it again. Then upload your document to "[Lesson 1 - Exercise 3](#)."

From "First Cities," by Calvin Tomkins

News of the catastrophic looting of Baghdad museums coincide, in the most heartrending way, with the countdown to a long-planned exhibition, opening on May 8th at the Metropolitan Museum, of Early Bronze Age art from the region that now includes Iraq. Called "Art of the First Cities," the exhibition covers a wide area, all the way from the Eastern Mediterranean to Pakistan, but its focal point is Mesopotamia, the "land between the rivers" (the Tigris and the Euphrates), where, by the third millennium B.C., the Sumerian people had invented cities, writing, irrigation farming, monumental architecture, government by law, and countless other benefactions of what we call civilization...Much of the material in "First Cities" come from Western museums. The British Museum are sending, among many other objects, the great "Standard of Ur," a mosaic displaying scenes of royalty in one of the most important Sumerian urban centers; Ur was in what is now southern Iraq, near Nasiriya, where U.S. forces encountered such fierce resistance in late March. The Louvre, "which more or less emptied its galleries to help us," according to Tarapor, have sent its world-famous diorite statue of Gudea, the enlightened and humanistic ruler of the city-state of Lagash, which was also in southern Iraq. One of the great themes of Mesopotamian artists were the interaction between humans and gods. Joan Aruz refer in the exhibition's huge catalogue to "combinations of human and animal figures [which] create images of supernatural creatures," such as the immensely powerful "Standing Lioness Demon" lent by the Brooklyn Museum and the many images of bulls or bull-humans, which symbolized power and fertility. More vigorous and less refined than Egyptian art of the same period, which shows few indications of Mesopotamian influence, the Sumerian styles in sculpture, beadwork, pottery, metal, and other materials spreads all the way to the Indus River Valley, some eighteen hundred miles to the east. "We talk about globalization today," Tarapor said, "but they was every bit as global as we are."

EXAMPLE: Let's do sentence one together. Remember to identify and explain each error

1. *News of the catastrophic looting of Baghdad museums coincide, in the most heartrending way, with the countdown to a long-planned exhibition, opening on May 8th at the Metropolitan Museum, of Early Bronze Age art from the region that now includes Iraq.*

Identify *News...coincide should be News...coincides*

Explain *This sentence has a subject-verb error because the singular subject "news" is used with the plural verb "coincide." "News" looks plural because it ends in an "s," but "news" is a unit and requires a singular verb. Also, a careless writer may use the plural verb "coincide" to agree with "museums." However, "museums" is not the subject—museums is the object of the preposition "of." "News is the subject.*

Lesson 1 - Exercise 3

Revision Practice

You may notice that many of sentences in the previous excerpt are long and complex. Sentences of this type are useful to condense a great deal of information; however, the drawback is that these sentences are dense and can be more difficult or slower to read. As mentioned before, when there are fewer words between the subject headword and the predicate headword, the reader is able to understand the sentence's meaning more quickly. Depending on your purpose and your audience, you may want to revise your own writing to eliminate words, especially between the subject and predicate headwords. Sometimes these extra words can be moved to the beginning or end of the sentence if they are needed for content. Let's take a look at the following example of sentence revision:

Unclear:

No part of writing elegant, effective, and rigorously academic essays--even for advanced writers-- seems more daunting than coming up with effective beginnings and endings.

vs.

Clearer:

Even for advanced writers, no part of writing elegant, effective, and rigorously academic essays seems more daunting than coming up with effective beginnings and endings.

vs.

Much clearer:

Even for advanced writers, no part of writing essays seems more daunting than coming up with effective beginnings and endings.

vs.

Clearest:

Even for advanced essay writers, nothing seems more daunting than coming up with effective beginnings and endings.

Exercise 4: Revision

- **Choose** a short excerpt (about 3-4 sentences) from "First Cities."
- **Revise** these sentences deeply, eliminating any extra words in all parts of the sentence. If there are words between the subject and predicate headwords, see if you can eliminate or move them. Be careful not to change the meaning of the sentences, but instead strive for clarity so that the sentences' meanings are readily apparent.
- **Post** these sentences in "[Lesson 1 - Exercise 4](#)."

From "First Cities," by Calvin Tomkins

News of the catastrophic looting of Baghdad museums coincide, in the most heartrending way, with the countdown to a long-planned exhibition, opening on May 8th at the Metropolitan Museum, of Early Bronze Age art from the region that now includes Iraq. Called "Art of the First Cities," the exhibition covers a wide area, all the way from the Eastern Mediterranean to

Pakistan, but its focal point is Mesopotamia, the "land between the rivers" (the Tigris and the Euphrates), where, by the third millennium B.C., the Sumerian people had invented cities, writing, irrigation farming, monumental architecture, government by law, and countless other benefactions of what we call civilization...Much of the material in "First Cities" come from Western museums. The British Museum are sending, among many other objects, the great "Standard of Ur," a mosaic displaying scenes of royalty in one of the most important Sumerian urban centers; Ur was in what is now southern Iraq, near Nasiriya, where U.S. forces encountered such fierce resistance in late March. The Louvre, "which more or less emptied its galleries to help us," according to Tarapor, have sent its world-famous diorite statue of Gudea, the enlightened and humanistic ruler of the city-state of Lagash, which was also in southern Iraq. One of the great themes of Mesopotamian artists were the interaction between humans and gods. Joan Aruz refer in the exhibition's huge catalogue to "combinations of human and animal figures [which] create images of supernatural creatures," such as the immensely powerful "Standing Lioness Demon" lent by the Brooklyn Museum and the many images of bulls or bull-humans, which symbolized power and fertility. More vigorous and less refined than Egyptian art of the same period, which shows few indications of Mesopotamian influence, the Sumerian styles in sculpture, beadwork, pottery, metal, and other materials spreads all the way to the Indus River Valley, some eighteen hundred miles to the east. "We talk about globalization today," Tarapor said, "but they was every bit as global as we are."

How to Post Your Work

Post your work in [Lesson 1 - Exercise 4](#) by clicking the "Edit my submission" button. In the text box that opens,

- You can copy and paste work you've composed in another program, or
- you can compose in the text box.

When you're done, click "Save changes." You will be returned to the main page of this exercise.

If you need to change your post now or later, click the "Edit my submission" button, and you can edit inside the text box.

The Optional Elements : Adverbials

So far, we have focused only on simple sentences with a basic subject + predicate construction; however, to add information, we sometimes need an additional element in our sentences. This is often a type of adverbial phrase and would be placed in what Kolln calls "The Optional Slot." She explains this well in "The Optional Slot" on pages 28-29.

Please read these pages now.

What are "adverbials"?

As Kolln explains, the term adverbial refers to any grammatical structure that answers the questions:

When:	<u><i>When Michael wakes up, he eats breakfast.</i></u>
Where:	<u><i>My dog always races to the dog park.</i></u>
Why:	<u><i>To improve my Spanish, I will spend the summer in Belize.</i></u>
	<u><i>Annie plays basketball because she loves teamwork and competition.</i></u>
How:	<u><i>He solved the problem with great difficulty.</i></u>

(Where do you think **Who** and **What** questions are answered?)

Why are adverbials optional?

Although adverbials may be necessary for content, they are considered optional because you can eliminate them, and the remaining words will still form a grammatical sentence.

Annie plays basketball because she loves teamwork and competition.

Adverbial

If you remove the adverbial, the remaining words *Annie plays basketball* still contain the required elements of a sentence: a subject and a predicate.

Also the placement of adverbials is often optional, depending on the adverbial's grammatical structure. The sentence about Annie has three optional slots:

1. **Before the subject.**

Because she loves teamwork and competition, Annie plays basketball.

(Notice that a comma is needed after the adverbial since it comes before the subject.)

2. **Between the subject and predicate.**

Annie, because she loves teamwork and competition, plays basketball.

(Notice that commas are needed AROUND the adverbial since it comes between the subject and the verb.)

3. **At the end of the sentence.**

Annie plays basketball because she loves teamwork and competition.

(No comma is needed when the adverbial comes at the end of the sentence.)

Say these three sentences out loud. What do you notice about rhythm and emphasis? Would one of these sentences be less clear to a reader?

Types of Adverbials

In Chapter 1, Koln briefly discusses four types of grammatical structures for adverbials:

- adverbs,
- prepositional phrases,
- subordinate clauses,
- infinitives.

Let's review them here.

Adverbs are single words that modify (describe) verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, and complete sentences (see pages 13-15 and 151-152):

a verb:	<i>Brittany</i>	<i>(sang)</i>	<u><i>beautifully.</i></u>
		verb	adverb

an adjective:	<i>Her song was</i>	<u><i>absolutely</i></u>	<i>(lovely).</i>
		adverb	adjective

another adverb:	<i>Brittany sang</i>	<u><i>very</i></u>	<i>(beautifully).</i>
		adverb	adverb

FINAL WRITING ASSIGNMENT (FWA)

This assignment has two parts: 1) an essay and 2) your analysis.

PART 1: Essay

Now it's time to apply what we've learned to writing. Here, I'd like you to write a short essay (approximately 1.5 pages, double spaced -- 350-500 words). We will use the text you generate for analysis both in Lesson 2 and as part of this assignment. Here is your topic.

How much do you know about your family tree? How important is it to you to know where your family came from, what it has done, and how its heritage might affect your own personality and abilities? Explain your response.

As you write your essay, think about aspects of good essay writing such as organization and development. Don't answer the questions robotically, but instead use them as a tool to develop an overarching theme. Make sure that your paragraphs relate to this theme and to each other.

Be sure to develop your paragraphs by providing examples and concrete details to illustrate your ideas.

Examples: "My mother's uncle Ted helped name me." "We have a heritage of violinists, and I will start learning the violin soon." "Aunt Tija is svelte and tall, unlike most women of Chinese descent."

PART 2: Analysis

In this course, **analysis is the most important aspect of most assignments**. Often, you will be asked to change your prose in ways that may not improve it. The purpose is to give you material to analyze. I want to see you thinking about what happens when you manipulate prose. This thinking (analysis) shows you what you can do, should do, and shouldn't do.

- a) Proofread for subject/verb agreement. If you find a mistake with subject /verb agreement, **write a short note to your instructor analyzing why you made the mistake**. Were there many noun phrases in the subject, for example?
- b) Find two sentences that do not follow the basic noun phrase + verb phrase pattern, such as one that begins with an adverbial clause instead of the subject. **Write a short paragraph explaining why you chose this construction**. How does this sentence pattern variation improve or possibly detract from your prose?
- c) Experiment with adding adverbials to your simple noun phrase + verb phrase structures. Try varying your sentence patterns. **Write a short analysis discussing what effect these changes might have on your prose**.

Due Together In One Document File:

Part 1: Essay

- A short essay (approximately 1.5 pages, double spaced -- 350-500 words).

Before submitting your essay, read Part 2: Analysis (above) and complete Part 2.

Part 2: Analysis of Essay

- a short note to your instructor analyzing why you made the mistake
- a short paragraph explaining why you chose the two constructions that are *not* noun phrase + verb phrase pattern
- a short analysis discussing what effect adding adverbials to your noun phrase + verb phrase structures might have on your prose

Submit Parts 1 & 2 (essay and analysis) as **one** file.

Important:

- This assignment is incomplete unless BOTH Parts 1 and 2 are uploaded together as one file.

[Click here to upload your FWA as one file.](#)

Make sure that you can define each of these words. If you are unclear about any of their meanings, please ask your instructor for an explanation:

Subject	Direct object
Predicate	Expanded Verb
Headword	Indirect object
Noun phrase	Subject complement
Verb phrase	Object of the preposition
Main verb	Subject/verb agreement
Auxiliary verb	Adverbial
	Optional Slot

Branch Table

Description 1: Click here to complete Lesson 1

Jump 1: Complete Lesson 1

Do you want to [complete Lesson 1](#)?

Multiple Choice

Answer 1: Yes

Response 1: Okay. Click the last Continue button to complete the lesson!

Score 1: 1

Jump 1: End of lesson

Answer 2: No.

Response 2: Okay. When you are ready to complete, please come back to this page and click "Yes."

Until then, choose the page you want to read from the list on the left.

Score 2: 0

Jump 2: This page