

JOHNSON COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

THE SENTENCE--PART I
SENTENCE PATTERNS

A knowledge of basic sentence structure is necessary to write well. Despite the complexity of our language there are only six basic sentence patterns into which words are arranged. Once the six basic patterns have been learned, the study of more complicated patterns will be easier. Most of the more difficult sentences are merely combinations of the basic sentences or well-defined orderly alterations of them.

Note that in each of the six basic sentence patterns, the function of the verb and the nature of the complement or completer required by the verb, are what distinguishes one pattern from another. Verbs are identified as transitive or intransitive. Transitive verbs transfer the action of the verb to a receiver. Intransitive verbs have no noun or object to act upon.

Sentence Pattern #1: Made up of a subject and a verb plus any modifiers--there is no complement or completer; therefore, the verb is intransitive: **S V**

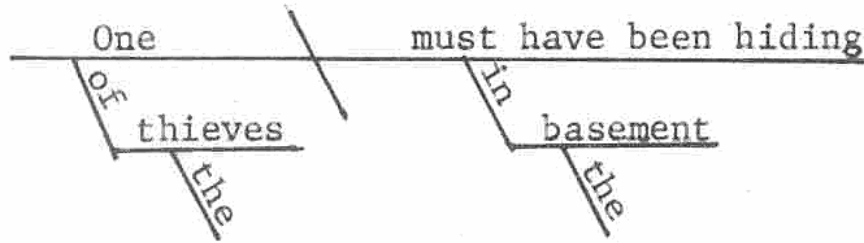
Examples (subject is bold, verb is underlined, and prepositional phrases are in parentheses):

Boys sing.

The **boys** (in the choir) (from Detroit) sing sweetly (at Christmas).



One (of the thieves) must have been hiding (in the basement).

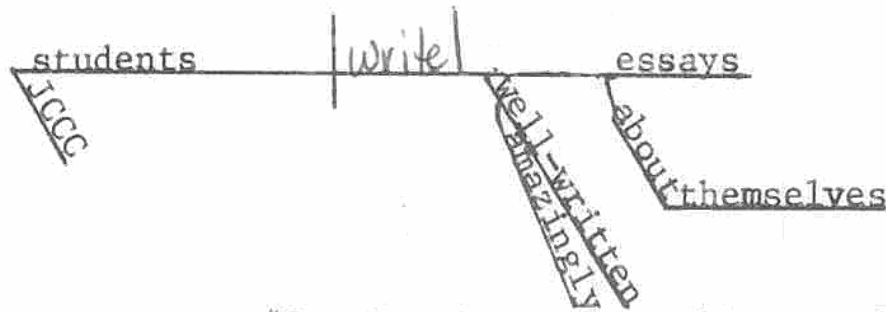


Sentence Pattern #2: Made of a subject and a verb and a direct object. The verb is transitive because it is acting upon an object directly: **S V DO**

Examples (subject is bold, verb is underlined, and direct object is italicized):

Students write *essays*.

JCCC **students** write amazingly well-written *essays* about themselves.



With one special kind of verb there is a problem of distinguishing between a direct object and an object of a preposition. Notice these two sentences:

Harry jumped off the box.

Harry took off his raincoat.

The first sentence is Pattern #1. *Off* is a preposition, *box* is the object of the preposition, and the prepositional phrase is used as an adverbial modifier, because it tells where Harry jumped.

The second sentence is Pattern #2. The verb, with its adverbial modifier *off*, is the equivalent of the transitive verb *remove*. *Raincoat* is the direct object.

There is another way to distinguish between the adverbial use and the prepositional use of such a word as *off* in the above examples. When the word is a vital adverbial modifier of the verb, it

can, in most cases, be used in either of two positions: immediately following the verb or following the direct object--"Harry took off his raincoat" or "Harry took his raincoat off." But when the word is a preposition, the alternate position is not possible. "Harry jumped the box off" is non-English.

Here are some other examples of this kind of verb with adverbial modifier(s). Notice that in each case you can easily find a transitive verb synonym for the combination:

- ...give up (relinquish) his rights
- ...leave out (omit) the second chapter
- ...put out (extinguish) the fire
- ...make over (alter) an old dress
- ...make up (invent) an excuse

Sentence Pattern #3: Consists of a subject and a verb with two completers of the verb: the direct object, which directly receives the action of the transitive verb and answers *who* or *what*, and the indirect object, which indirectly receives the action of the verb and answers *to whom* (or *which*) or *for whom* (or *which*).

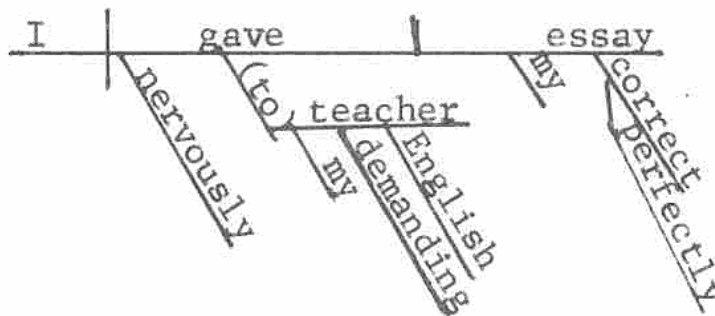
NOTE: There cannot be an indirect object without a direct object.

A typical verb for this sentence pattern is *give, allow, assign, ask, tell, write, send, show, pay, grant*, etc. (Nearly all sentences using these verbs can make essentially the same statement by using a prepositional phrase, the preposition usually being *to* or *for*. When the preposition is present in the sentence, it is a Pattern #2 sentence.) Pattern #3: **S V IO DO**

Examples (subject is bold, verb is underlined, direct object is italicized, and indirect object is in all capital letters):

I gave the TEACHER my *essay*.

I nervously gave my demanding English TEACHER my perfectly correct *essay*.



- REMEMBER:
1. Every verb has a subject.
 2. Some verbs have a direct object.
 3. A few verbs have both a direct object and an indirect object.

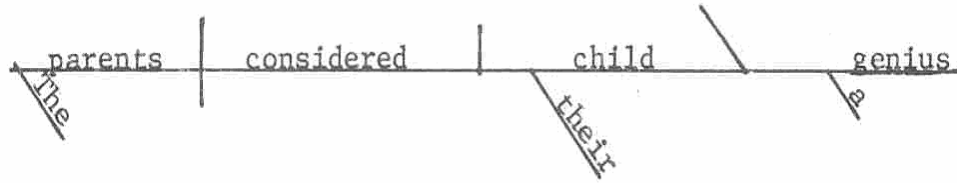
Sentence Pattern #4: Consists of a subject and a verb and two completers. The one closer to the verb is the direct object and the second one is the objective complement, which is either a noun that renames the direct object or an adjective that describes the direct object.

NOTE: You may test this pattern by inserting *to be*. Sometimes the word *as* is used between the direct object and object complement.

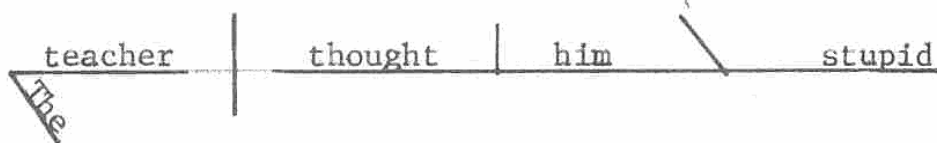
The following verbs are the most frequently used in Sentence Pattern #4: *elect, appoint, name, call, consider, find, make, think*. **S V DO OC**

Examples (subject is bold, verb is underlined, direct object is italicized, and object complement is in all capital letters):

The **parents** considered their *child* a GENIUS.



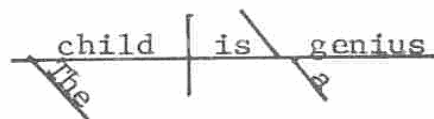
The **teacher** thought *him* STUPID.



Sentence Pattern #5: Consists of a subject, a special kind of intransitive verb called a linking verb (a list follows) and a subjective complement (may be a noun which renames the subject): **S LV NC**

Example (subject is bold, linking verb is underlined, subjective complement—noun—is italicized):

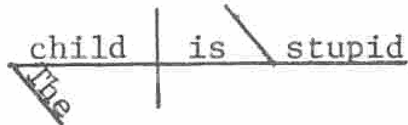
The **child** is a *genius*.



Sentence Pattern #6: Consists of a subject, a special kind of intransitive verb called a linking verb and a subjective complement (may be an adjective which describes the subject): **S LV AC**

Example (subject is bold, linking verb is underlined, subjective complement—adjective—is italicized):

The **child** is *stupid*.



Linking Verbs--Verbs that do not always express action.

Become	She became a housewife.
Grow	He grew weary of the lecture.
Turn	Mac turned green with envy.
Seem	Mary seemed ill to me.
Appear	Gladys appeared well to me.
Look	Frances looks good in red.
Remain	He remained calm.
Stay	He stayed my friend.
Continue	The weather continued warm.
Feel	Later he felt better.
Smell	The fish smells spoiled.
Taste	The fish tastes terrible.
Sound	This sentence sounds all right to me.
Prove	She proved faithful to the end.
Get	The roads have been getting progressively worse.
Wear	Her patience is wearing thin.

The following *to be* verbs:

Be	Shall be	Being	Will be	Am	Has been
Are	Have been	Is	Had been	Was	Shall have been
Were	Will have been				

NOTE: An alternative to the basic sentence patterns given is the passive voice. Only transitive verbs can have passive verb forms; therefore, only patterns #2, #3, and #4 can be altered to this structure. Because the use of passive voice is considered to be lifeless writing, many composition teachers will discourage it.

Examples:

Sentence Pattern #2 Active--Students write essays.

Passive--Essays are written by students.

Sentence Pattern #3 Active--I gave the teacher my essay.

Passive--My essay was given to the teacher by me.

Sentence Pattern #4 Active--The parents considered their son a genius.

Passive--Their son was considered a genius by the parents.

If the doer of the action is expressed in a sentence using a passive verb, the doer must occur as the object of the preposition.

Active--I have.

Passive--I am had.

Practice Exercise A

Identify the sentence pattern (#1, #2, #3, #4, #5, or, #6) of each of the following sentences.

1. The museums provide something for everyone.
2. The runner ran around third base.
3. Trying to let in some fresh air, Doris opened a window.
4. The air outside was worse than the air inside.
5. Annie yielded to Jack's sweet talk.
6. Unemployment is getting worse.
7. Partying is fun.

8. Sue wants to quit her job.
9. Bert stumbled through the lobby of the union.
10. The excited horse threw its rider.
11. Have they started the game yet?
12. The hunter on safari killed two lions.
13. I haven't got any money for the movie.
14. There are two new theaters in town.
15. I enjoy going to the movies.
16. The pitcher pitched a wild pitch.
17. That wild pitch of his cost him the game.
18. The following students should report to the dean's office.
19. I have been following tennis for years.
20. This sentence is the last one in this exercise.

Practice Exercise B

Write two sentences as examples of each of the sentence patterns. Be sure to mark subject (*S*), verb (*V*), and complement (*DO*, *IO*, *OC*, *AC*, and/or *NC*).

Sentence Pattern #1

Sentence Pattern #2

Sentence Pattern #3

Sentence Pattern #4

Sentence Pattern #5

Sentence Pattern #6

Practice Exercise C

Give the sentence pattern for each sentence, and then diagram each sentence.

1. Mr. Brown denied every one of the accusations.
2. I shall assign the class the first three chapters of the textbook.
3. The floodwaters have been slowly receding since last Sunday.
4. Upon re-examination now, my youthful ambitions seem quite unrealistic.

5. A government chemist pronounced the grain unfit for human consumption.

6. The debating coach pointed out two serious flaws in my argument.

7. Bob had left his raincoat in one of his classrooms.

8. His stories left the children weak from laughter.

9. Professor Ewing's lectures have shown me the value of these surveys.

10. Mrs. Alberts keeps her house spotlessly clean.

11. The principal's answer to our request was a vehement "No."

12. Lately there has been an outbreak of mysterious forest fires.

13. I can offer you nothing except my deepest sympathy.

14. Most of us consider you the logical replacement for the missing treasurer.

15. In spite of the heat, the old man kept his overcoat on.

16. Sherman has become one of our most reliable investigators.

17. After the president's announcement, many of the reporters looked stunned.

18. Mr. Garfield has given us an inspirational example of self-sacrifice.

19. Before us stood a tall, stern-faced guard.

20. I'm optimistic about your chances for an early promotion.