

Handout 02.

Subject & Verb, Object of Preposition, and Appositive

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1HB1, 1HB2, 1HB3

Purwanto, M.A.

1 Subject and Verb

Every complete sentence needs these two parts. Find them first, and the rest of the sentence becomes much easier to understand.

What is the subject?

The subject is who or what the sentence is about. It is usually a noun (a person, place, thing, or idea) or a pronoun.

What is the verb?

The verb tells us what the subject does, or what state it is in (action or being).

The teacher explains the lesson. (*subject = teacher, verb = explains*)

My sister is a nurse. (*subject = sister, verb = is*)

EASY METHOD

Step 1 — find the verb first (the action word). Step 2 — ask "Who or what + verb?" The answer is your subject.
Example: "...explains..." → Who explains? → "The teacher." That is your subject.

Common trap: a noun that sits close to the verb is not always the subject. Sometimes the real subject is earlier in the sentence, especially when a prepositional phrase sits in between. We'll see exactly why in Section 2.

Practice 1 — Find the subject and verb

Underline the subject once and the verb twice.

1. *The students in the library are studying quietly.*
2. *Our professor always arrives early.*
3. *The bridge across the river collapsed last year.*
4. *Many countries around the world celebrate this holiday.*
5. *The information in these reports seems outdated.*

2 Object of the Preposition

This part explains the "trap" from Section 1 — and it is one of the most useful ideas for TOEFL grammar and reading.

What is a preposition?

A preposition is a small word that shows a relationship — usually place, time, or direction — between a noun and the rest of the sentence.

in	on	at	to	from	of
with	about	for	between	during	across

What is the object of the preposition?

It is the noun or pronoun that comes right after the preposition. Together, "preposition + object" forms a prepositional phrase.

We met **in the morning**.

She left the keys **on the table**.

The list **of items** is long.

GOLDEN RULE

The object of a preposition can never be the subject of the sentence. In the third example above, "items" looks close to the verb, but the real subject is "list," not "items." That's why the verb is "is," not "are."

Practice 2 — Find the prepositional phrase

Put brackets [] around the prepositional phrase and circle the object of the preposition.

1. The box of old photographs is in the closet.
2. One of my classmates speaks three languages.
3. The results of the experiment surprised everyone.
4. She walked through the crowded market slowly.
5. The number of applicants has increased this year.

3 Appositive

An appositive adds extra information about a noun, right next to it. TOEFL passages use appositives often, so knowing how to "skip past" one helps you find the real subject and verb faster.

What is an appositive?

An appositive is a noun or noun phrase that renames or explains another noun beside it. It is usually set off by a pair of commas.

Mr. Lee, **my English teacher**, is very kind.

Paris, **the capital of France**, attracts millions of visitors.

My favorite subject, **biology**, starts at nine o'clock.

READING TRICK

If you see a noun followed by a comma, extra words, and another comma — that middle part is probably an appositive. You can mentally remove it, and the sentence should still make sense: "Mr. Lee is very kind." This helps you locate the true subject and verb even in long sentences.

Practice 3 — Find the appositive

Underline the appositive and write which noun it renames.

1. *Dr. Santoso, the head of the department, will give the opening speech.*
2. *The Amazon, the largest rainforest on Earth, is home to millions of species.*
3. *Her new laptop, a gift from her parents, broke after two weeks.*
4. *Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, is a very busy city.*
5. *My best friend, a talented painter, is holding her first exhibition.*

4 Mixed Practice

Now put all three ideas together — this is exactly how TOEFL sentences are built.

Practice 4 — Label every part

Label: S = subject, V = verb, OP = object of preposition, AP = appositive.

1. *The manager of the store, Mrs. Rivera, greets every customer with a smile.*
2. *Volunteers from the community, mostly students, cleaned the park on Saturday.*
3. *The professor's theory about climate change, a controversial idea, surprised the committee.*
4. *The bridge between the two cities, an old stone structure, was closed for repairs.*
5. *Our guide, an expert on local history, told us about the temple during the tour.*