

Subjects and Verbs

Avoiding Repeated Subjects

In English, a particular subject can be used only once in a clause. Don't repeat a subject in the same clause by following a noun with a pronoun.

Incorrect: The *manager* *he* asked Dmitri to lock up tonight.

Correct: The **manager** asked Dmitri to lock up tonight.

Correct: **He** asked Dmitri to lock up tonight.

Even when the subject and verb are separated by a long word group, the subject cannot be repeated in the same clause.

Incorrect: The *girl* who danced with you *she is* my cousin.

Correct: The **girl** who danced with you **is** my cousin.

Including Pronoun Subjects and Linking Verbs

Some languages may omit a pronoun as a subject, but in English, every clause other than a command must have a subject. In a command, the subject *you* is understood: (You) Hand in your papers now.

Incorrect: The Grand Canyon is in Arizona. *Is* 217 miles long.

Correct: The Grand Canyon is in Arizona. **It is** 217 miles long.

Every English clause must also have a verb, even when the meaning of the clause is clear without the verb.

Incorrect: Angelita's piano teacher very patient.

Correct: Angelita's piano teacher **is** very patient.

Including *There* and *Here* at the Beginning of Clauses

Some English sentences begin with *there* or *here* plus a linking verb (usually a form of *to be*: *is*, *are*, and so on). In such sentences, the verb comes before the subject.

There are masks in every culture on Earth.

The subject is the plural noun *masks*, so the plural verb *are* is used.

Here is your driver's license.

The subject is the singular noun *license*, so the singular verb *is* is used.

In sentences like those above, remember not to omit *there* or *here*.

Incorrect: *Are* several chickens in the Bensons' yard.

Correct: **There are** several chickens in the Bensons' yard.

Not Using the Progressive Tense of Certain Verbs



The progressive tenses are made up of forms of *be* plus the *-ing* form of the main verb. They express actions or conditions still in progress at a particular time.

George **will be taking** classes this summer.

However, verbs for mental states, the senses, possession, and inclusion are normally not used in the progressive tense.

Incorrect: All during the movie they *were hearing* whispers behind them.

Correct: All during the movie they **heard** whispers behind them.

Incorrect: That box *is containing* a surprise for Pedro.

Correct: That box **contains** a surprise for Pedro.

Common verbs not generally used in the progressive tense are listed in the following box.

Common Verbs Not Generally Used in the Progressive

Thoughts, attitudes and desires: agree, believe, imagine, know, like, love, prefer, think, understand, want, wish

Sense perceptions: hear, see, smell, taste

Appearances: appear, seem

Possession: belong, have, own, possess

Inclusion: contain, include

Using Only Transitive Verbs for the Passive Voice

Only transitive verbs—verbs that need direct objects to complete their meaning—can have a passive form (one in which the subject receives the action instead of performing it). Intransitive verbs cannot be used in the passive voice.

Incorrect: If you don't fix those brakes, an accident *may be happened*.

(*Happen* is an intransitive verb—no object is needed to complete its meaning.)

Correct: If you don't fix those brakes, an accident **may happen**.

If you aren't sure whether a verb is transitive or intransitive, check your dictionary. Transitive verbs are indicated with an abbreviation such as *tr. v.* or *v. t.* Intransitive verbs are indicated with an abbreviation such as *intr. v.* or *v. i.*

Using Gerunds and Infinitives after Verbs



A gerund is the *-ing* form of a verb that is used as a noun: For Walter, **eating** is a daylong activity. An infinitive is *to* plus the basic form of the verb (the form in which the verb is listed in the dictionary): **to eat**. The infinitive can function as an adverb, an adjective, or a noun. Some verbs can be followed by only a gerund or only an infinitive; other verbs can be followed by either. Examples are given in the following lists. There are many others; watch for them in your reading.

Verb + gerund (*admit + stealing*)

Verb + preposition + gerund (*apologize + for + yelling*)

Some verbs can be followed by a gerund but not by an infinitive. In many cases, there is a preposition (such as *for*, *in*, or *of*) between the verb and the gerund. Following are some verbs and verb/preposition combinations that can be followed by gerunds but not by infinitives:

admit	deny	look forward to
apologize for	discuss	postpone
appreciate	dislike	practice
approve of	enjoy	suspect of
avoid	feel like	talk about
be used to	finish	thank for
believe in	insist on	think about

Incorrect: He must *avoid to jog* until his knee heals.

Correct: He must **avoid jogging** until his knee heals.

Incorrect: The instructor *apologized for to be* late to class.

Correct: The instructor **apologized for being** late to class.

Verb + infinitive (*agree + to leave*)

Following are common verbs that can be followed by an infinitive but not by a gerund:

agree	decide	plan
arrange	have	refuse
claim	manage	wait

Incorrect: The children *want going* to the beach.

Correct: The children **want to go** to the beach.

Verb + noun or pronoun + infinitive (*cause + them + to flee*)

Below are common verbs that are followed first by a noun or pronoun and then by an infinitive (not a gerund):

cause	force	remind
command	persuade	warn

Incorrect: The coach *persuaded Yasmin studying* harder.

Correct: The coach **persuaded Yasmin to study** harder.

Following are common verbs that can be followed either by an infinitive alone or by a noun or pronoun and an infinitive:

ask	need	want
expect	promise	would like

Dena asked to have a day off next week.

Her boss asked her to work on Saturday.

Verb + gerund or infinitive (*begin + packing* or *begin + to pack*)

Following are verbs that can be followed by either a gerund or an infinitive:

begin	hate	prefer
continue	love	start

The meaning of each of the above verbs remains the same or almost the same whether a gerund or an infinitive is used.

Faith hates **being** late.

Faith hates **to be** late.

With the verbs below, the gerunds and the infinitives have very different meanings.

forget

remember

stop

Esta **stopped to call** home.

(She interrupted something to call home.)

Esta **stopped calling** home.

(She discontinued calling home.)

ACTIVITY 1

Underline the correct form in parentheses.

1. The doctor (asked me, she asked me) if I smoked.
2. The coffee is very fresh. (Is, It is) strong and delicious.
3. (Are mice, There are mice) living in our kitchen.
4. The box (is containing, contains) a beautiful necklace.
5. Unless you take your foot off the brake, the car will not (be gone, go).
6. Most basketball players (very tall, are very tall).
7. Many people (enjoy to spend, enjoy spending) a day in the city.
8. The teacher (plans taking, plans to take) us on a field trip tomorrow.
9. Some old men in my neighborhood (play cards, they play cards) every afternoon.
10. When I am happy, I feel like (to sing, singing).

ACTIVITY 2

Underline the correct form in parentheses.

1. My grandparents (are, they are) in their nineties.
2. The pizza is two days old. (Is, It is) dry and stale.
3. (Was money, There was money) stolen from the convenience store last night.
4. The manager (owns, is owning) two SUVs: a Honda and a Ford.
5. The package will not (be arrived, arrive) until Friday morning.
6. After a twelve-hour shift, the employees (very tired, were very tired).