

Simple Sentence Patterning

... in 8 Steps



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The following examples are for the three common sentence patterns (not in this order):

N-AV

N-AV-N

N-AV-n-N

N-LV-N

N-LV-A

Look at these examples:

Example 1: *The car made a noise.*

Example 2: *Sarah kicked Jane the ball.*

Example 3: *The tree is tall.*

Example 4: *Mr Smith is the captain of the team.*

Example 5: *Mr Smith is talking to the team.*

Step 1 – Find the subject noun (N)

What is the sentence about? The answer should be the subject – a noun.

Example 1: *The sentence is about the car. ‘Car’ is the subject noun.*

Example 2: *The sentence is about Sarah. ‘Sarah’ is the subject noun.*

Example 3: *The sentence is about the tree. ‘Tree’ is the subject noun.*

Example 4: *The sentence is about Mr Smith. ‘Mr Smith’ is the subject noun.*

Example 5: *The sentence is about Mr Smith. ‘Mr Smith’ is the subject noun.*

Step 2 – Find the verb

Ask ‘what?’ after the subject. What did the subject be or do?

Example 1: *The car what? The car made. ‘Made’ is the verb.*

Example 2: *Sarah what? Sarah kicked. ‘Kicked’ is the verb.*

Example 3: *The tree what? The tree is. ‘Is’ is the verb.*

Example 4: *Mr Smith what? Mr Smith is. ‘Is’ is the verb.*

Example 5: *Mr Smith what? Mr Smith is talking. ‘Is talking’ is the verb (phrase).*

1: The ^Ncar ^Vmade a noise.

2: ^NSarah ^Vkicked Jane the ball.

3: The ^Ntree ^Vis tall.

4: ^NMr Smith ^Vis the captain of the team.

5: ^NMr Smith ^Vis talking to the team.

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Step 3 – Identify type of verb

Did the subject do something (*Action Verb*, AV) or be something (*Linking Verb*, LV)?

Example 1: *Did the car do or be something? The car did something (action).*

Example 2: *Did Sarah do or be something? Sarah did something (action).*

Example 3: *Did the tree do or be something? The tree was something (linking).*

Example 4: *Did Mr Smith do or be something? He was something (linking)*

Example 5: *Did Mr Smith do or be something? He did something (action).*

If the verb is a linking verb, go to Step 6

If the verb is an Action verb:

Step 4 – Identify a Direct Object (if any) (N)

If the verb is an action verb, ask ‘what’ after it. If there is a clear answer, that answer is a *Direct Object*.

Example 1: *The car made a noise. It made what? It made a noise. ‘Noise’ is the object of ‘made’.*

Example 2: *Sarah kicked Jane the ball. Sarah kicked what? She kicked the ball (not Jane!). ‘Ball’ is the direct object of ‘kicked’.*

Example 5: *Mr Smith is talking to the team. Mr Smith is talking what? He’s talking to the team, but he is not talking the team. He didn’t talk something, he just talked. There is no direct object in this sentence.*

Step 5 – Identify an Indirect Object (if any) (n)

If there is another noun in between the verb and the direct object, ask: “Does this noun answer ‘to whom or what?’ or ‘for whom or what?’” If so, the answer is an *Indirect Object*.

Example 1: *The car made a noise. There is no noun between the verb (made) and the direct object (noise).*

Example 2: *Sarah kicked Jane the ball. There is a noun between the verb (kicked) and its direct object (ball). That noun is Jane. The ball was kicked to Jane, so Jane answers ‘to whom or what’, or ‘for whom or what’? Jane is the Indirect object of ‘kicked’.*

Example 5: *Mr Smith is talking to the team. There is no direct object after the verb, so there is no indirect object.*

Go to Step 8

- 1: The ^Ncar ^{AV}made a noise.
- 2: ^NSarah ^{AV}kicked Jane the ball.
- 3: The ^Ntree ^{LV}is tall.
- 4: ^NMr Smith ^{LV}is the captain of the team.
- 5: ^NMr Smith ^{AV}is talking to the team.

- 1: The ^Ncar ^{AV}made ^Na noise.
- 2: ^NSarah ^{AV}kicked ^NJane the ball.
- 5: ^NMr Smith ^{AV}is talking to the team.

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If there is a Linking Verb:

Step 6 – Identify the Predicate Nominative (N) or Predicate Adjective (A)

Ask ‘what?’ after the Linking verb. The answer is the word that is linked to the subject and talks about the subject.

Example 3: *The tree is tall. The tree is what? It’s tall.*

Example 4: *Mr Smith is the captain of the team. Mr Smith is what? He is the captain.*

Step 7 – Noun or Adjective

Is the word linked to the subject a noun (*Predicate Nominative*), or something that describes the subject (*Predicate Adjective*)?

Example 3: ‘Tall’ is an adjective, so it is the *Predicate Adjective*.

Example 4: ‘Captain’ is a noun. It can be used as an adjective, as in *Captain Cook*, but the article in front of it (*the*) means it has to be a noun, because only nouns have articles (*a, an, the*). It is the *Predicate Nominative*.

3: The ^Ntree ^{LV}is ^Atall.

4: ^NMr Smith ^{LV}is ^Nthe captain of the team.

Step 8 – Any other nouns?

Are there any other nouns not labeled? They could be *Objects of Prepositions*. Is there a preposition just before the noun?

Example 4: *Mr Smith is the captain of the team. ‘The team’ is not a subject, direct object or indirect object. Notice it comes after the preposition ‘of’. It is the object of the preposition ‘of’.*

Example 5: *Mr Smith is talking to the team. ‘The team’ is not a subject, direct object or indirect object. Notice it comes after the preposition ‘to’. It is the object of the preposition ‘to’.*

1: The ^Ncar ^{AV}made ^Na noise.

2: ^NSarah ^{AV}kicked ⁿJane ^Nthe ball.

3: The ^Ntree ^{LV}is ^Atall.

4: ^NMr Smith ^{LV}is ^Nthe captain (of the team) ^{op}.

5: ^NMr Smith ^{AV}is talking (to the team) ^{op}.