



# **ENGLISH LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS**

**JEWELS EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR UP-AND-COMING SCHOLARS**

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## WHAT IS GRAMMAR?

**Grammar** has to do with how the parts of our language fit together to form sentences. It's the process of combining words (and punctuation) correctly to communicate effectively.

When you are talking with your friends, perfect grammar may not be so important. But, when you need to appear professional, educated, or businesslike, you must be able to use what is known as Standard Edited American English (SEAE). You may have heard it referred to as *proper English*. Basically, it is the dialect you find in most textbooks, magazines, newspapers and business correspondence.

**Standard** means that it is established as the dialect most people have agreed to use.

**Edited** implies that you have taken the time to write it down.

**American English** is the dialect used here in the United States, as opposed to Great Britain, Australia, or New Zealand, though they are all rather similar.

And don't make the mistake of confusing good *grammar* with a good *vocabulary*.

Grammar concerns whether or not a word is **positioned** in the **right place**. Vocabulary has to do with whether a word **means** what it ought—whether it is used well in terms of its **definition**. Just because someone spouts long, important sounding words doesn't necessarily mean they are using good grammar.

And finally, remember that when it comes to writing, your first priority is to get all of your ideas down on paper as quickly as possible. Don't worry about the correctness of your grammar until it is time to edit your work.

## **AN ESSENTIAL DISCIPLINE**

Is grammar really all that important? We think so.

“And why is that?” you may ask.

Well, the ability to communicate well is extremely important, which is one of the main reasons we study grammar.

You see, by communication, we mean both giving and receiving information—valuable skills in helping ensure that you and those around you understand the world in which you live.

And when it comes to written material, understanding what you encounter means being able to identify the main idea.

But, to identify the main idea of any literary selection, one must be able to identify the main idea within individual paragraphs. And to do that, one must be able to identify the subject (and predicate) within each sentence. And to do that, one must have a thorough understanding of nouns and verbs—which brings us back to grammar.

## WHAT IS A SENTENCE?

Since grammar is all about forming sentences correctly, we had better start by clarifying exactly what a sentence is.

A **sentence** is a group of words that expresses a complete thought.

But, in order to express a complete thought, a sentence has to be *about* something. In other words, it has to have a **subject**.

The **subject** of a sentence is the person or the thing that is either *doing* something, *having* something, or *being* something in the sentence. Hence, the subject is ***the person or the thing the sentence is about***.

However, even if a sentence has a subject, it still needs something else to express a complete thought. That's because the subject in the sentence cannot do anything, have anything, or be anything without something called a **predicate**.

The **predicate** tells what the subject of a sentence is, does, or has.

And of course, sentences always begin with a capital letter and end with some type of punctuation mark—either a period, question mark, or exclamation point.

One of the first skills students must develop is the ability to recognize and use complete, coherent sentences when speaking—a process that begins at the kindergarten grade level. If you already possess this skill you are sure to quickly progress through the next few lessons.

At Vernondale Christian Academy we are not satisfied that you have really learned something until you can verbalize it on your own. So, though we defined the term *sentence* on the previous page, let's pause a moment to verify that you have already logged this information in your long-term memory.

If you are unable to recite the definition of the word *sentence* without any assistance, you should memorize it at this time:

**A sentence is a group of words.**

Oh, but we can't stop there! You see, not every group of words is a sentence. No, a sentence is a group of words that expresses a **complete thought**.

Okay, so what did we say before? We said that you need to be able to recognize and use complete, coherent sentences when speaking.

*(Of course, if you've already graduated from kindergarten, which you probably have if you're reading this yourself, you need to be able to recognize and use complete, coherent sentences when **writing** too.)*

But, what is meant by *complete*, and what is meant by *coherent*?

Well, *coherent* is just a word that lets us know a sentence makes sense. In other words, it has to communicate an entire thought. That is what we mean when we say...

**A sentence is a group of words  
that expresses a complete thought.**

It simply means that a sentence is a group of words that makes sense.

**NOTE:** This is really the *only* grammar skill with which kindergarten students need to concern themselves.

To understand what is meant by *complete*, we need to venture into the world of grammar.

Oh, but you don't know what grammar is, do you?

Well, **grammar** is simply the study of how sentences are put together.

So, what do students need to know about how sentences are put together?

- Well, first of all, sentences have to begin with a capital letter.
- Secondly, sentences are also required to end with a punctuation mark—either a period, a question mark, for an exclamation point.

Combining this knowledge with the fact that a sentence has to make sense will help you to unscramble the mixed up sentences on the next page.

**NOTE:** Even students who cannot read should be able to successfully complete the following activity, provided they can distinguish between uppercase and lowercase letters. (You'll need to reproduce the activity using strips of cardstock that can be rearranged instead of copied).

The activity is meant to reinforce the fact that all sentences begin with a capital letter and end with a punctuation mark. Non-readers can look for the word (group) beginning with a capital letter to determine which of the cards comes first. Of course, a card ending with a punctuation mark is the one that goes last. And obviously, the only remaining card should be placed in the middle.

The same activity can be carried out in a much more interesting and fun fashion by going to the following webpage:

<http://www.earobics.com/gamegoo/games/monkey/monkey.html>



# IDENTIFYING SENTENCES I

**Directions:** Below is a series of mixed up sentences. Rewrite each sentence, putting the words in the correct order. The first one has been done for you.

1. a blue car. saw I

I saw a blue car.

2. to sing. love I

3. a red pencil. Here is

4. are warm. The cookies

5. runs He very fast.



# ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

## SENTENCES

## Grammar ♦ Lesson V

### *Sentence Structure*

Unscrambling sentences is one thing, but deciding whether or not a group of words makes a sentence in the first place is a different matter altogether.

So, exactly what are we talking about when we say that a sentence is a group of words that expresses a complete thought?

First of all, in order to express a complete thought (or in order to make sense) every sentence must have two main parts.

The first part tells who or what the sentence is about. That part is called the **subject**.

The next part tells what happened in the sentence. That part is called the **predicate**.

Every sentence must have a subject and a predicate because without both of them, it cannot express a complete thought.

So, now we have our final definition for sentence:

*A sentence is a group of words that has a subject and a predicate, and expresses a complete thought.*



# ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

## VERBS

## Grammar ♦ Lesson VI

### *Locating the Subject*

Now that we know **a sentence is a group of words that has a subject and a predicate, and expresses a complete thought**, our next step is to come up with a plan for figuring out whether or not a group of words has a **subject**.

To determine do that, we have to ask three basic questions...

1. Does this group of words tell me **who is something** or **what is something**?
2. Does this group of words tell me **who did something** or **what did something**?
3. Does this group of words tell me **who had something** or **what had something**?

Let's begin with the first question and use this sentence as an example:

**Philip Hewitt is my brother.**

Does this group of words tell us what is something or what is something?

Why, yes it does. It tells us that Philip Hewitt is something—that he is my brother. We can therefore conclude that this group of words does have a subject.

On the other hand, if the group of words had said...

**Is my brother.**

...we would have had no idea **who** or **what** is my brother. The group of words would have been lacking (missing) a subject.

Let's continue with the second question and use this sentence as an example:

**The glass fell from the table.**

Does this group of words tell us what did something or what had something?

Why, yes it does. It tells us that the glass did something—it fell from the table. We can therefore conclude that this group of words does indeed have a subject.

On the other hand, if the group of words had simply said...

**Fell from the table.**

...we would have had no idea **who** or **what** fell from the table. The group of words would have been lacking a subject.

And finally, let's continue with the third question and it used this sentence as an example:

## **Everybody had fun at the dance.**

Does this group of words tell us who had something or what had something?

Why, yes it does. It tells us that everybody had something—they had fun at the dance. We can therefore conclude that this group of words has a subject.

But, what if the group of words had merely said...

## **Had fun at the dance.**

Well, we would have had no idea **who** or **what** had fun at the dance. In this instance, the group of words would have been lacking a subject.

With out a subject, a group of words cannot form a complete sentence because it will be unable to communicate an entire thought.

*If there is nothing and no one in a group of words that either **is, does,** or **has** something, then there **is no subject**, and the group of words is **not** a sentence!*

So, don't forget...

**The subject of a sentence is the person or thing (or idea) that the sentence is about.**

When a group of words does not have a subject, it is called a **sentence fragment**.

# IDENTIFYING SENTENCES I

**Directions:** Carefully read the sentences below. Figure out if each group of words is a **complete sentence** or a **sentence fragment** by asking yourself if the words tell you who or what *is*, *does*, or *has* something. Circle the appropriate response.

- |                                 |          |   |          |
|---------------------------------|----------|---|----------|
| 1. Victor ate ice cream.        | Complete | / | fragment |
| 2. Charlotte is my best friend. | Complete | / | fragment |
| 3. Went to the store.           | Complete | / | fragment |
| 4. Lewis has the keys.          | Complete | / | fragment |
| 5. Mr. Smith is my teacher.     | Complete | / | fragment |
| 6. The boys are at school.      | Complete | / | fragment |
| 7. Played in the pool.          | Complete | / | fragment |
| 8. The comedian was funny.      | Complete | / | fragment |
| 9. Vacationed in Yosemite.      | Complete | / | fragment |
| 10. Ran in the marathon.        | Complete | / | fragment |
| 11. Our parrot talks to us.     | Complete | / | fragment |
| 12. Jerry is at the zoo.        | Complete | / | fragment |
| 13. Grabbed my backpack.        | Complete | / | fragment |
| 14. Rolled in the field.        | Complete | / | fragment |
| 15. Tony learned a trick.       | Complete | / | fragment |
| 16. That dog is nice.           | Complete | / | fragment |
| 17. Found my homework.          | Complete | / | fragment |
| 18. Tony learned a trick.       | Complete | / | fragment |
| 19. That dog is nice.           | Complete | / | fragment |
| 20. Found my homework.          | Complete | / | fragment |



# ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

## NOUNS

## Grammar ♦ Lesson VII

### *Introduction to Nouns*

The subject of a sentence is usually a **noun** or a **pronoun**, so knowing about nouns and pronouns will probably make it easier for us to figure out whether or not a sentence is complete and coherent.

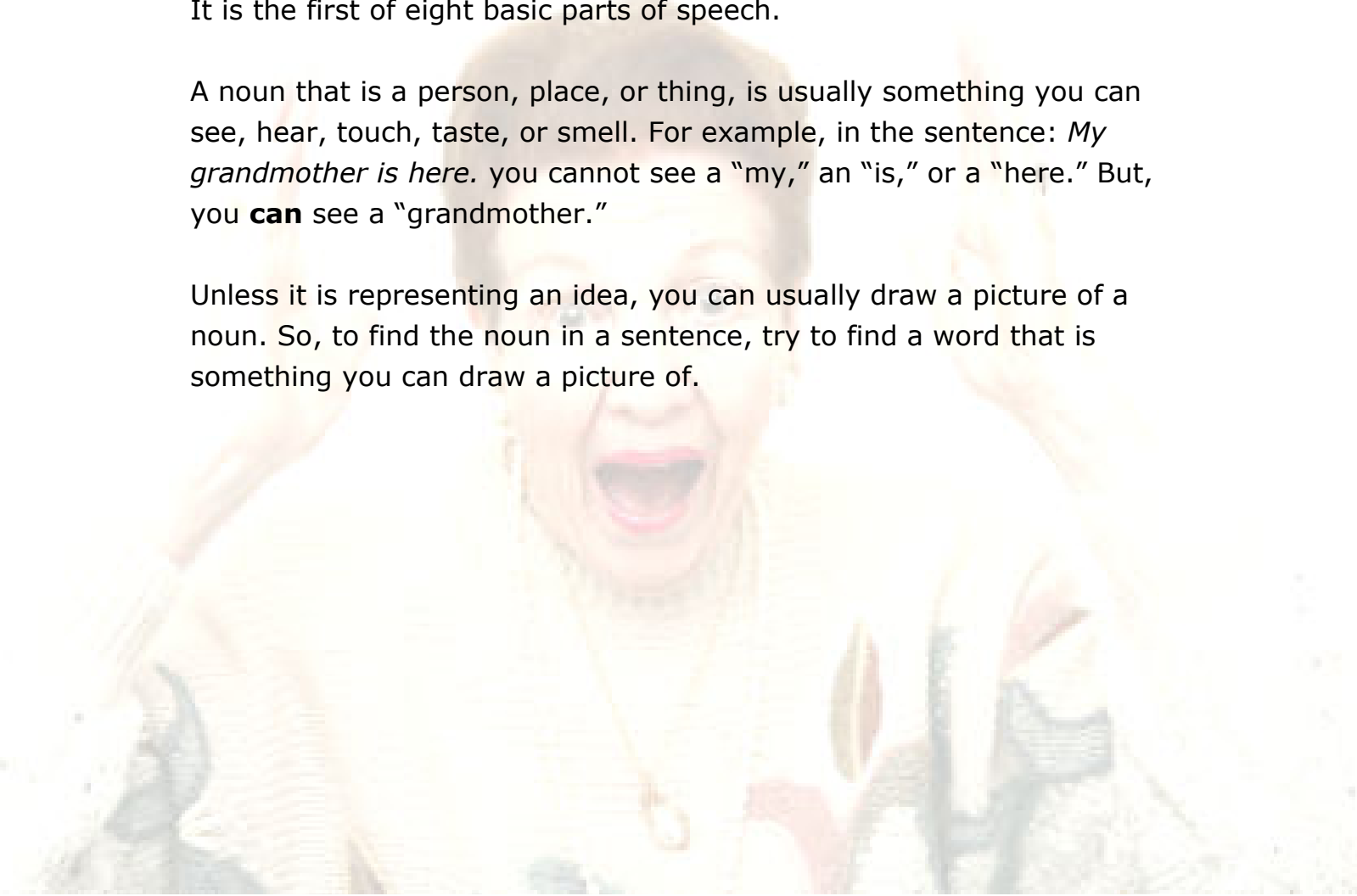
Let's begin with a noun:

A **noun** is a word that is used to name a person, place, thing, or idea.

It is the first of eight basic parts of speech.

A noun that is a person, place, or thing, is usually something you can see, hear, touch, taste, or smell. For example, in the sentence: *My grandmother is here.* you cannot see a "my," an "is," or a "here." But, you **can** see a "grandmother."

Unless it is representing an idea, you can usually draw a picture of a noun. So, to find the noun in a sentence, try to find a word that is something you can draw a picture of.



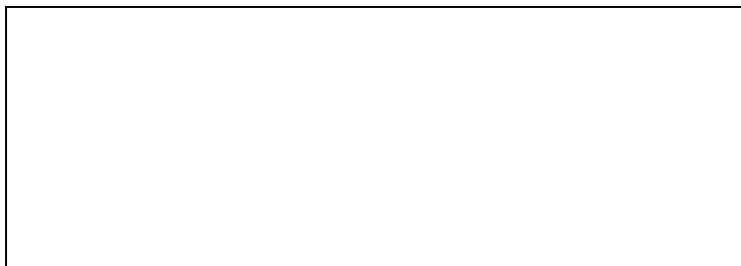
Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

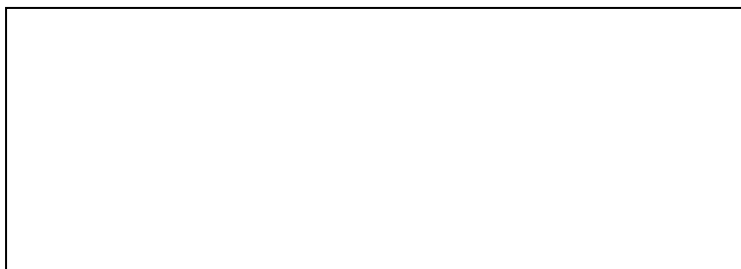
# IDENTIFYING SENTENCES II

**Directions:** Carefully read the sentences below. Identify the noun in each sentence by printing the numeral “1” above it. Then draw a picture of the noun in the box.

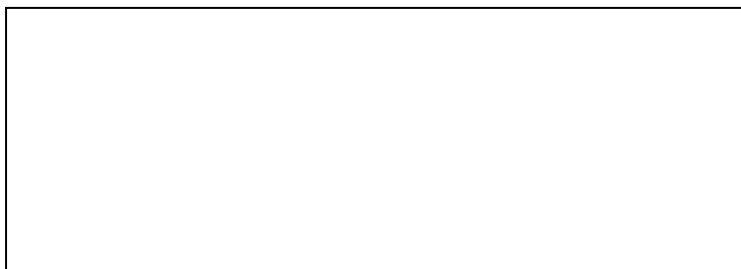
1. This orange tastes good.



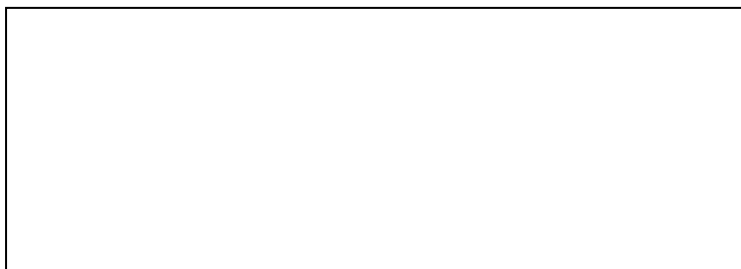
2. Go to school right now!



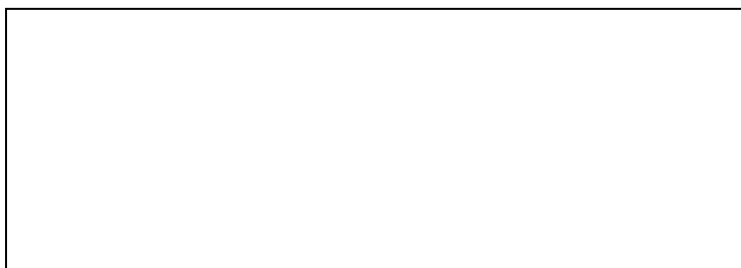
3. The doctor is nice.



4. The television is broken.



5. Wash the dog.





# IDENTIFYING SENTENCES III

A noun is a word that names a person, place, thing or idea. To find a noun, it usually helps to look for a word that is something you can draw a picture of.

**Directions:** Carefully read each sentence below. Print the numeral 1 above each noun. (The first one has been done for you.)

**Hint:** There may be more than one noun in certain sentences.

1. The dog is standing still.
2. The crab is red.
3. That animal stood on its legs.
4. A Blue Jay sat on the branch.
5. The bear lifted her paw.
6. Our pizza is here.



# ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

## PRONOUNS

## Grammar ♦ Lesson VIII

### *Introduction to Pronouns*

As we said before, the subject of a sentence is usually a **noun** or a **pronoun**, so knowing about nouns and pronouns would probably make it easier for us to figure out when we are dealing with complete, coherent sentences. We therefore learned that a **noun** is a word that is used to name a person, place, thing, or idea, and that it is the first of eight basic parts of speech.

It is now time to learn about the second of the eight basic parts of speech: the **pronoun**. The definition to pronoun is very simple.

**Definition:** *A pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun.*

Pronouns can be used in different ways, but right now, we want to look at pronouns that are used as the subject of a sentence. Here are a few examples:

I, you, he, she, it, us, we, they, anybody, anyone, each, either, none, someone, somebody, both, everyone, one, no one, neither, many, few, several, who, whom, what, which, whose, this, that, these, those

All of these words can take the place of a noun or nouns. For instance, instead of saying...

*Tatianna, Barry, Pete and Ruben went to the store.*  
We could simply say...

***They*** went to the store.

# PRONOUNS

**Directions:** Write the numeral 1 above **each** noun in each of the sentences below. Write the numeral 2 above each pronoun. The first one has been done for you. If you need help identifying pronouns, you may refer to the box of pronouns appearing on page 17.

1.       <sup>2</sup>We       <sup>1</sup>ate pickles.
2. They told stories.
3. Carlos helped us.
4. They laughed.
5. Bernard runs races.
6. Melanie sings songs.
7. Fireworks exploded.
8. She made burritos.
9. He loves candy.
10. They told Victor.
11. We learned our lesson.



# PARTS OF SPEECH

## PERSONAL PRONOUNS    Grammar ♦ List I

A **pronoun** is a word that takes the place of a noun. It is used to refer to a noun whose identity was made clear earlier in the writing.

Personal pronouns stand in for people, places, things and ideas.

### first-person

I  
me  
my  
mine  
we  
us  
our  
ours  
myself  
ourselves

### second-person

you  
your  
yours

### third-person

he  
him  
he is  
she  
her  
hers  
they  
them  
theirs  
we  
us  
ours  
it  
its  
who  
whom



# PARTS OF SPEECH

## PRONOUNS

## Grammar ♦ List II

Here is a list of all the pronouns arranged in alphabetical order.  
Learn to recognize them when you see them.

all	others
another	our
any	ours
anybody	ourselves
anyone	several
both	she
each	some
either	somebody
every body	someone
everyone	something
herself	that
him	their
himself	theirs
his	them
I	themselves
it	these
its	they
itself	this
many	those
me	us
mine	you
most	your
much	yours
my	yourself
myself	we
neither	what
nobody	which
nine	who
no one	whom
nothing	whose
one	

# REVIEW

DIRECTIONS: Complete the following without referring to your notes or any other form of assistance.

Write the definition for the word: sentence.

What are the two most basic rules about writing sentences?

There are two things that a sentence must have in order to express a complete thought (to make sense). What are those two things?

Write the definitions for the two things you listed in question #3.

What is a sentence fragment? (Also known as a phrase?)

Write the definition to noun.

Write the definition to pronoun.

Write a list of at least ten pronouns.



# ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

## SENTENCES

## Grammar ♦ Lesson XII

### *Introduction to Verbs*

Every complete sentence contains two parts: a **subject** and a **predicate**.

The subject is what (or whom) the sentence is about, while the **predicate** tells something about the subject.

We learned that to figure out whether or not a group of words has a subject we can ask ourselves if the group of words tells us **who** or **what** something is, does, or has.

But, the *best* way to determine whether or not it *does* is by first finding the **verb**, and then making a question by placing “who?” or “what?” before it.

Oh, but that’s right!

We have yet to verify that you possess a thorough understanding of the concept of verbs.

Well then, we’d better do that right now.

As was said previously, in order to express a complete thought, a sentence must have something called a predicate.

However, before you can fully understand predicates, you need to know about **verbs**.

**A *verb* is a word that expresses action, or a state of being.**

Verbs are the fourth of eight basic parts of speech. As you can see by the above definition, there are two kinds of verbs: **action** verbs, and **state-of-being** verbs.

- An **action** verb tells you what someone or something (the subject) in the sentence *does* or *has*.

- A **state-of-being** verb tells you what someone or something (the subject) in the sentence *is*.

To identify an action verb, you look at each word in the sentence and ask yourself, "Could I show someone how to do this?" If not, the word probably isn't an action verb. Let's look at the sentence below to get a better picture of how this works.

**EXAMPLE:** *Anthony laughed.*

Could I show someone how to "*Anthony*?" No, I could not. Therefore, *Anthony* is NOT the action verb. Well then, could I show someone how to "*laugh*?" Yes, I could. So, in the above sentence, the word *laugh* is the action verb. Do you see how that works?

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Now, the best way to identify the state-of-being verbs is to simply memorize them. They are: *am*, *are*, *is*, *was*, *were*, *be*, *being*, and *been*. Let's take a look at another sentence to see how this strategy works in action.

**EXAMPLE:** *Roberto Valencia was my father's best friend.*



Because of my having memorized the state-of-being verbs, I'm able to immediately recognize that the word *was* is the verb in the above sentence. Pretty cool, huh?

Now let's spend a little time practicing identifying verbs in sentences. Then we will go back and finish looking at predicates