

GRAMMAR ERRORS

Subject/Verb Disagreement *s/v*

The subject/verb disagreement is the worst error in grammar. The subject of each sentence will be either singular or plural, and the verb *must* agree with it in number. If the subject is singular, the verb must be singular.

Wrong: *The **reason** for the numerous objections **are** obvious.*

Right: *The **reason** for the numerous objections **is** obvious.*

The most common reason for a subject/verb disagreement is the presence of intervening words between the subject and the verb, as in the two examples above. **Compound subjects** joined by the coordinating conjunction *and* are plural: *Bob and Jane are here*; compound subjects joined by *or* are singular: *Bob or Jane is here*.

Sentence Fragment *frag*

Advanced academic writers use **complete sentences**. Groups of words that do not make complete thoughts are called **fragments**. The fragment is one of the worst errors in grammar. One common sentence fragment is to put a period after an introductory dependent clause. These often begin with subordinating conjunctions such as *when*:

Wrong: *When scientists photographed the squid. They were amazed.*

Right: *When scientists photographed the squid, they were amazed.*

Another common sentence fragment occurs when you put a period after an introductory participial phrase:

Wrong: *Catching the full force of the gale. Caesar crouched.*

Right: *Catching the full force of the gale, Caesar crouched.*

Because we have not studied phrases or clauses yet, these examples will make more sense soon. Notice at this point that just because you have a subject and a verb or even a direct object, that does not mean that the sentence is a complete thought. It must be a complete thought to be a sentence. Look at these fragments, and notice that even though they may have major parts of sentence, they are still not complete thoughts:

If I see Hadrian at the beach

Brutus gave Cassius a

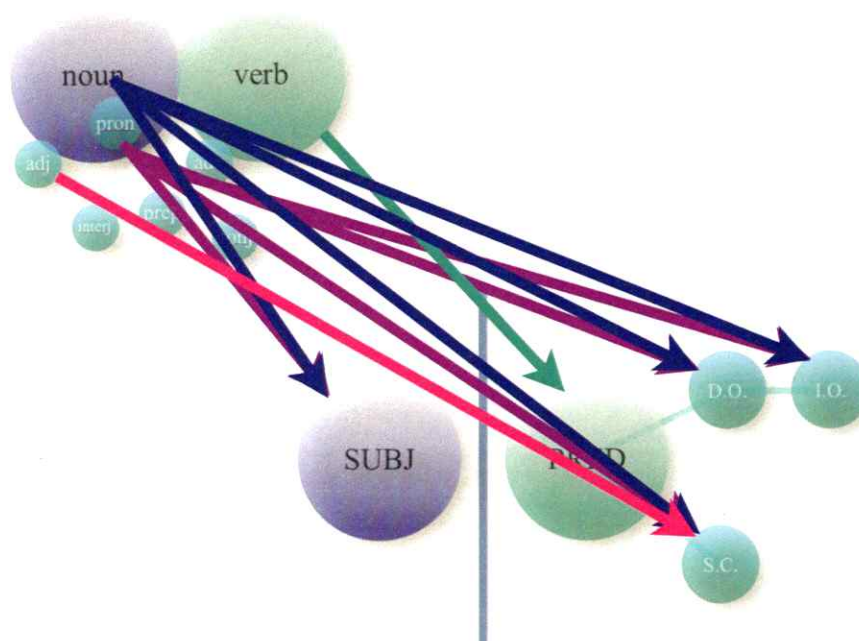
I was a beginner but

This is only a dependent clause.

This has an indirect object but no direct object.

The logic of the words is not complete.





How do the players play the game? In team sports there is no game until the players get in formation and run plays. In grammar the parts of speech are the players, and they have to take their places as parts of sentence, in formation, in order to run plays. The two main kinds of grammar plays are action plays and equation (linking) plays. If only football and basketball were so easy.

There are eight kinds of words, but there are only five main parts of sentence. **Only four parts of speech—nouns, pronouns, verbs, and adjectives—can become parts of sentence.** Nouns can be subjects, direct or indirect objects, or subject complements. So can pronouns, but the subjects must be subject pronouns, and the objects must be object pronouns. An adjective can be a subject complement. The verb is the simple predicate.

Great words make great sentences. The other four kinds of words can be present in sentences, but they cannot be a part of sentence. They only can attend the main parts as modifiers and logical operators. If we now compare the power parts of speech—the noun, pronoun, verb, and adjective—we see a near-perfect alignment with **vocabulary**. When you study vocabulary, you mostly learn nouns, verbs, and adjectives. You learn the very kinds of words that you need to make powerful sentences. If you want to be a writer, learn words (vocabulary), and learn what to do with them in sentences (grammar). Grammar is a way of thinking about language.



Two-Level Analysis

Now that we have studied parts of speech and parts of sentence, we can do two-level analysis. Under each sentence below, identify the part of speech of every word on line one, and the parts of sentence on line two. Example:

Ishmael eventually appreciated Queequeg and his customs.

n. adv. v. n. conj. adj. n.

subj. AVP -----compound D.O.-----

The active voice transitive action verb sends the action to a compound direct object. Notice that we do not put a comma before the conjunction in the compound direct object.

1. **Yeats gave the young poet a lesson in effective metaphor.**

2. **Mozart wrote rapidly, intensely, and with extreme concentration.**
