The Compound Verb

Recognize a compound verb when you find one.

Every subject in a sentence must have at least one verb. But that does not mean that a subject can have only one verb. Some subjects are greedy as far as verbs go. A greedy subject can have two, three, four, or more verbs all to itself.

When a subject has two or more verbs, you can say that the subject has a compound verb.

Consider these examples:

Before mixing the ingredients for his world-famous cookies, Bobby swatted a fly buzzing around the kitchen.

*Bobby* = subject; *swatted* = verb.

Before mixing the ingredients for his world-famous cookies, Bobby swatted a fly buzzing around the kitchen and crushed a cockroach scurrying across the floor.

*Bobby* = subject; *swatted, crushed* = compound verb.

Before mixing the ingredients for his world-famous cookies, Bobby swatted a fly buzzing around the kitchen, crushed a cockroach scurrying across the floor, shooed the cat off the counter, picked his nose, scratched his armpit, licked his fingers, and sneezed.

*Bobby* = subject; *swatted, crushed, shooed, picked, scratched, licked, sneezed* = compound verb.