

THE LINKING VERB

Recognize a linking verb when you find one.

Linking verbs do not express action. Instead, they connect the **subject** of the **verb** to additional information about that subject.

Read these examples:

Keila **is** a shopaholic.

Ising isn't something that Keila can *do*. **Is** connects the subject, **Keila**, to additional information about her, that she will soon have a huge credit card bill to pay.

During the afternoon, my cats **are** content to nap on the couch.

Areing isn't something that cats can *do*. **Are** connects the subject, **cats**, to something said about them, that they enjoy sleeping on the furniture.

After drinking the old milk, Vladimir **turned** green.

Turned connects the subject, **Vladimir**, to something said about him, that he needed to find a bathroom quickly.

A five-item quiz **seems** impossibly long after a night of no studying.

Seems connects the subject, **a five-item quiz**, to something said about it, that its difficulty depends on preparation, not length.

Irene always **feels** sleepy after pigging out on pizza from Antonio's.

Feels connects the subject, **Irene**, to her state of being, sleepiness.

Depending on use, some verbs are both linking and action.

The following verbs are *true* linking verbs: any form of the verb **be** (**am, is, are, was, were, has been, are being, might have been**, etc.), **become**, and **seem**. These true linking verbs are *always* linking verbs.

Then you have a list of verbs with split personalities: **appear, feel, grow, look, prove, remain, smell, sound, taste**, and **turn**. Sometimes these verbs are linking verbs; sometimes they are **action verbs**.

How do you determine the difference?

If you can substitute **am, is**, or **are** and the sentence still sounds logical, you have a *linking verb* on your hands.

If, after the substitution, the sentence makes no sense, then you are dealing with an *action verb* instead.

Here are examples:

Sylvia **tasted** the spicy squid eyeball stew.

Sylvia **is** the stew? I do not think so! **Tasted**, therefore, is an action verb in this sentence, something that Sylvia is *doing*.

The squid eyeball stew **tasted** good.

The stew **is** good? You bet. Try a bowl!

I **smell** the delicious aroma of a mushroom and papaya pizza baking in the oven.

I **am** the aroma? No way! **Smell**, in this sentence, is an action verb, something that I am *doing*.

The mushroom and papaya pizza **smells** heavenly.

The pizza **is** heavenly? Definitely! Come smell for yourself!

When my dog Oreo **felt** the wet grass beneath her paws, she bolted up the stairs and curled up on the couch.

Oreo **is** the wet grass? Of course not! Here, then, **felt** is an action verb, something that Oreo is *doing*.

My dog Oreo **feels** depressed after seven straight days of rain.

Oreo **is** depressed? Without a doubt! Oreo hates the wet.

This substitution will not work for **appear**. With this verb, you must analyze its function in the sentence.

Compare these two examples:

As soon as the cat falls asleep, blue jays **appear** at the bird feeder.

Notice that **are** sounds good: Blue jays **are** at the bird feeder. But here **appear** is what the blue jays are *doing*, making this **appear** an action verb.

The blue jays **appear** happy to discover a bird feeder full of seed.

Here, **appear** is connecting the subject, **blue jays**, to their state of mind, happiness, making this second **appear** a linking verb.

