

The Linking Verb

Recognize a *linking verb* when you see one.

Linking verbs do not express action. Instead, they connect the subject of the verb to additional information about the subject. Look at the examples below:

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** is connecting 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 an antacid.

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

Seems connects the subject, **a ten-item quiz**, with 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.

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 multiple 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 tell when they are action verbs and when they are linking verbs?

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, you are dealing with an *action* verb instead. Here are some examples:

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

Sylvia **is** the stew? I don't think so! **Tasted**, therefore, is an action verb in this sentence, something Sylvia is *doing*.

The squid eyeball stew **tasted** good.

The stew **is** good? You bet. Make your own!

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 I am *doing*.

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

The pizza **is** heavenly? Definitely! Try a slice!

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 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 **appear**, you have to analyze the function of the verb.

Swooping out of the clear blue sky, the blue jay **appeared** on the branch.

Appear is something a blue jay can *do*—especially when food is near.

The blue jay **appeared** happy to see the bird feeder.

Here, **appeared** is connecting the subject, **the blue jay**, to its state of mind, happiness.



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