Recognize a subject complement when you see one.

A subject complement is the adjective, noun, or pronoun that follows a linking verb.

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 that can be linking or action: appear, feel, grow, look, prove, remain, smell, sound, taste, and turn. If you can substitute any of the verbs on this second list with an equal sign [=] and the sentence still makes sense, the verb is almost always linking.

Read these examples:

Brandon is a gifted athlete.

Brandon = subject; is = linking verb; athlete = noun as subject complement.

It was he who caught the winning touchdown Friday night.

It = subject; was = linking verb; he = pronoun as subject complement.

Brandon becomes embarrassed when people compliment his skill.

Brandon = subject; becomes = linking verb; embarrassed = adjective as subject complement.

Brandon’s face will turn red.

Face = subject; will turn = linking verb; red = adjective as subject complement. [Will turn is linking because if you substitute this verb with an equal sign, the sentence still makes sense.]

Don’t mistake a subject complement for a direct object.

Only linking verbs can have subject complements. If the verb is action, then the word that answers the question what? or who? after the subject + verb is a direct object.

When Michelle woke up this morning, she felt sick.

She = subject; felt = linking verb; sick = subject complement. [Felt is linking because if you substitute this verb with an equal sign, the sentence still makes sense.]

Michelle felt her forehead but did not detect a temperature.
Michelle = subject; felt = action verb. She felt what? Forehead = direct object. [Felt is action because if you substitute this felt with an equal sign, the sentence does not make sense.]

Use subject pronouns as subject complements.

The chart below contains subject and object pronouns. Because a subject complement provides more information about the subject, use the subject form of the pronoun—even when it sounds strange.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Pronouns</th>
<th>Object Pronouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we</td>
<td>us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he, she, it</td>
<td>him, her, it</td>
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<tr>
<td>they</td>
<td>them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>who</td>
<td>whom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Check out these sample sentences:

Don’t blame Gerard. It was I who woke you from a sound sleep.

It = subject; was = linking verb; I = subject complement.

Don’t get mad at me! I didn’t pull your ponytail! It was he.

It = subject; was = linking verb; he = subject complement.

Remember the amazing guitarist I met? This is she.

This = subject; is = linking verb; she = subject complement.