THE SUBJECT COMPLEMENT

Recognize a subject complement when you find 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 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.

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.

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.

Brandon’s face will turn red.

*Face* = subject; *will turn* = linking verb; *red* = adjective as subject complement. *(Will turn* is a linking verb because if you substitute an equal sign, the sentence still makes sense.)
Do not confuse subject complements with direct objects.

Only linking verbs can have subject complements. If you have an action verb, 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 a linking verb because if you substitute this *felt* 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 an action verb 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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they</td>
<td>them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>who</td>
<td>whom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Check out these examples:
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 that I met? This is *she*.

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