

# THE SUBJECT COMPLEMENT

## Recognize a subject complement when you find one.

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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.

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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.

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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.

| SUBJECT PRONOUNS | OBJECT PRONOUNS |
|------------------|-----------------|
| I                | me              |
| we               | us              |
| you              | you             |
| he, she, it      | him, her, it    |
| they             | them            |
| who              | whom            |

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.

