

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.

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.

