

How to Find the Subject in a Sentence

A simple way to find the subject of a sentence is to ask *Who?* or *What?* before the verb. Remembering the following guidelines will also help you find the subject of a sentence.

(1) The subject of a sentence expressing a command or request is always understood to be *you*.

REQUEST [You] Bring me that book of poems, please.

COMMAND [You] Turn out your light and go to sleep, Mariana.

(2) The subject of the sentence is never in a prepositional phrase.

EXAMPLE **Some** of these poems are difficult to understand. [*Some* is the subject of the sentence. *Poems* is the object of the preposition *of*.]

(3) The subject of a sentence expressing a question generally follows the verb or a part of the verb phrase.

EXAMPLE Do **you** like this poem best? [*You* do like this poem best.]

(4) The word *there* or *here* is almost never the subject of a sentence.

EXAMPLES Here are the **pliers** and **hammer**! [What are here? *Pliers* and *hammer* are here.]

There were several **books** of poetry on the shelf. [What were? *Books* were.]

EXERCISE A In each of the following sentences, underline the subject once and the verb twice. If the subject is understood to be *you*, write *You* after the sentence.

Example 1. Please begin now, class, with your small group discussions. *You*

- Here is a poem by Alice Walker, an African American writer and a Pulitzer Prize winner.
- Was Alice Walker dismissed once from college because of her participation in a civil rights demonstration?
- Didn't she later win a scholarship to Sarah Lawrence College?
- There are several copies of the novel *The Color Purple*, by Alice Walker, in our school library.
- Claudia, please pick up a copy of the movie *The Color Purple* at the video store.

EXERCISE B In each of the following sentences, decide whether the underlined word is the subject. If it is, write *S* above it. If it is not, find the subject and circle it. If the subject is understood to be *you*, write *You* after the sentence.

Example 1. How often is the poetry of Langston Hughes read?

- Gregory, listen to the rhythm in the poem "Harlem," by Langston Hughes.
- There is a line in that poem about "a raisin in the sun."
- The writer of the play *A Raisin in the Sun* took the play's title from that line of poetry.
- Wasn't there a movie produced under that title also?