Recognizing Subjects, Verbs, and Prepositional Phrases

Subject - is a noun or pronoun. Although there may be more than one noun or pronoun in the

sentence, the subject is the noun or pronoun which answers the question “who

or what” before the verb.

Examples:

A. John drove the car well.

a. Find the verb – drove

b. Ask “who or what drove?”

c. The answer to this question is the subject – John

B. Yesterday it rained for six hours.

a. Find the verb – rained

b. Ask “who or what rained?”

c. The answer to this question is the subject – it

Hints for finding subjects:

(1) Before locating the subject of a sentence, block out all prepositional phrases

because the subject is never in a prepositional phrase.

Example: One (of my friends) lives (in Sacramento.)

Most (of the team) went (on the trip.)

(2) Here, there, and where are never the subjects of sentences.

In these cases, the subject will follow the verb.

Examples: Where are the boys?

Here are my two sisters.

There go the band members.

Hints for finding verbs:

(1) Note that words like not, ever, never, only, always, just, really, already, and often, are

not part of the verb even though they may be in the middle of the verb.

Examples: Keith had never driven to the cottage before.

I had always driven to the cottage by myself.

(2) Two other forms – driving and to drive – look like verbs but neither can ever be

the verb of a sentence. No ing word by itself can ever be the verb of a sentence;

it must have a helping verb with it.

Larry driving home. (not a sentence because there is no proper verb)

Larry was driving home. (a sentence)

No verb with to in front of it can ever be the verb of a sentence.

To drive down the river road. (not a sentence because there is no proper verb and

no subject)

I like to drive down the river road. (a sentence)

These two forms, driving and to drive, may be used as subjects, or they may have

other uses in the sentence.

Driving is fun. To drive is fun.

Neither of them can ever be the verb of a sentence.

(3) The infinitive form of the verb (to + a verb) is not a prepositional phrase.

Example: Tom decided to run (to the store.)

(4) Not only may a verb be composed of more than one word, but also there may be

more than one verb in a sentence:

Steve painted the house and planted trees in the yard.

Also there may be more than one subject.

Steve and Marie painted the house and planted trees in the yard.