

PREDICATES, OBJECTS, COMPLEMENTS

Predicates

A **predicate** is the completer of a sentence. The **subject** names the "do-er" or "be-er" of the sentence; the predicate does the rest of the work. A **simple predicate** consists of only a verb, verb string, or compound verb:

- The glacier melted.
- The glacier has been melting.
- The glacier melted, broke apart, and slipped into the sea.

A **compound predicate** consists of two (or more) such predicates connected:

- The glacier began to slip down the mountainside and eventually crushed some of the village's outlying buildings.

A **complete predicate** consists of the verb and all accompanying modifiers and other words that receive the action of a **transitive verb** or complete its meaning. The following description of predicates comes from *The Longman Handbook for Writers and Readers* (examples our own):

With an **intransitive verb**, **objects** and **complements** are included in the predicate. (The glacier is melting.) With a **transitive verb**, **objects** and **object complements** are said to be part of the predicate. (The slow moving glacier wiped out an entire forest. It gave the villagers a lot of problems.) With a **linking verb**, the subject is connected to a **subject complement**. (The mayor doesn't feel good.)

A **predicate adjective** follows a linking verb and tells us something about the subject:

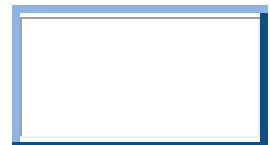
- Ramonita is beautiful.
- His behavior has been outrageous.
- That garbage on the street smells bad.

A **predicate nominative** follows a linking verb and tells us what the subject is:

- Dr. Couchworthy is acting president of the university.
- She used to be the tallest girl on the team.

Direct and Indirect Objects

A **direct object** is the receiver of action within a sentence, as in "He hit the ball." Be careful to distinguish between a direct object and an **object complement**:



- They named their daughter Natasha.

In that sentence, "daughter" is the direct object and "Natasha" is the object complement, which renames or describes the direct object.

The **indirect object** identifies to or for whom or what the action of the verb is performed. The direct object and indirect object are different people or places or things. The direct objects in the sentences below are in **boldface**; the indirect objects are in *italics*.

- The instructor gave his *students* **A's**.
- Grandfather left *Rosalita and Raoul* **all his money**.
- Jo-Bob sold *me* **her boat**.

Incidentally, the word *me* (and similar object-form pronouns such as *him, us, them*) is not always an indirect object; it will also serve, sometimes, as a direct object.

- Bless me/her/us!
- Call me/him/them if you have questions.

In English, nouns and their accompanying modifiers (articles and adjectives) do not change form when they are used as objects or indirect objects, as they do in many other languages. "The radio is on the desk" and "I borrowed the radio" contain exactly the same word form used for quite different functions. This is not true of **pronouns**, however, which use different forms for different functions. (He [subject] loves his grandmother. His grandmother loves him [object].) (See, also, **pronoun cases**.)

Complements

Since this page is about the completers of thoughts, it is appropriate to include a brief description of complements. A **complement** (notice the spelling of the word) is any word or phrase that completes the sense of a **subject**, an **object**, or a **verb**. As you will see, the terminology describing predicates and complements can overlap and be a bit confusing. Students are probably wise to learn one set of terms, not both.

- A **subject complement** follows a **linking verb**; it is normally an adjective or a noun that renames or defines in some way the subject.
 - A glacier is a huge body of ice.
 - Glaciers are beautiful and potentially dangerous at the same time.
 - This glacier is not yet fully formed. (verb form acting as an adjective, a participle)

Adjective complements are also called **predicate adjectives**; noun complements are also called **predicate nouns** or **predicate nominatives**. See **predicates**, above.

- An **object complement** follows and modifies or refers to a **direct object**. It can be a noun or adjective or any word acting as a noun or adjective.

- The convention named Dogbreath Vice President to keep him happy. (The noun "Vice President" complements the direct object "Dogbreath"; the adjective "happy" complements the object "him.")
- The clown got the children too excited. (The participle "excited" complements the object "children.")
- A **verb complement** is a direct or indirect object of a verb. (See [above](#).)
 - Granny left Raoul all her money. (Both "money" [the direct object] and "Raoul" [the indirect object] are said to be the verb complements of this sentence.)