

# The Subject Complement

Recognize a *subject complement* when you see 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 the verb **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.

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.

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.

Brandon's face will turn **red**.

**Face** = subject; **will turn** = linking verb; **red** = adjective as subject complement. [**Will turn** is linking because if you substitute this verb with an equal sign, the sentence still makes sense.]

**Don't mistake a subject complement for a direct object.**

Only linking verbs can have subject complements. If the verb is action, 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 linking because if you substitute this verb 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 action 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 sample sentences:

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 I met? This is **she**.

**This** = subject; **is** = linking verb; **she** = subject complement.



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