

Kickstart your grammar!

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Sentence analysis involves breaking a sentence down into clauses. You identify the function of each clause: subject, verb, direct object, etc. Sentence analysis gives you an understanding of how a sentence is structured. It helps you to formulate sentences correctly and apply the spelling rules properly.



Example of sentence analysis

Below is a sentence broken down into clauses/parts. The function of each clause/part is indicated.

- Mijn vader heeft mij een appel gegeven.
- Mijn vader **subject**
- heeft **finite verb**
- heeft gegeven **predicate** (2nd & 3rd verb)
- mij **indirect object**
- een appel **direct object**

Overview of the various clauses/parts

In the list below, you can see all the sentence components:

1. subject
2. finite verb
3. predicate (2nd & 3rd verb)
4. direct object
5. indirect object

Why analyse sentences?

You can analyse a sentence to determine:

- what the finite verb of a sentence is and which subject it corresponds to;
- what the main verb of a sentence is and which subject it refers to;
- whether a sentence is in the singular or plural;
- whether a sentence is in the present, past or past perfect tense;
- whether a sentence consists of one or more clauses;
- and much more

Finite verb

The finite verb is the verb that tells you which tense the sentence is in. It also indicates whether a sentence is in the singular or plural. The finite verb is linked to the subject of the sentence. If you want to analyse a sentence, you must first identify the finite verb. Then you determine the subject, direct object, indirect object and modifiers.

How do you find the finite verb?

There are 3 different ways to find the main verb.

1. If you turn the sentence into a question, the finite verb comes first.
2. If you change the tense of the sentence, the finite verb changes.
3. If you change the sentence from singular to plural or vice versa, the finite verb changes.

Examples of the finite verb

Below you can see an example of each method. The finite verb is highlighted in green.

1. Maria eet een banaan. – Eet Maria een banaan?
2. Maria eet een banaan. – Maria at een banaan.
3. Maria eet een banaan. – Maria en Peter eten een banaan.

Finite verb in compound sentences

A compound sentence is a sentence consisting of two or more clauses. Each clause contains a finite verb. A compound sentence can consist of two main clauses or of a main clause and a subordinate clause. In a subordinate clause, the finite verb is often placed at the end. Below are a few examples of the finite verb in compound sentences. The finite verb is highlighted in pink.

- Ik kom morgen, maar mijn partner kan er niet bij zijn.
- Hij heeft gisteren iemand ontmoet die naar Canada gaat emigreren.
- De docent vindt dat de cursisten te weinig huiswerk doen.

If you want to identify the finite verb in each sentence, remove the conjunction (dat). You then split it into two separate sentences:

- De docent vindt.
- De cursisten doen te weinig huiswerk.

The verb and the subject are linked.

Subject

The subject of the sentence is the person or thing that takes action or performs an action. Take this sentence, for example: De man werkt in de tuin. Here, De man is the subject. The subject and the finite verb are linked: they belong together.

How do you find the subject?

There are 3 different ways to find the subject.

1. If you put 'who' or 'what' before the verb, the answer to the question is the subject.
2. If you change the verb from singular to plural, the subject changes too.
3. If you turn the sentence into a question using inverted word order.

Examples of subjects

Below you can see an example of each type. The subject is highlighted in yellow. The finite verb is underlined.

1. **Peter** eet een peer. – Wie eet een peer? - Answer: Peter
2. **Het meisje** eet een appel. – De meisjes eten een appel.
3. **De kinderen** eten een banaan. – Eten de kinderen een banaan?

Predicate (2nd & 3rd verb)

The predicate consists of all the verbs in a sentence. If there is only one verb in the sentence, the predicate is the finite verb. If there are more verbs in the sentence, the predicate is the finite verb together with the other (2nd & 3rd) verbs. When analysing a sentence, you should therefore always start with the finite verb.

How do you find the predicate?

You find the predicate by following these three steps.

1. First, find the finite verb.
2. Then check if there are any other verbs in the sentence.
3. Together, these verbs form the predicate.

Examples of predicates

In the examples below, the predicate is in blue and the finite verb is underlined.

- Joost eet een kiwi.
- Joost heeft een kiwi gegeten

Joost heeft mij een appel gegeven.