



TERMS TO KNOW: Vital Sentence Elements

SENTENCE: A group of words that names at least one person or thing and expresses a complete thought about it. (The same definition applies to **independent** and **main clauses**.)

Ex: The mouse ran up the clock.

SUBJECT: The part of a sentence that names what the sentence is about. The **complete subject** includes a *noun* or *pronoun* plus the words that describe it. The **simple subject** is the unadulterated noun or pronoun.

Ex: **The little gray mouse** ran up the clock.
 complete subject
 simple subject

Some sentences have **compound subjects**, which contain two or more simple subjects:

Ex. **The little gray mouse and its cousin** ran up the clock together.

PREDICATE: The part of a sentence that tells what the subject does, or what it is, or what happens to it. At the very least, the predicate must contain a **verb**, and it usually includes additional words to complete the thought of the sentence (the **complement**). A **compound predicate** contains more than one verb.

Ex: The little gray mouse **ran up the clock and jumped down onto the piano**.
 verb complement verb complement

VERB: An essential part of every sentence – the word that tells what the subject does, what it is, or what happens to it. The verb is the word in the predicate that changes to indicate what tense (time frame) it is expressing.

Ex: All the little gray mice **run** in a pack. (present tense verb)
 Yesterday, one of the mice **ran** up the clock in record time. (past tense)

Auxiliary (helping) verbs: Usually some form of BE, DO, or HAVE that combines with the base form of another verb to help it express what happens to the subject.