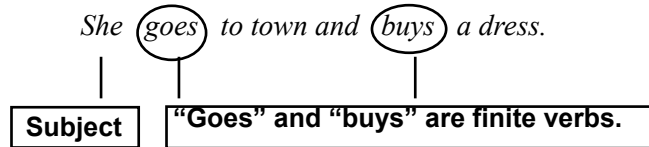


Finite and non-finite verbs

A verb may be finite or non-finite.

A finite verb is a verb that has a subject, such as **he plays** or **he played**.

The subject gives us information about the verb, such as who, when and how many.



A non-finite verb is a verb that does not change its form. Examples include:

the **present participle** (playing), the **past participle** (played) or **infinitives** (to play).

A non-finite verb is an unmarked verb. This means that the verb "play", as in the examples below, does not tell us who was playing (person), when they were playing (tense) or how many people or things were playing (number).

He **is playing** in the park: **is** = auxiliary (finite) verb; **playing** = present participle (non-finite verb)

He **had played** in the park: **had** = auxiliary (finite) verb; **played** = past participle (non-finite verb)

He **wants to play** in the park: **wants** = modal (finite) verb; **to play** = infinitive (non-finite verb)

Note: An infinitive verb has the word "to" in front of it: *to go, to sing, to do*. If "to" is attached to a verb it is not a preposition.

Exercise 2

Example	Is it a finite or non-finite verb?
1. She swims every day.	
2. Do you have to dive ?	
3. You cannot do that!	
4. He is sick.	
5. He is going to the school function.	
6. She wanted to sleep until midday.	
7. He was not told.	
8. She said she had to go, but her mother wouldn't let her.	i. ii.
9. He ran to school but was still late.	
10. It is very difficult to grow vegetables in winter.	

Where is the subject?

Sally writes: "Hence, showing the reader that the senator does not take her profession seriously."

This sentence does not have a grammatical subject.

Correction: "Hence, the author shows the reader that the senator does not take her profession seriously."



Typically, your key message in a sentence should be in the subject-verb-object position.

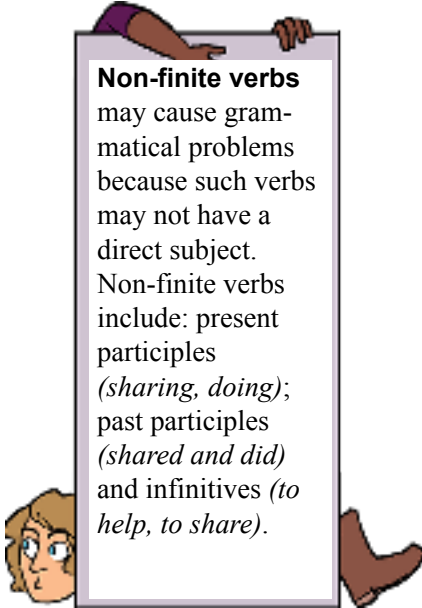
The part of the clause (or sentence) that contains the subject of the verb is called **the subject**. The subject of a sentence is always a noun or a pronoun. Generally, you can find the subject by asking "who" or "what" before the verb.

The part of the sentence that contains the verb and the object of the verb (if there is one) is called **the predicate**. Generally, you can find the object by asking "whom" or "what" after the verb.

Sally writes: "As an animal lover, who knows that puppies are cute, is questioning myself as to whether I am ready to own a pet."

The predicate "is questioning myself" lacks a subject.

Correction: "As an animal lover, who knows that puppies are cute, I am questioning myself as to whether I am ready to own a pet."



Non-finite verbs may cause grammatical problems because such verbs may not have a direct subject. Non-finite verbs include: present participles (*sharing, doing*); past participles (*shared and did*) and infinitives (*to help, to share*).

Exercise 3

A. Indicate whether the verb is finite (f) or non-finite (n). Underline the subject.

1. Watching the birds from the top of the trees (...), I decided (...) that it would be more fun to fly (...) with the birds.
2. Encouraged by her latest triumph (...), Ms Smith decided (...) to increase (...) her bike-riding efforts.
3. Weeping from frustration (...), I was (...) so disappointed that my friend failed (...) to win (...) the prize.
4. Using census data on incomes (...), the study determines (...) Australia's most liveable city

B. Identify the clause with the incorrect non-finite verb. Rewrite the sentence.

1. At 14, the young boy got cancer, and making us feel sympathy.
2. Mr Smith condemns the increase of bike riders, and hence producing doubt about the Council's scheme.
3. Contrastingly, Nancy accepts the norms of society and facing its reality.
4. These actions tend to overrule our parents hence needing to break free.
5. The author shames Mr Davis because failing to create a smoke-free society.
6. The ambulance's siren blared loudly whilst practising their football drills.
7. Therefore, believing she was doing the right thing.

Exercise 3

A. Indicate whether the verb is finite (f) or non-finite (n). Underline the subject.

1. Watching the birds from the top of the trees (.N.), I decided (.F.) that it would be more fun to fly (. F.) with the birds.
2. Encouraged by her latest triumph (..N.), Ms Smith decided (..F.) to increase (.N..) her bike-riding efforts.
3. Weeping from frustration (.N..), I was (..F.) so disappointed that my friend failed (..F.) to win (.N..) the prize.
4. Using census data on incomes (..N.), the study determines (..F.) Australia's most liveable city .

B. Identify the clause with the incorrect non-finite verb. Rewrite the sentence.

1. At 14, the young boy got cancer, and **making us feel sympathy**.
2. Mr Smith condemns the increase of bike riders, and **hence producing** doubt about the Council's scheme.
3. Contrastingly, Nancy accepts the norms of society and **facing its reality**.
4. These actions tend to overrule our parents **hence needing to break free**.
5. The author shames Mr Davis because **failing to create** a smoke-free society.
6. The ambulance's siren blared loudly whilst **practising their football drills**.
7. Therefore, **believing she was doing the right thing**.

Exercise 4

Example	Is it a transitive or an intransitive verb?
1. She ran away.	Intransitive
2. They danced until midnight.	Intransitive
3. She received a present.	Transitive (object = present)
4. She saw her friend.	Transitive (object = friend)
5. The boy ate a roll.	Transitive (object = roll)
6. She played all day.	Intransitive
7. Jack kicks the football.	Transitive (object = football)

Jim asks

Jim asks: I am often marked down in English because my teacher says that my expression is unclear or clumsy. I thought ideas were the thing that mattered.

Dear Jim,

This is a very common problem and you are by no means alone. Your teacher is drawing your attention to the fact that there is a link between good expression and good ideas/clear thought processes.

If you are consistently losing marks in English, it is often because you have awkward phrases/expression. If the entire essay consists of clumsy, clunky grammar, it is hard to achieve an A.

Thank you for sending in the paragraph. I have indicated some of your common grammatical errors.

Jim's paragraph:

“By referring to her personal experience, the author criticises Kyle Sandiland’s comment and emphasis the affect of bullying (1). She highlights that it is “much worse than the problems associated with her disability”. (2) The author expects readers to feel frustrated towards Kyle Sandiland, because he is acting as irresponsible role model (3). Furthermore, using her personal experience (4), it increases the public’s awareness towards the issue of bullying, because it has a such terrifying affects on individual.”

Grammar notes:

1. The subject of the verb “emphasis” is “the author”: as the subject is singular, the verb must also be singular and must take the present tense, i.e. “emphasises”. Note, too that the conjunction “and” joins together two predicates: “criticises” and “emphasises”. Each verb must be the same part of speech.
2. The verb “highlights” is a transitive verb. This means that it needs a grammatical object, ie. “She highlights the point that it is a shameful situation.”
3. You are referring to a specific “role model”. The noun must be preceded with the indefinite article, “an”.
4. Be careful with non-finite or “ing” verbs, such as “using”. They do not have a direct grammatical subject and this can lead to grammatical errors. In this case, the grammatical subject “it” does not directly relate to “using her personal experience”.