

## How to Diagram Sentences

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Sentence diagramming can be a useful visual tool to help students understand, identify, and apply the parts of a sentence. Most students find that the visual representation of how these parts of the sentence fit together makes the abstract features of English grammar more concrete. With practice, students can use diagramming to diagnose and fix their own grammatical mistakes and add variety to their writing.

### Instructional Objectives

Students will learn how a sentence diagram depicts the subject, predicate, direct object, modifiers (adjectives and adverbs), indirect objects, and prepositional phrases in three ten-minute lessons.

### Preparation and Materials

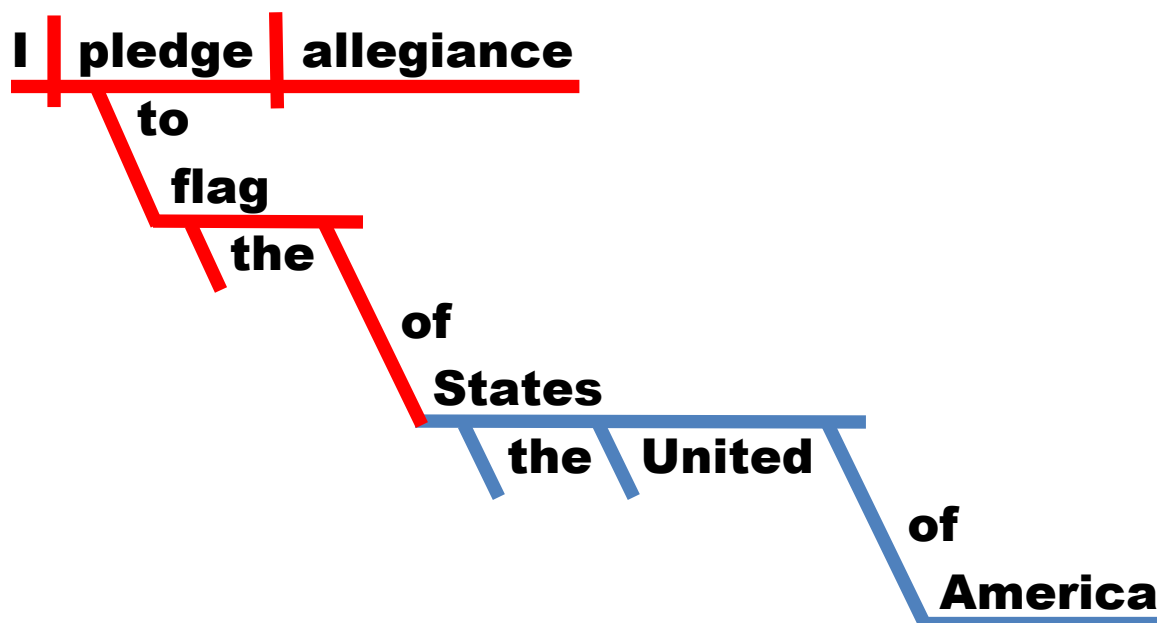
Students will need binder paper, pencils, and rulers. The teacher will use the display projector or board to model the procedures.

### Procedures

The teacher draws and explains each component of the sentence diagram and students copy it. The teacher shows the following example before beginning the three lessons to give students a sense of what a completed sentence diagram looks like.

### Example

“A complex sentence diagram looks like this. We’ll begin with the basics and learn step by step.”





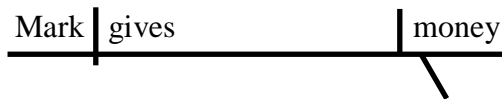
## Sentence Diagramming Lesson #2

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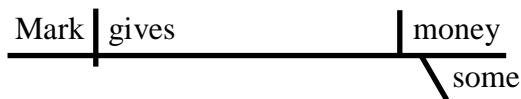
Let's review our sentence diagram.

- The subject is on top of the horizontal line to the left. The subject is the “do-er” of the sentence. The subject is “Mark.”
- To the right of the subject, after the first vertical line that extends below the horizontal line, is the predicate. The predicate is “what the do-er does.” The predicate is “gives.”
- To the right of the predicate, after the second vertical line that does not extend below the horizontal line, is the direct object. The direct object answers “What?” or “Whom?” from the predicate. The direct object is “money.”

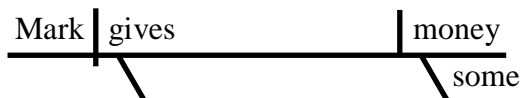
1. Let's add onto our sentence diagram. Anything below the horizontal line modifies the word it connects to above the horizontal line. *Modifies* means to describe, talk about, add to, limit, or make more specific. Draw a slanted line down from the horizontal line below the direct object “money.” For example, an adjective modifies a noun or a pronoun. An adverb modifies an adjective, adverb, or verb.



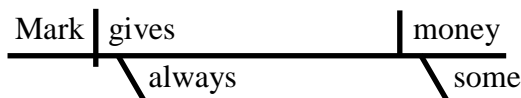
2. Write “some” to the right of the slanted line. The adjective “some” modifies the common noun “money.” Because an adjective comes before the noun it modifies, we would read the sentence as “Mark gives some money.”



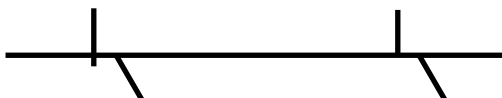
3. Now draw a slanted line down from the horizontal line below the predicate “gives.”



4. Write “some” to the right of the new slanted line. The adverb “always” modifies the verb “gives.” Let's read the complete sentence out loud: “Mark always gives some money.”



5. Now draw and label your own subject-predicate-direct object sentence diagram with a modifying adjective and adverb. Let's share a few of our sentence diagrams.



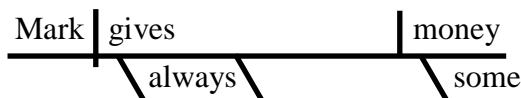
## Sentence Diagramming Lesson #3

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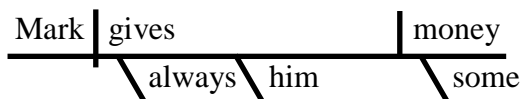
Let's review our sentence diagram.

- The subject is on top of the horizontal line to the left. The subject is the “do-er” of the sentence. The subject is “Mark.”
- To the right of the subject, after the vertical line that extends below the horizontal line, is the predicate. The predicate is “what the do-er does.” The predicate is “gives.”
- To the right of the predicate, after the second vertical line that does not extend below the horizontal line, is the direct object. The direct object answers “What?” or “Whom?” from the predicate. The direct object is “money.”
- The slanted line below the horizontal line modifies the direct object “money.” The modifier is the adjective “some.”
- The slanted line below the horizontal line modifies the predicate “gives.” The modifier is the adverb “always.”

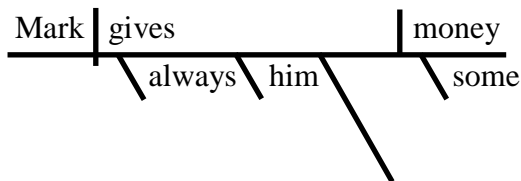
1. Let's add onto our sentence diagram. Draw a new slanted line down from the horizontal line below the predicate to the right of the adverb “always.”



2. Write the indirect object “him” to the right of the slanted line. The indirect object is a noun or a pronoun and is usually placed between the predicate and the direct object in a sentence. The indirect object answers “To or For What?” or “To or For Whom?” from the predicate.



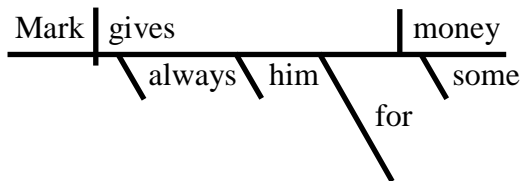
3. Now draw a long slanted line down from the horizontal line below the predicate “gives” and to the right of the indirect object “him.”



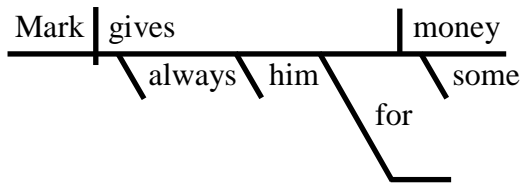
## Sentence Diagramming Lesson #3

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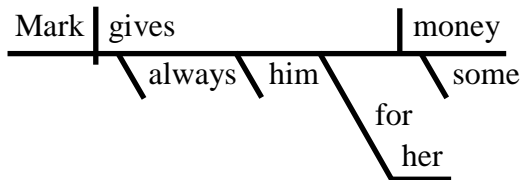
4. Write the preposition “for” to the right of the long slanted line. A preposition begins a phrase and shows some relationship, location, time, or position between the preposition and its object. The preposition asks “What?” or “Whom?” and the object provides the answer. The preposition “for” asks “Whom?”



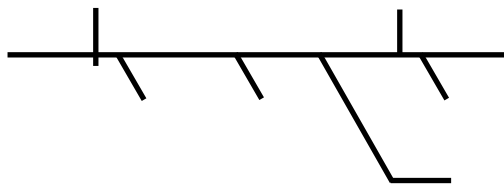
5. Now draw a horizontal line to connect to the bottom of the long slanted line for the object of the preposition.



6. Write the object “her” to answer the “Whom?” on the horizontal line.



7. Now draw and label your own subject-predicate-indirect object-direct object sentence diagram with a modifying adjective and adverb and a prepositional phrase. Let’s share a few of our sentence diagrams.



# Sentence Diagramming Teacher Tips

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## On the Horizontal Baseline

- Place all parts of the predicate verb phrase on the horizontal line between the subject and direct object (has been said).
- If the object is a predicate noun or adjective, draw a backslash ( \ ) slanting toward the subject (He | is \ Tom) (He | is \ nice).
- Place implied subjects in the subject place within parentheses, for example (You).
- Place appositives after the subject or object within parentheses (Tom (the man in red)).

## Expanding the Baseline

- Compound subjects (Tom and Sue) and compound predicates (talked and shopped) are drawn as multiple horizontal lines stacked vertically and are joined at each end by a fan of diagonal lines.
- The coordinating conjunction (and) is placed next to a dotted vertical line that connects the left ends of the horizontal lines.

## Below the Baseline

### -Modifiers

Modifiers of the subject, predicate, or object are placed below the baseline. Adjectives (including articles) and adverbs are placed to the right of backslashes ( \ ), below the words they modify.

### -Prepositional Phrases

- Prepositional phrases (under the tree) are also placed beneath the words they modify.
- Prepositions are placed to the right of backslashes ( \ ), below the words they modify and the backslashes are connected to the horizontal lines on which the objects of the prepositions are placed.

### -Compound Sentences

Compound sentences (Tom walked home and Sue followed him) are diagrammed separately with the verbs of the two clauses joined by a vertical dotted line with the conjunction written next to the dotted line.

### -Subordinate (Dependent) Clauses

- Subordinate (dependent) clauses (Although Tom walked home, ...) connect the verbs of the two clauses with a dotted backslash next to which the subordinating conjunction is written.
- Subordinate (dependent) clauses form their own subject-verb-object baselines.

# Sentence Diagramming Teacher Tips

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## -Participles and Participial Phrases

- A participle (practicing...) is drawn to the right of a backslash, except that a small horizontal line branches off at the end on which the suffix er, \_ing, \_en, \_d, or \_ed is written.
- With a participial phrase, the additional word or words are placed after a vertical line following the participial suffix (practicing soccer).

## -Relative Clauses

Relative clauses (whom I know) connect the subject or object of the baseline with a dotted line to the relative pronoun (that, which, who, whom, and whose) which begins its own subject-verb-object baseline.

## Above the Baseline

### -Gerunds and Gerund Phrases

- Gerunds (Running) are placed on a horizontal line, connected to a vertical line descending to the baseline. The \_ing is written to the right of a backslash at the end of the horizontal line.
- With a gerund phrase (Running effortlessly), the additional word or words are connected to the backslash on another horizontal line.

### -Interjections

Interjections (Hey), Expletives (There), and Nouns of Direct Speech are placed on horizontal lines above the baseline and are not connected to the baseline.

### -Noun Clauses

Noun clauses (What you should know) branch up from the subject or object sections of the baseline with solid lines and form their own baselines with subject-verb-object vertical lines.

For additional grammatical constructions and sentence diagram samples, I highly recommend these helpful sites: [http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/diagrams2/one\\_pager2.htm](http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/diagrams2/one_pager2.htm)  
[http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/diagrams2/one\\_pager1.htm](http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/diagrams2/one_pager1.htm)

### Want a full-year program including simple sentence diagrams?

For grades 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8: *Grammar, Mechanics, Spelling, and Vocabulary*

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