

TEACHING GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS

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**ASSESSMENT
AND PRACTICE**



**COMPREHENSIVE
GRAMMAR AND
MECHANICS
PROGRAM**



Sentence diagramming can be a useful tool to make the abstract components of English grammar more concrete. Most students find that the visual image helps them better understand and remember grammatical terms, the parts of a sentence, and the basic rules of grammar. With practice, writers can use diagramming to diagnose their own grammatical errors and fix them.

Check out how much students can learn about grammar with these two simple sentence diagrams from my programs. Both examples focus on adverbs.

Easy

Examples: Carefully she answered. He walked slowly.

They | **games**
| **video**

Answer

They | played | games
happily \ video

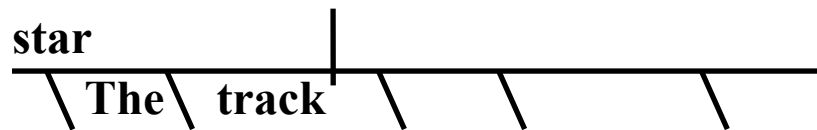
Happily, they played video games. They happily played video games. They played video games happily.

Challenging

Lesson Focus: Today we are studying **adverb order**. Remember that an adverb modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb and can be a word or a phrase. When using more than one adverb to modify the same part of speech, usually place adverbs in this functional order: 1. What degree 2. How 3. Where 4. When. **Example:** She sings more enthusiastically on the stage each night.

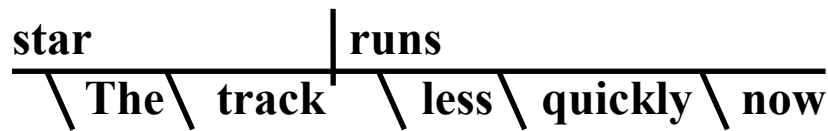
Revise and complete the sentence diagram for this mixed-up sentence: “The track star runs quickly now less.”

Fill in the rest of the words from the mixed-up sentence.



Compare your diagram to that on the display. Use a different color pen or pencil to place a check mark ✓ above each correctly placed answer and revise any errors.

Answer



The track star runs less quickly now.

Whether you choose to include simple sentence diagramming as one instructional component of teaching grammar and usage in the reading and writing contexts, the following three 10-minute lessons will help your students better understand how sentences are structured.

Lesson Objectives

Students will demonstrate the correct placement of the subject, predicate, direct object, and indirect object of a sentence in a sentence diagram.

Lesson #1

1. Draw a simple horizontal line and write a subject on top to the left. Make the subject a proper noun and define the word as “the do-er” of the sentence.

Mark _____

2. Draw a vertical line after the subject and extend it just under the line.

Mark | _____

3. Write a predicate on top of the horizontal line, just to the right of the vertical line. Make the predicate a present tense action verb that will easily lead to a direct object without an article (*a*, *an*, and *the*). Define the predicate as “the action” of the subject and “what the ‘do-er’ does.”

Mark | gives _____

4. Have students replicate the lines and then insert their own subjects (proper nouns only) and predicates (present tense action verbs only). Share examples and discuss, making sure to use the exact language of instruction.

_____ | _____

Lesson #2 Building onto the Lesson #1 Diagram

5. Draw another vertical line after the predicate, but don't extend it under the horizontal line.

Mark | gives |

6. Write a direct object on top of the horizontal line, just to the right of the second vertical line. Make the direct object be a common noun that doesn't need an article. Define the direct object as the word that answers "What?" or "Who" from the predicate.

Mark | gives | money

7. Have students add the second vertical line on to their Lesson #1 Diagram and insert their own subjects, predicates, and direct objects (common nouns only). Don't allow students to use articles at this point. Share examples and discuss, making sure to use the exact language of instruction.

| |

Lesson #3 Building onto the Lesson #2 Diagram

8. Draw a vertical line down from the horizontal line below the predicate.

Mark | gives | money
|

9. Write an indirect object to the right of the vertical line. Make the indirect object be a pronoun. Define the indirect object as the word that answers "To or For What?" or "To or For Whom" from the predicate.

Mark | gives | money
| her

10. Have students add the vertical line on to their Lesson #2 Diagram and insert their own subjects, predicates, direct objects (common nouns only), and indirect objects (pronouns only). Don't allow students to use articles at this point. Share examples and discuss, making sure to use the exact language of instruction.

| |
|

Sentence Diagramming Teacher Tips

Should you choose to continue using sentence diagrams, the more complex grammatical constructions necessitate expansion of the basic horizontal line. At this point, it is best to refer to the horizontal line as the *baseline* because more advanced sentence diagrams may have multiple horizontal lines.

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 forward slashes (/), 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 forward slashes (/), below the words they modify and the forward slashes 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 forward slash next to which the subordinating conjunction is written. Subordinate (dependent) clauses form their own subject-verb-object baselines.

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, who, whom, which) 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 Address 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 sister sites:

http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/diagrams2/one_pager2.htm

http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/diagrams2/one_pager1.htm