

Lesson 14: The Main Word of the Subject

In Lesson 5, we learned how to find the subject of a sentence. Do you remember? Write the rule here: Everything in between the _____ of the sentence and the _____ is the **subject**.

Now it is time to look more closely at the subject. Specifically, we want to know what we can find when we look inside the subject box. When we look inside the subject box, there are lots of things we can find, but the most important thing is the **main word** of the subject. Every subject must have at least one main word. It might have a determiner and describers, too.

- The main word of the subject is the word that the subject is actually about. We identify the main word of the subject by putting a star (*) over it.
- It is possible to have more than one main word in the subject box, but if we do, we must have the word **and** to connect them.
- all noun boxes work the same way

The **main word** of the subject is the word that the subject is actually about. This word must "agree" with the verb.

Here are some examples:

*
Most college **classes** give one midterm exam and one final exam.

* X dtn
Two **professors** have tried something different.



Why do we care?

When we are **writing**, if we know what the main noun is, we know if it needs a singular ("-s") or plural (-no "s") verb. If we don't know the main noun, we will make subject-verb agreement (S/V) mistakes.

If we can find the main noun in a sentence that we are **reading**, we know what is important, and we can read faster. We know which words we need to look up and which we can get in context.

Sometimes this is easy:

* VXO
Students love tests. (+)

* VXS
Gabe loves tests. (1)

* VXO
Our students love tests. (+)

Sometimes this is not easy. Here is a sentence with a long subject.

Grading college students on quizzes given at the beginning of every class, rather than on midterms or a final exam, increases both attendance and overall performance.

grading is the main subject

Nouns as describers. A subject is always a noun. Sometimes we also use nouns as describers . Don't be confused. The subject will come last.

Example:

* X dtn
A quiz was given every day in this class. (**Quiz** is a noun. **Quiz** is the main subject)

* VXD
This quiz class had 90% attendance.

(**Class** is a noun and the main subject. **Quiz** describes the type of class.)

Lesson 14 Exercise 1 Finding the main word

Directions: Ignore words that are crossed out.

1. Mark visible X-words with an X.
2. Write *do*, *does*, or *did* over verbs that have hidden X-Words.
3. Draw a box around the subject (or subjects).
4. Find the main word and put the main word symbol (*) over it.

The Advantages of Frequent Quizzes

Here is how it works:

^{*} ^{Vxdo}
The professors tell their students to bring laptops to every class.

^{*} ^{Vxdo}
All 901 students bring their laptops to the next class.

^{*} ^X
A computerized quiz is given every day.

^{*} ^{Vxdoes}
Everybody complains.

^{*} ^X ^{dtn}
The usual midterms and finals are not given.

^{*} ^X ^(do) ^{Vb} ^{Vb}
The quizzes are short, but the students have to do the reading and come to class to pass.

^{*} ^{Vxdoes} ^{*} ^[clause] ^{Vxdo}
Each student gets a personalized test—questions [~~that they have missed~~] come back.

^{*} ^X
Skipping is not a good idea.

^{*} ^X
Attendance is 90%.

^{*} ^{Vxdo}
Grades improve.

Source: *The New York Times*



* Vxdo
~~Students from poor high schools~~ improve the most.

* X
 Those young ~~people~~ were usually the smartest students in their high school classes.

* X
~~College~~ is different.

* X
~~College classes~~ are much harder.

* X
~~They~~ are not the smartest students in their college classes.

* Vxdoes
~~Preparing for regular quizzes~~ helps them learn how to study.

Lesson 14 Exercise 2

Singular, plural, and uncountable boxes

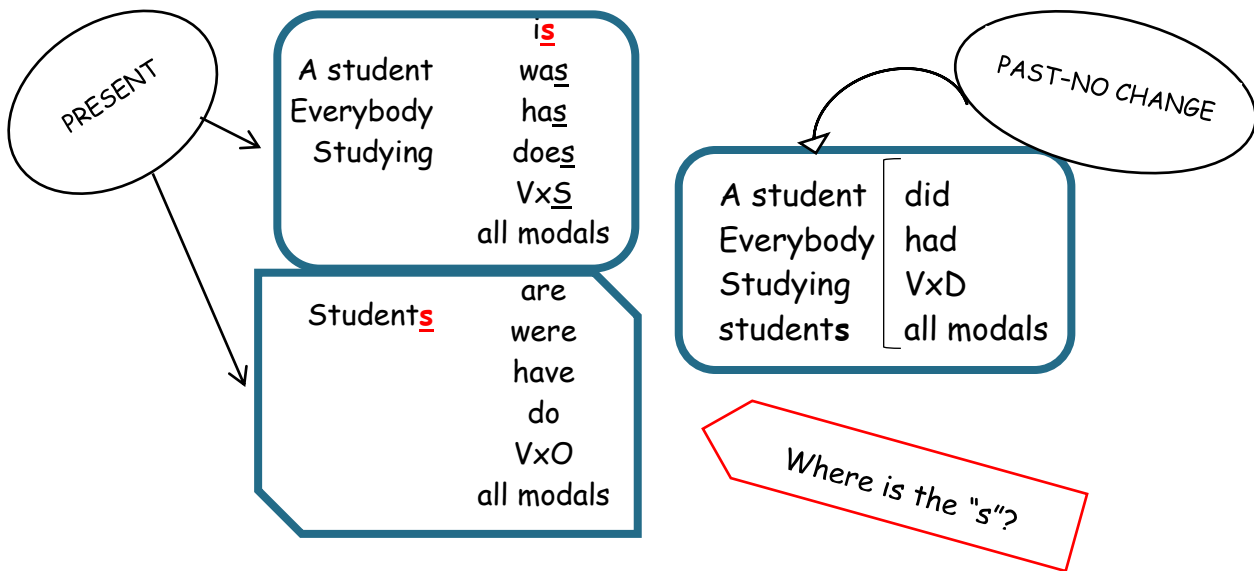
Look at the sentences in Exercise 1. There are 18 main words. Find 4 singular boxes, 101 plural boxes, 1 uncountable box, and 2 -ing boxes. Copy them into the lists below like the example. Some may be pronouns. 5 and 6 have two main subject words.

Plural Boxes	Singular Boxes
1 professors	1 quiz
2 students	2 everybody
3 midterms	3 student
4 finals	4 college
5 quizzes	Uncountable Boxes
6 students	1 attendance
7 grades	Gerunds (-ing nouns) Boxes
8 students	1 skipping

9 people	2 preparing
10 classes	
11 they	

Lesson 14 Exercise 3 Subject/Verb agreement

Did you notice? If the main noun ends in an "s," the X-Word or doesn't.



Now look back at these sentences. What X-Words (visible or hidden) come after these main subjects? Circle the final "s" on the subjects and verbs.

- 1. (the) professors **tell**
- 4. Everybody **complains**
- 6. (the) quizzes **are**
- 7. Skipping **is**
- 9. Attendance **is**
- 10. Grades **improve**
- 12. People ← plural **were**

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