Diagramming Sentences

What Is Sentence Diagramming?

If you like putting puzzles together, you should like diagramming sentences. Diagramming is just a way of taking sentences apart and showing how the pieces of the sentence fit together to form a complete thought. Follow the steps below to learn the basics of diagramming sentences.

Step 1 – Sentence diagramming begins by underlining the subject and the predicate (verb + what the subject is or does). Make a vertical line to separate the subject from the predicate.

Example: Jaime sings. Jaime | sings.

Exercise A: Draw a line between the subject and the predicate in the following sentences.

1. Kyle ran. 4. We played. 7. They talked.
2. Sarah smiles. 5. She will sleep. 8. It rolls.

Exercise B: Rewrite the sentences above. Underline the subject and the predicate. Put a vertical line between the subject and the predicate.

1. 4. 7.
2. 5. 8.
3. 6. 9.

Extension: Write ten of your own two-word sentences. Diagram them exactly the way we did the sentences from above.
Step 2 – What if there is more than one subject? This is called a *compound subject*. Put the compound subjects on top of each other, then the word “and” at the left of the vertical line, just put the compound subjects on top of each other and connect them with the word “and.”

Example: Jaime and Dawn sing.  

Exercise C: Diagram the sentences below. Use the example above to help. Make sure compound subjects are on top of each other.

1. Kyle and Jacob ran.  
2. Amy and I laugh.  
3. Balls and tires roll.  
4. Kim and Alice played.  
5. Sarah and I smile.  
6. Men and women surf.  
8. He and she will

Exercise D: Diagram the sentences below. Use what you’ve learned to diagram sentences correctly.

1. Sharks swim.  
2. They worked.  
3. She cries.  
4. Mom and Dad kiss.  
5. Michael and I left.  
7. Puppies play.  
8. Cats and Dogs fight.

Extension – Write ten of your own two, three, or four word sentences. Diagram them exactly the way we did the sentences from above.
Step 3 – Let’s add some prepositional phrases to our sentences. First, you need to know the parts of a prepositional phrase. They are prepositions, modifiers, and objects of the preposition.

A prepositional phrase begins with a **preposition** and ends with the **object of the preposition**.

Some objects of the preposition have **modifiers**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prepositional Phrase</th>
<th>Preposition</th>
<th>Modifier</th>
<th>Object of the Preposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in the kitchen</td>
<td>in</td>
<td>the</td>
<td>kitchen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>without money</td>
<td>without</td>
<td></td>
<td>money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>around school</td>
<td>around</td>
<td></td>
<td>school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>through windy skies</td>
<td>through</td>
<td>windy</td>
<td>skies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When diagramming prepositional phrases, put the preposition at an angle below the word it is connecting.

The object of the preposition goes on the flat line with any modifier below it. See the samples below.

```
in  kitchen

without  money

around  school

through  skies  windy
```

**Exercise E:** For the prepositional phrases below, write “Prep” above the preposition, “OP” above the object of the preposition, and “M” below the modifiers.

**Examples:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prep</th>
<th>OP</th>
<th>Prep</th>
<th>OP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to</td>
<td>the store</td>
<td>for</td>
<td>me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. at work 4. down the street 7. after lunch 10. with smelly feet
2. to the movies 5. from my teacher 8. during class 11. below average
3. by her locker 6. near pretty flowers 9. at dinner 12. with my cousin
Exercise F: On a separate sheet of paper, diagram the prepositional phrases from Exercise E. Be sure to put the object of the preposition on the flat line and the modifier below it.

**Extension** – Make up twenty prepositional phrases. Write “Prep” above your prepositions, “OP” above the objects of the preposition, and “M” below your modifiers.

Exercise G: Let’s diagram some sentences with the subjects, verbs, and prepositions put together. Follow the example below. Use a separate sheet of paper.

Example: Kyle ran down the street.  

1. Kyle and Jacob ran across the yard.
2. They sailed beyond the horizon.
3. Bill and Ted talked for hours.
4. Sarah and I smile at boys.
5. Balls and tires roll down hill.
6. Sharks swim in the ocean.
7. Puppies play with chewy toys.
8. Michael and I left during the movie.
9. She cries at weddings.
10. Mom went to the store.
11. Billy and I practice after school.
12. People waited against the fence.
13. Indians lived near fresh water.
14. They sang until morning.
15. Fish and eels live beneath the ocean.

17. Kim and Alice played with the bunny.
18. He and she slept until 3'oclock.
19. Asia and I laugh at the clown.
20. Mom and Dad kiss around us.
21. They worked inside the house.
22. Cats and dogs fight with each other.
23. Men and women surf at Seal Beach.
24. Corey fell off his skateboard.
25. Daniel entered with muddy feet.
26. Cars race past the spectators.
27. Paint and glue spilled onto the floor.
28. Ships sailed toward the horizon.
29. Dogs barked during the storm.
30. Pizza and soda arrived at our house.
Step 4 – Many verbs have direct objects. These objects receive action directly from the verb. When diagramming direct objects, they are placed on the same line as the verb with a line between them which does not go below the horizontal line. See the example below:

*Casey bought eggs.*

Also, sentences usually have modifiers that describe other words in the sentence. A modifier is placed under the word it modifies. See the example below:

*Hungry* *Casey bought three large, delicious eggs.*

Here are two more examples:

*The crazy dog bit a big hole in my shoe.*

*He sang the song before the wedding.*

Exercise H: Diagram the sentences below on a separate sheet of paper.

1. The tired teacher corrected thirty papers after school.
2. We cleaned the garage for Dad.
3. A police officer arrested a dangerous criminal behind our house.
4. Tom and Jerry fought the dog in the funny cartoon.
5. The happy, little girl gave flowers to the cheering crowd.
6. He vacuumed the house between commercials.
7. A silly man entertained the crowd outside the theater.
8. I eat my tacos with salsa.
9. Singers and dancers performed skits for delighted children.
10. The bus carried passengers across the city.
11. A funny comedian told hilarious jokes during the show.
12. Her mom drove us to the mall.
13. I want a new bike for my birthday.
14. Students and teachers made a beautiful mural for our auditorium.
15. The incredible pilots flew their planes in a perfect formation.
Step 5 – Verb Phrases or Linking Verbs?

When diagramming sentences, it is very easy to confuse some verbs. Verbs that help another verb are called helping verbs (also called auxiliary verbs). The helping verbs and the main verb together make up the verb phrase.

Examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb phrase</th>
<th>Helping Verb(s)</th>
<th>Main Verb</th>
<th>Diagram</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>will go</td>
<td>will</td>
<td>go</td>
<td>John (\text{will go})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is running</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>running</td>
<td>He (\text{is running})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>should have waited</td>
<td>should have</td>
<td>waited</td>
<td>I (\text{should have waited})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Linking verbs** are other types of verbs. These verbs link, or join, a subject with a noun or an adjective in the predicate. If the subject is linked to a noun, it is called a *predicate noun*. If the subject is linked to an adjective, it is called a *predicate adjective*. Below is a list of some linking verbs:

- is, are, was, were, am, appear, become, been
- can, feel, look, remain, seem, smell, taste

Examples:

**Predicate Noun**

- Kim is president.

**Predicate Adjective**

- Kim seems nice.

In the sentences above, “is” links “Kim” to the noun “president.” In this case, “Kim” and “President” are the same thing. In the second sentence, “seems” links the subject “Kim” to the adjective nice. In this case also, “Kim” and “Nice” are considered the same thing.

Linking verbs are diagrammed differently than the verb phrases. We will still place a line between the subject and the verb. However, a diagonal line will be placed between the linking verb and the word that is being linked to the subject.

Examples:

- Kim | is \(\text{\(/\)} \) president
- Kim | seems \(\text{\(/\)} \) nice
Exercise I: The following sentences will contain verb phrases or linking verbs. On a separate sheet of paper, diagram the sentence. Write “Helping verb” if the sentence contains a helping verb or “Linking Verb” if the sentence contains a linking verb.

Examples:

A. Sheila is running for class president.
   (Helping Verb) Sheila is running
   (Linking Verb) Sheila is running for president

B. Alice is president for three more weeks.
   (Linking Verb) Alice is president
   (Linking Verb) Alice is president for three more weeks

1. The chicken is delicious.
2. Weeds have grown throughout the garden.
3. The flowers in the shop smell wonderful.
4. She should have won the contest.
5. Kara will be going home at lunch.
6. We are family.
7. I was the singer on the stage.
8. The class will wait for the teacher.
9. The teacher might be calling your mom.
10. Simon and Peter will fish at Lake Mead.
11. Mary is the perfect daughter.
12. The air in the hospital smells clean.
13. The water in the thermos remained hot.
14. She is singing in the concert.
15. Tiffany has gone home for the evening.
16. Chocolate cake tastes best with ice cream.
17. Margot and Roy seem friendly.
18. Orville and Wilbur are building a big red kite.
19. Boys and girls will be leaving after the show.
20. Mom and Dad look tired.
Step 6 – What if there is more than one verb in a sentence? This can happen in several ways. First, there can be two verbs describing what the subject did. In this case, you diagram the verbs in a similar way as two subjects:

Kyle jumped and skipped.

Jacob and Kyle jumped and skipped

Another common way to see several verbs in a sentence is with infinitives. An infinitive is a verb that has “to” before it such as “to play” or “to run.” These infinitives act like direct objects so we are going to treat them like direct objects. Look at the following example:

The puppies wanted to play.

Exercise J: Diagram the following sentences on a separate sheet of paper.

1. The lions roared and attacked.
2. I love to sing.
3. They worked and rested.
4. The hungry babies cried and screamed.
5. Cats and dogs love to fight.
6. Tammy went to shop.
7. The bird chirped and sang.
8. Michael and I swam and dove.
9. She asked to go.
10. The kite twisted and turned.
11. The batter swung and missed.
12. The girls asked to join.
13. Amy hates to clean.
14. The students wrote and read.
15. Big rocks rolled and fell.
16. Al loves to cook.
17. Happy people sang and danced.
18. Workers cleaned and left.
19. Harry wanted to eat.
20. Thunder crashed and boomed.
Step 7 – You’ve learned about direct objects, but sometimes sentences have *indirect objects*. They would like you to think that they are direct objects, but they’re not. These indirect objects try to steal the action away from the verb. However, only the direct objects can take the action. Look at the following example:

My mom bought me an ice cream.

What is the verb? bought
What was bought, me or ice cream? ice cream

“Ice-cream” is the direct object because it takes the action directly from the verb. “Me” is an indirect object because the ice cream was bought FOR me. So in this case, “me” receives action indirectly from the verb, “bought”.

How do we diagram indirect objects? One way is to put the indirect object on the same line as the verb and direct object. The vertical line between the verb and objects does not pass the horizontal line.

**Examples:**

My mom bought me an ice cream.

\[
\begin{array}{c|c|c|c}
\text{IO} & \text{DO} \\
\text{mom} & \text{bought} & \text{me} & \text{ice cream.}
\end{array}
\]

Sally wrote her a nice, sincere letter.

\[
\begin{array}{c|c|c|c}
\text{Sally} & \text{wrote} & \text{her} & \text{letter}
\end{array}
\]

**Exercise K:** In each sentence below, under line the verb and draw an arrow to the direct object. Put “DO” above the direct object and “IO” above the indirect object. Finally, on a separate sheet of paper, diagram the sentence.

The teacher gave us new pencils for the test.

\[
\begin{array}{c|c|c|c|c}
\text{IO} & \text{DO} \\
\text{the} & \text{gave} & \text{us} & \text{pencils} & \text{for} & \text{test}
\end{array}
\]

1. The coach hit him the ball before the game.

2. Tim told Mary the news about the concert.

3. She painted me a picture for my birthday.
4. We sang the school a song at the assembly.
5. Bonnie drew him a beautiful picture of a rainbow.
6. Nover gave Tracy a big, wet, juicy kiss across the face.
7. Meredith asked Lisa an important question about the test.
8. My sister ordered me a shirt from the catalogue.
9. Larry wrote Thomas a letter.
10. Student council printed the upper graders flyers about the dance.
11. We bought him expensive, new stamps for his collection.
12. The salesman showed my mom the new car.
13. She left me a map to her new house.
14. The nice man gave the boy candy.
15. Tyler bought him a birthday present.
16. Lucy peeled my mom a carrot for the salad.
17. Joy saved him a piece of cake.
18. The choir sang the school a song.
19. The doctor wrote me a prescription for the medicine.
20. Dad built us a tree house in the back yard.

Extension: On the lines below, write five sentences that contain indirect objects.
Step 8 – You’ve learned many diagramming basics. Of the many other rules, let’s look at one more common feature of diagramming.

Modifiers – Modifiers are words that describe other words. Modifiers can be adjectives, adverbs, nouns, pronouns, or verbs. If it describes another word, it is a modifier. Here are some examples.

- adjective – smart person
- adverb – runs quickly
- noun – baseball player
- pronoun (possessives) – her dress
- verbs (participles) – dancing girl

“Smart” modifies (describes) person
“Quickly” modifies (describes) runs
“Baseball” modifies (describes) player
“Her” modifies (describes) dress
“Dancing” modifies (describes) girl

Exercise I: Below is a list of words in a box. On a separate sheet of paper, make up a word for the words in the box to modify (describe). Next, explain how it modifies the word you created, and tell the part of speech of the word in the box. See the example.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Word with Modifier</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Part of Speech</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>slowly</td>
<td>talks slowly</td>
<td>“slowly modifies talks”</td>
<td>adverb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. tall
2. beautifully
3. apple
4. flying
5. eagerly
6. active
7. perfectly
8. loudly
9. pepperoni
10. their
11. quiet
12. candy
13. his
14. movie
15. visiting
16. our
17. singing
18. marching
19. my
20. blue

How to Diagram Modifiers
Modifiers are placed on a slanted line below the words they describe.

The big red ball bounced wildly.

The dancing boy dropped his cheese pizza.
Exercise M: Draw an arrow from the modifier to the word it describes.

Next, diagram the sentences on a separate sheet of paper.

Example: My story will be given to the Washington Post today.

1. Their bike was given to the Salvation Army yesterday.
2. Sometimes I argue with stubborn people.
3. Their noisy dog barked constantly.
4. The Air Force base allowed his brother to visit.
5. Tonight, we will sing beautifully for our lovely teacher.
6. The barking dogs woke the sleeping babies.
7. Her painting showed pictures of flying cars.
8. Suddenly, their music stopped.
9. Lately, she has been visiting the Red Cross.
10. The chirping birds played happily in the tall trees.

Extension: On a separate sheet of paper, write two sentences using these parts of speech as modifiers: adjective, adverb, noun, pronoun, verb. (10 total sentences)
Exercise N: Draw an arrow from the modifier to the word it describes. Next, diagram the sentences on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Nike shoes were given today to the athletes.
2. We oiled the squeaky tires carefully.
3. Her new prom dress had a rip.
4. Their blazing fire burned for three hours.
5. The young man asked for her permission.
6. We will use a hunting knife for the rope.
7. Babe Ruth played briefly for the Boston Red Sox.
8. She read her sweet poem for the class.
9. The cheating students will be punished severely.
10. Tomorrow, we will wake promptly at 7:00 A.M.

Exercise O: Put the modifiers from the sentences in Exercise N in their proper column. You may exclude articles such as "the" or "a".

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjectives (6)</th>
<th>Adverbs (6)</th>
<th>Nouns (5)</th>
<th>Pronouns (4)</th>
<th>Verbs (3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>today</td>
<td>Nike</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Extension – Find three sentences that you can diagram from a book you are reading. Keep in mind that you have not learned all the rules for diagramming. Therefore, there will be many sentences that you will not know how to diagram. Just look for three sentences that follow the rules that you have learned.
Sentence Diagramming
Mixed Review

Directions: Diagram the following sentences on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Julia sang.
2. Ronald and Sam played.
3. Elizabeth smiled and laughed.
4. Mario drove.
5. Charles sat and waited.
6. Valerie and Charlene worked.
7. Emily waited for the doctor.
8. Sandra and Billy danced.
9. Ricky gave Lucy a bracelet with diamonds.
10. Pete and Sean ran and jumped.
11. She wanted to go.
12. The bus drove down the street.
13. Anna brought us presents for Christmas.
14. Everyone waited to see.
15. Cars parked behind the building.
16. The talented children in the choir started to sing.
17. Dolphins played in wavy water.
18. The generous lady gave the store dresses for a donation.