



S W O R D F I S H
Sentence Mechanics Curriculum Aid



FALL 2010

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OVERVIEW

DESCRIPTION

Swordfish is a curriculum aid that helps students learn how the parts of a sentence work and how to combine sentences properly. As much as possible, it is designed to be self-explanatory. All practice questions have their answers in the back so that the students can check their work. Collectable end-of-book assignments are provided for teachers who wish to grade their students' work. Three tests that are administered and graded by the editors are available for students to take.

DESIGN & PRINTING

The pdf is formatted to be used mainly online. If one wants to print it out, the format is best preserved when the aid is printed front and back on 8 x 11" copier paper. The recommended way to print a certain page in the pdf is to open to that page, choose the "Print" command from the toolbar menu, and then select the "Current Page" option in the print dialogue box.

EXAM COPIES

Teachers who use *Swordfish* can request a free pdf and/or bound copy (4" x 5") of the current instruction packet. Email swordfisheditors@gmail.com.

INDIVIDUALIZED TESTS

Teachers can elect to have their students take up to three open-book exam provided by, and graded by, the *Swordfish* editors. Each test is individualized in that, while the general level of difficulty of the tests remains the same, the specific questions of an exam have been altered from the questions of other exams so that each student must do his or her own work. When students request a test (see below), it will be emailed to the student ten days before the deadline of the exam set either by the teacher or by the editors. The student emails his or her answers to the editors, who grade them and notify the student of the correct answers and the grade. Teachers can request a spreadsheet of the scores.

Teachers can custom set the exam schedule by emailing their deadlines to the editors at swordfisheditors@gmail.com. Or teachers can choose to follow the default schedule:

Fall Schedule

Exam "1" or "1+" (over Ch. 1)	due 30 Sep
Exam "2" or "2+" (over Chs. 1, 2, and 3)	due 30 Oct
Exam "3" or "3+" (over Chs. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5)	due 25 Nov

Spring Schedule

Exam "1" or "1+" (over Ch. 1)	due 20 Feb
Exam "2" or "2+" (over Chs. 1, 2, and 3)	due 25 Mar
Exam "3" or "3+" (over Chs. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5)	due 25 Apr

NB: The "+" symbol denotes an advanced version of the standard test. Chapter 6 is not included in Exam 3 or Exam 3+.

Students who plan to take one or more of the exams should send an email to swordfisheditors@gmail.com requesting each exam separately. This way, a reply-thread is established for each exam, making it possible for the editors to track which exams have been sent to whom, and when they have been sent. The email should include the student's name, his or her teacher's name and school affiliation, and can read something like this: "My name is John Doe. My teacher is Ms. J. Smith from Roanoke U. Please register me for Exam 2+." The email can be sent anytime. The exam will be sent ten days before its custom or default deadline.

Since each test is graded by hand, please allow up to ten days for the test results to be determined and sent to the student.

COST

The cost of the *Swordfish* pdf is \$17. This cost covers all student/editor interaction.

ORDERING & REFUND POLICY

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Ch. 1: The Simple Sentence

The simple sentence is the foundation to this book. Learn it well before moving to Ch. 2.

1.1) A Starter Definition

A simple sentence is a group of words that . . .

- begins with a capital letter
- ends with a mark of end-punctuation
- has only one clause between these two boundaries*

Beginning with a Capital Letter

In academic writing, every sentence will start with a capital letter, but not every capital letter will start a sentence. Sometimes a word will be capitalized because it is a proper name. This name may appear in the middle of a sentence:

- T**he computers are working now. (The capital *T* starts the sentence correctly.)
- This letter came for **B**ob. (The *B* for *Bob* is capitalized only because of the name.)
- B**ob got the letter. (The *B* is used both for the name and to start the sentence.)

Marks of End-Punctuation

These three marks are called “marks of end punctuation”:

- the period .
- the exclamation point !
- the question mark ?

One of these marks will always be at the end of every English sentence. It will form a boundary between the sentence before and the sentence after. For example, the words *the man took the bag* become a sentence when I start it with a capital *T* and end it with a period. At times I’ll put brackets around the sentence to highlight these two boundaries:

the man took the bag → **T**he man took the bag. → [The man took the bag.]

The Clause

Every simple sentence will have a verb, and this verb will always have a subject. **The verb-and-subject pair is called the “clause” of a simple sentence.** To find the clause, you must find the verb first: the verb will lead you to the subject every time.

*We will find out in Ch. 4.1 that this is an “independent” clause.

1.2) Six Steps to Find the Verb

You may think that you already know how to find verbs. But be careful! Sometimes verbs can be tricky. Please take this small quiz to see whether you can skim parts of this chapter or whether you should carefully read all of it.

See Where You Stand

First, cover the answers below. Then underline the verbs of these tricky simple sentences.

1. Under the varnished table stretched the two puppies.
2. During the storm there were pieces of paper scattered around the yard.
3. We were forced to examine the results.
4. Michelle ignored Bobby during the break to make him jealous.
5. Whipped by the wind, the bending tree trunk groaned loudly.
6. Melanie practiced hard in order to perform well at the singing competition.
7. Shouting will convince nobody to believe you.
8. After the break we will be happy to answer questions concerning our decision.
9. Around the corner came the cow owned by Farmer Lonnie Holden.
10. Designed to withstand the heat, the roof helped to keep the house cool.

Here are the answers:

1. Under the varnished table stretched the two puppies.
2. During the storm there were pieces of paper scattered around the yard.
3. We were forced to examine the results.*
4. Michelle ignored Bobby during the break to make him jealous.
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Surprised? If you want to know why these underlined words are verbs and why others you may have thought were verbs really aren't, you need to keep reading!

The following pages will list 6 steps to find verbs. Be sure to study each step carefully, and take them in order. They are designed to build on each other.

*A word that looks like a verb but has *to* right before it will never be a genuine verb.

Step 1: Rid Yourself of Unreliable Ideas

Unreliable Idea No. 1) A verb is the action word of a sentence. In the sentence . . .

Mike runs a mile in four minutes.

. . . the action word is clearly seen—the word *runs*—and in this particular sentence it is the verb. If you found the verb this way (by looking for the action), you got lucky.

Why do I say you got lucky? Because many words that express action are not verbs, and some verbs don't express action at all. For example, in the sentence. . .

Running is good for your heart.

. . . the word *Running* expresses action, yet it is not the verb in this sentence. The real verb is the word *is*, and this word does not really express action, does it? In light of this, consider the following sentence:

As still as a stone, Mary slept through the action of the adventure movie.

The verb is *slept*, but this verb happened in such a way that the person who did it was “as still as a stone”. In this light, how does *slept* point to action? It doesn't.

On the other hand, the word *action* comes just a few words later, after *slept*. Surely the word *action* means action, no? But this word *action* is not a verb.

So the idea that verbs must express action is misleading, indeed.

Unreliable Idea No. 2) Large lists in grammar books can help you learn verbs.

I am not against lists, and I'll include some lists soon enough. But if you do look at a large list of verbs, be warned—many words on such lists aren't going to be verbs all the time. They may be verbs in one sentence and something else in another.

The words *hit* and *shout* are like this. Let's look at *hit* first. In one sense it can mean the action of making contact with something, and in another sense it can be the impact itself.

I hit the ball.	(<i>hit</i> = verb.)
There was a direct hit on the submarine.	(<i>hit</i> ≠ verb.)

What about *shout*? In one sentence, it can mean the act of raising your voice, or in another sentence it can mean the noise itself. One is a verb, and one isn't.

The fans on that side of the field shout loudly.	(<i>shout</i> = verb)
The shout came from behind that building.	(<i>shout</i> ≠ verb)

Step 2: Learn the *Have*, *Be*, and *Do* Verbs

The previous step warned you about long lists. However, when the words on a list will always be what the list says they will be, the list can really help.

These three lists are like that: their words will always be verbs. These lists are short and probably incomplete. Nevertheless they are good enough to help you at this point.

1. *Have* verbs: have, has, had, will have*

have had, has had, will have had

2. *Be* verbs: am, are, is, was, were, will be (but not **to be**!)

am being, are being, is being, was being, were being, will be being
(but not **being** by itself!)

3. *Do* verbs: do, does, did, will do

Some *Have* verbs can be combined with some *Be* verbs (I'll call these *Have + Be* verbs).

have been, has been, will have been,
have been being, has been being, will have been being

Some *Have* verbs can also combine with some *Do* verbs:

has done, have done, will have done, will have had done

Some *Be* verbs can combine with some *Do* verbs:

am doing, was doing, were doing, will be doing

And finally, the *Have + Be* verbs can combine themselves with some *Do* verbs:

have been doing, has been doing, will have been doing
have been done, has been done, will have been done

*Treat the 2- or 3-word units as one whole verb (*will have* = 1 verb, not 2 separate verbs). I will often refer to these verbs as “multiple-word verbs”.

Step 3: Know the Modal Verbs

Modal verbs add shades of meaning to a verb that already exists in the sentence.

Here's an example of a verb that isn't a modal:

I **lend** money to him. (verb = *lend*)

The verb *lend* states a fact. It points to an event or habit that takes place in the present. However, when a modal gets attached to this verb, as in . . .

I **should** lend money to him. (verb = *should lend*)

. . . then the meaning comes across that there is obligation or duty involved. That's how modals work: they add the meaning of obligation, of conditions, of necessity, or so forth.

Here are two other examples (notice how modals help form multiple-word verbs):

I **would** lend money to him if I had it. (verb = *would lend*)
The *would* adds the meaning of conditions which must be met first.

I **must** lend money to him in order to be fair. (verb = *must lend*)
The *must* adds the meaning of necessity—of something that has to be done.

The following is a short list of modal verbs. Whenever you see these in a sentence, you can rest assured that you've found a verb (however, see note for *can*, *may*, and *might*).

can*, can be, could, could be, will be, would, would be, should
should be, may*, may be, might*, might be, must, must be

① When modals combine with *Have*, *Be*, and *Do* verbs, modals will come in front:

Polly **should** have been here for the exam. (verb = *should have been*)

Modals in front of verbs which take place in the present (“present-tense”) or in the past (“past-tense”) join with them to make multiple-word verbs.

We **might be** + **painting** the room. (verb = *might be painting*)
modal a form of present-tense

The call **must be** + **taped**. (verb = *must be taped*)
modal a form of past-tense

*Of course, at times *can* = cylinder container, *May* = fifth month, *might* = power, etc.

Step 4: Learn about Words Ending in *-ing*

To be verbs, words ending in *-ing* must always be part of a multiple-word verb (shaded):

I had been mowing the lawn.	Dora was asking the questions.
We will be finishing now.	Sam is painting the wall.
The car had not been making that noise.	Soon Carla should be sleeping .

The *-ing* word of a multiple-word verb will always be the last word of the group. The words coming before it will be *Be* verbs, *Have* + *Be* verbs, modals, or some combination of these three things. The whole lot makes up the verb of the sentence.

I had been mowing the lawn.	(multiple-word verb = <i>had been mowing</i>)
<i>Have</i> verb <i>Be</i> verb <i>-ing</i> word	
He must be finishing now.	(multiple-word verb = <i>must be finishing</i>)
modal verb <i>-ing</i> word	

In the following, the *-ing* words don't have *Have*, *Be*, *Do* verbs or modals coming before:

Following his nose, the hound walked slowly up the trail.
The children played in the raindrops **falling** through the oak's leaves.

Thus, these words aren't verbs. By themselves, *-ing* words will never be verbs.

❶ There are a few other words besides *Be* verbs, *Have* + *Be* verbs, or modals that will cause an *-ing* word to become part of a multiple-word verb.

<i>keep, keeps, kept</i> + <i>-ing</i> word:	He keeps coming to the door. multiple-word verb
<i>continue, continues, continued</i> + <i>-ing</i> word:	I continued studying. multiple-word verb

Practice Avoiding *-ing* Words That Aren't Verbs

To practice avoiding non-verb *-ing* words, underline the verbs. Answers are on pg. 141.

- The cars were rushing past the bus waiting at the corner.
- Coming from behind, the running back was reaching for the football.
- Yolanda is worried about the spelling exam.
- They have been staying home lately, avoiding the stinging cold.
- The importance of studying is becoming evident to the students.
- A frozen rain fell from the sky, pelting the glass with sleet.
- Behind the fence stood the exited dog, waiting for a reason to bark.