

Sentence Cores, Canonical Sentence Types, Adverbials

Simple declarative English sentences fall into three **major canonical types**.

Intransitive: **Subject-Verb**

Tweedy	slept.
S	V

Transitive: Subject-Verb-Direct Object Tweedy caught a mouse.
S V DO

Subject-Complement: **Subject-Linking Verb-Subject Complement** Tweedy is a cat.
S LV SC

A huge variety of English sentences, some of them extremely elaborate, reduce to **cores** as simple as in those examples.

Intransitive: **S-V** [The little grey kitten that our neighbor captured in a live-trap] [sleeps].
S V

Transitive: **S-V-DO** [The little grey kitten that our neighbor captured in a live-trap] [caught]
S V

[the annoying mouse that had been sneaking into the kitchen and eating the kibble every night].

DO

Subject-Complement:

S-LV-SC [The little grey kitten that our neighbor captured in a live- trap]

[is] [one of the most adorable companions that a human being could ever hope for].

LV SC

Parsing a sentence – explaining its syntactic structure – begins with finding the core of the sentence and identifying its canonical type. Parsing should be done by reading the whole sentence and assessing what work the main verb does.

If the subject simply does something, the verb is intransitive. Tweedy wanders.

If the subject does something to something or someone else, the verb is transitive. Tweedy eats his kibble.

If the subject is said to have a certain attribute, feature, identity – if you can replace the verb with an equal sign – it is a linking verb with subject-complement (and the verb is called a **linking verb**). Tweedy looks small.

