

imperative, subjunctive, indirect-object, object-complement, active & passive voice

The English **imperative mood** is the bare form of the verb, used alone. Imperative sentences are orders, more or less strong or mild. They usually don't have express subjects, but we understand that the subject is the person (or cat) being addressed, who can sometimes appear as a pronoun or a name.

- **Eat** your kibble!
- You **eat** your kibble!
- Tweedy, **eat** your kibble!

In the second example, only meaning and inflection of the voice (in writing, punctuation) distinguish the sentence from the statement of fact "You eat your kibble."

The English **subjunctive mood** is the bare form of the verb, used to express a wish or a condition (in the sense of the context or prerequisite for something). English uses its subjunctive very rarely, compared to other languages, and often in fixed traditional expressions, so that it sounds old-fashioned:

- **come** what may
- **be** that as it may
- truth **be** told
- **suffice** it to say
- God **save** the King

One form of *be* is used often in similar conditional senses: *were* instead of *was*.

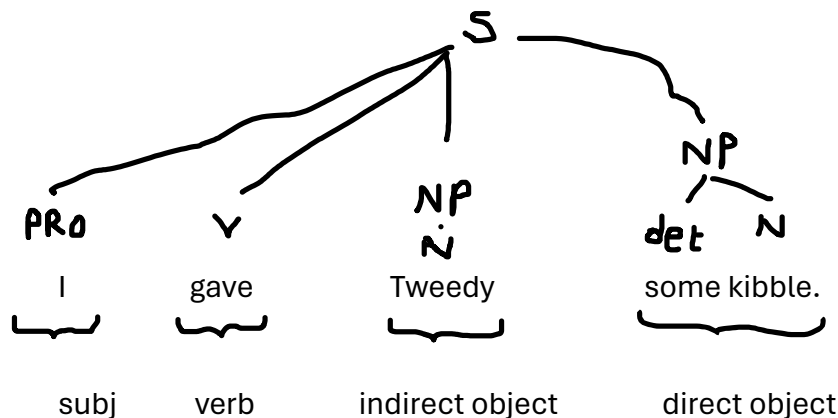
- If Tweedy **were** smart, he would come indoors.
- If I **were** you, I would get a different cat.

This use of *were* is not a true subjunctive (which would be the bare form *be*). Since it refers to something that isn't the case, some linguists call this use of *were* the **irrealis**.

two additional canonical sentence types

We have been working with three common sentence types: intransitive, transitive, and subject-complement. Two other canonical types round out the basic English sentence structures. Like the main types, they convey specific meanings via word order, and they employ particular verbs to do so.

Indirect-object sentences are a special case of transitive sentences. They too have direct objects, but they include a second object, an **indirect object**. They usually involve verbs of giving. The direct object is the gift; the indirect object is the recipient.

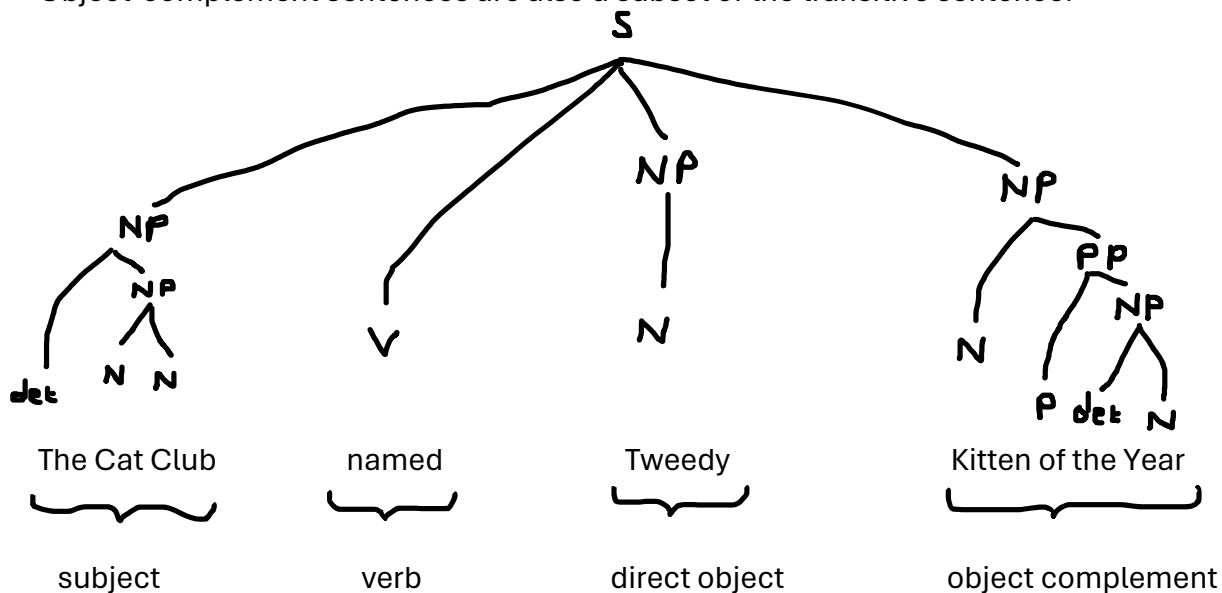


Note that the word order S-V-IO-DO is crucial.

- I gave the little kitten a toy mouse.
- *I gave a toy mouse the little kitten.

Or perhaps the second sentence is possible if you are playing with figurines. But though the words are identical, the second sentence has a completely different meaning, and those meanings are signaled only by the order in which the noun phrases appear.

Object-complement sentences are used with verbs of naming, appointing, electing, or otherwise turning the direct object into something else, or assigning it some role or title. Object-complement sentences are also a subset of the transitive sentence.



Again, the word order S-V-DO-OC is essential.

- *The Cat Club named Kitten of the Year Tweedy.

active and passive voice

Almost all the transitive sentences we have worked with so far are in the **active voice**, though we have identified the form of the passive verb phrase: *be* auxiliary + -ed participle.

In English, active transitive sentences can be transformed into **passive voice** by inverting the word order, making the direct object of the active sentence the subject of the passive sentence, while making the subject of the active sentence the **agent** of the passive sentence. The agent usually appears in a prepositional phrase called an agent phrase, the most usual modern preposition being *by*. Agents don't have to appear.

- Tweedy **chased** the white hen. (active; S-V-DO)
- The white hen **was chased** by Tweedy. (passive; S-V-A)
- Mistakes **were made**. (passive S-V without agent)

Those two sentences are effectively synonyms except for voice; either way, the hen is on the run and Tweedy is in pursuit. But passive voice can often sound quite different from active, and suggest different connotations. For instance, making the hen the subject of the sentence, even though she is the object of the verb's action, foregrounds or "topicalizes" the hen. We can't help but think more about the hen when she appears first in the sentence than when she appears last.

Passive voice can be used along with perfect and progressive aspects. Just maintain the verb phrase rule

VP → [modal] [AUX perfect have] [AUX progressive be] [AUX passive be] main verb

- Tweedy **had been taken** to the vet by his Mormor. (perfect passive)
- Tweedy **is being groomed** by the Pet Patrol people. (progressive passive)

Indirect-object and object-complement sentences, being transitive, can be made passive. With indirect-object sentences, either object can become the passive subject:

- Tweedy gave the hen a scare. (active; S-V-IO-DO)
- A scare was given the hen by Tweedy. (passive; S-V-IO-A)
- The hen was given a scare by Tweedy. (passive; S-V-DO-A)

With object-complement sentences, only the direct object can become the passive subject. The object complement then becomes a subject complement:

- The Chamber of Cats elected Tweedy Cat Chairman. (active; S-V-DO-OC)
- Tweedy was elected Cat Chairman by the Chamber of Cats. (passive; S-V-SC-A)
- *Cat Chairman was elected Tweedy by the Chamber of Cats.

Intransitive and subject-complement (linking verb) sentences cannot be made passive.

- Tweedy stretched out on the patio. (intransitive; no passive possible)
- *Out on the patio was stretched by Tweedy.
- Tweedy turns four this year. (subject-complement; no passive possible)
- *Three was turned last year by Tweedy.

Prescriptive stylists hate the passive voice, even while they often mis-identify many kinds of constructions as "passive." (You often see linking-verb sentences, intransitives, or even active transitive sentences with non-action verbs described as "passive.") Mechanical grammar checkers will often routinely advise against the passive voice. But there may be any number of good reasons to use a passive in a particular situation. Indeed, why would the passive ever have developed, if it were never useful?