

Subject Complements

1 Here's the Idea

► **A complement is a word or a group of words that completes the meaning of a verb.** Complements include subject complements, direct objects, indirect objects, and objective complements.

A **subject complement** follows a linking verb and describes or renames the subject. There are two kinds of subject complements: predicate adjectives and predicate nominatives. Subject complements can also have their own modifiers, as in the second example below.

Predicate adjectives describe subjects by telling *which one, what kind, how much, or how many*.

During the 1930s, the jitterbug became popular.

SUBJECT LINKING VERB PREDICATE ADJECTIVE

In comparison, today's dances seem very tame.

MODIFIER PREDICATE ADJECTIVE

Predicate nominatives are nouns and pronouns that rename, identify, or define subjects.

The jitterbug is a dance variation.

SUBJECT LINKING VERB PREDICATE NOMINATIVE

Frank Manning was an inventive jitterbug dancer.

PREDICATE NOMINATIVE

2 Why It Matters in Writing

Subject complements, like the simple noun *man* in the model below, can themselves be modified to create a full description.

LITERARY MODEL

"Verenka's father was a very handsome, imposing, and well-preserved old **man**."

—Leo Tolstoy, "After the Ball"

1 Here's the Idea

- Many action verbs require complements called **direct objects** and **indirect objects** to complete their meaning.

Direct and Indirect Objects

A **direct object** is a word or group of words that names the receiver of the action of an action verb. It answers the question *what* or *whom*. Consider the following sentence:

Many people save.

Notice that the sentence is missing information. You probably wonder what many people save.

Many people save **string.**
↑ DIRECT OBJECT

Other people keep **twist ties** **from plastic bags.**
↑ DIRECT OBJECT

An **indirect object** is a word or group of words that tells to what, to whom, or for whom an action is done. In a sentence containing both a direct and an indirect object, the indirect object almost always comes before the direct object. Verbs that often take indirect objects include *bring*, *give*, *hand*, *lend*, *make*, *offer*, *send*, *show*, *teach*, *tell*, and *write*.

Savers give **friends** **collecting advice.**
↑ INDIRECT OBJECT ↑ DIRECT OBJECT

What do savers give? **advice** *Advice* is the direct object.

To whom do savers give advice? **friends** *Friends* is the indirect object.

Savers will proudly show **anyone** **their giant jars of pennies.**
↑ INDIRECT OBJECT ↑ DIRECT OBJECT

For more about action verbs, see p. 14.

The words *to* and *for* never appear before the indirect object. *To* and *for* are prepositions when they are followed by a noun or pronoun. In such cases the noun or pronoun is an object of the preposition, not an object of the verb.

