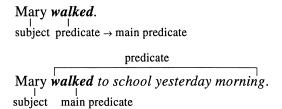
23. WHAT IS A PREDICATE?

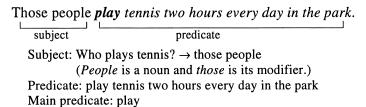
A sentence can always be divided into two parts: the subject and the predicate (the way to identify subjects is discussed in detail in **What is a Subject?**, p. 70). To put it simply, a predicate is everything in a sentence except the subject; it defines or describes the subject.

A **predicate** can be just one word, a verb for instance, or a group of words containing it. The core of the entire predicate is called the **main predicate** (textbooks often use the terms "predicate" when referring to the "main predicate"). In the examples to follow, the predicate is in *italics* and the main predicate in *bold italics*.

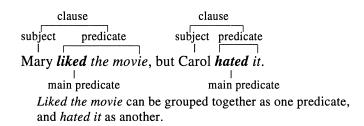


Although in many languages (including English) verbs are the only class of words that can be a main predicate, in other languages (including Japanese) other classes of words can also play that role. In the grammar of such languages, the term "predicate" is a convenient cover term that encompasses all the classes of words that "behave like verbs."

To establish the predicate of a sentence, first find the subject by asking who or what before the verb. Note that a subject can be more than one word; i.e., a noun and its modifier. Once you have identified the subject, you will know that the rest of the sentence is the predicate.



Sometimes there are two or more subjects and two or more predicates in a sentence. In order to identify them you have to group words together by meaning. Each unit of a subject + predicate is called a clause (see What are Sentences and Clauses?, p. 89).



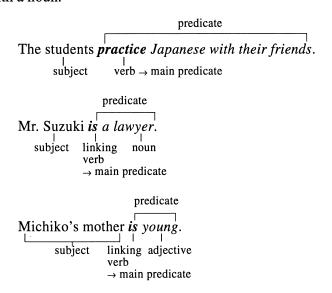
A word such as *but*, as in the above example, is a conjunction and is not part of the subject or the predicate of the sentence (see **What is a Conjunction?**, p. 49).

In both English and Japanese it is important to know which predicate goes with which subject to understand the sentence correctly, especially as sentences become more complex.

IN ENGLISH

A predicate consists of the verb plus all the words in the sentence that go with it in meaning. The main predicate of a sentence is always a verb.

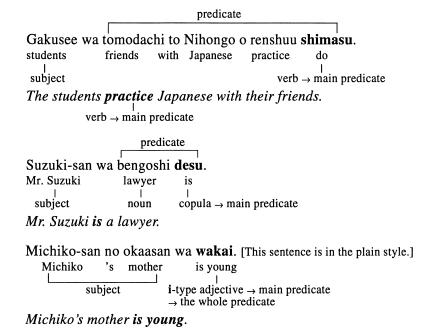
Here are examples of predicates whose main predicates are an action verb, a linking verb to be with an adjective, and a linking verb to be with a noun.



IN JAPANESE

The main predicate (often referred to simply as "the predicate") of a sentence can be a verb, the copula **desu** (to be), or an **i**-type adjective. The predicate consists of the main predicate plus all the words in the sentence that go with it in meaning. (See **What is a Descriptive Adjective?**, p. 36, and **What are the Uses of the Verb "To be"?**, p. 26.)

Here are examples of predicates whose main predicates, shown in **bold**, are a verb, the copula **desu** (to be), and an **i**-type adjective.



Underline the entire predicate in the following sentences.

- Circle the main predicate.
- 1. Summer is my favorite season.
- 2. Nice houses on the beach are quite expensive.
- 3. The artists' group sponsored a wonderful exhibit with the central theme of world peace.