

Verbs of Incomplete Predication

**Intransitive verbs** do not have objects:

The baby cried.
She slept.

In the example sentences given above the intransitive verbs *cried* and *slept* have no objects, but the sentences still make complete sense.

Now consider the examples given below.

The earth is ...
Alice seems ...
The milk turned ...
Honey tastes ...

You will have noticed that the sentences given above do not make complete sense because their predicates (is, seems, turned, tastes) are incomplete. Each of these sentences requires a word or words to make the sense complete.

Now read the sentences given below:

The earth is **round**.
Alice seems **upset**.
The milk turned **sour**.
Honey tastes **sweet**.

When the adjective **round** is added to the fragment ‘The earth is’, the sentence becomes meaningful. Similarly the adjective **upset** turns the fragment ‘Alice seems’ into a meaningful sentence.

Such a verb which requires a word or words to complete the predicate is called a **verb of incomplete predication**. Examples are: **be** (is/am/are/were/was), **appear, become, look, seem, smell, grow, turn** etc.
The word or words required to make the sense complete is called the **complement of the verb**.

The complements of intransitive verbs can be nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, participles, prepositional phrases and infinitives.

Alice is my **sister**. (Here the complement is the noun sister.)
This bag is **mine**. (Here the complement is the pronoun mine.)
He is **nice**. (Here the complement is the adjective nice.)
The child fell **asleep**. (Adverb)
This machine is **of no use**. (Prepositional phrase)
This house is **to let**. (Infinitive)
She continued **reading**. (Present participle)
She seemed distressed. (Past participle)

Here the complements *sister, mine, nice, asleep, to let* etc., say something about the subjects *Alice, bag, he, child, house* etc. They are therefore called **subject complements**.

### Object complements

Transitive verbs have objects. But some transitive verbs require, besides their objects, some complements to complete their predicates:

Examples are given below:

The teacher appointed John **monitor**.
The people elected her **President**.
Success made him **mad**.
The court declared the man **guilty**.
We found him **dishonest**.

Here the complements *monitor, president, mad, guilty and dishonest* say something about the objects *John, her, him, the man* etc. They are therefore called **object complements**.