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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

How to Diagram Any Sentence gives you the opportunity to practice hands-on diagramming, based on the principles in *The Diagramming Dictionary*. Reading through *The Diagramming Dictionary* will tell you *how* to diagram, but working through the exercises in this book will make that knowledge real. (As you already know, you remember some of what you read—but much more of what you *do*.)

Start out by reading the Foreword in *The Diagramming Dictionary*. That will provide you with the rationale behind diagramming (why should you bother?), along with plenty of practical suggestions for your own diagramming practice.

Then, have a quick look through the next short section of *The Diagramming Dictionary*, Before We Begin, to make sure that you understand the basis of all diagrams (the subject/predicate division).

And you're ready to go.

How to Diagram Any Sentence follows the exact same progression as *The Diagramming Dictionary*. So read through the rule in the *Dictionary*, look at the sample diagram, and then turn to *How to Diagram* to complete the exercises. Then, check your work.

For example: The first section in Part I of the *Dictionary* is IA, Simple subjects. And the first simple subject (IA.1) is common nouns: "When a common noun is used as the subject of a sentence, put it on the subject line." Read the definition, examine the diagram, and then turn to *How to Diagram Any Sentence*. You'll see the exact same first section (IA, Simple subjects) and then the first exercise—four sentences with common nouns as subjects. Modelling your work on the example in the *Dictionary*, diagram the subject and predicate of each sentence. Then, check your work against the Answer Key in the second half of the book.

That's all there is to it! You can move on to IA.2 (the understood you as subject), and then IA.3 (pronouns as subjects), always checking the definition and example in the *Dictionary* first, and then putting that knowledge to use by diagramming the exercises in *How to Diagram*.

A few things to keep in mind:

Because every sentence has a subject and a predicate, it's impossible to do even a basic diagram without putting both of those parts of the sentence

on your sketch. So until you learn about predicates in Section IB, the predicate of each sentence will be underlined for you. Don't worry about what's underlined. Just put it in the predicate space. (That's why you needed to read *Before We Begin*, so if you skipped that part of the instructions above, go back and look at it now.)

So that you can learn one diagramming concept at a time, *How to Diagram* puts sentence parts that you haven't yet learned in italics. Only diagram the words in regular type, and don't worry about the rest. Sometimes we have included the entire sentence diagram in the Key, just for your own interest.

And finally: Whenever possible, we've drawn the sentences in the exercises from the books of actual accomplished writers and indicated this with a footnote. If there's no footnote, the sentence was invented in order to illustrate a particular grammatical rule.

Sharpen your pencil, grab some unlined paper and an eraser, and start diagramming!



WHY DIAGRAMMING IS HELPFUL FOR ADULT WRITERS

If you feel uncertain about the clarity of your written sentences—and who hasn't?—sentence diagramming can help you crack the mysterious code of the English language.

The whole point of written English is to say, as plainly as possible, exactly what you mean. And although that sounds simple, hundreds of thousands of intelligent and talented grown-ups managed to get through twelve years of primary and secondary school without being given the tools needed for this task. Many of them also earned college degrees, and even graduate degrees, and still find themselves struggling to write effective sentences.

Diagramming can show you why a sentence is, or isn't, working—with a minimum of wasted time. Diagrams are a simple, visual representation of the logical relationship between the words in a sentence. If those words have a clear relationship to each other, you'll get your point across.

Think of diagramming as a wellness check on your sentences. A thought begins in your brain as a wordless idea; you put that idea into words; and then you put those words down on paper. Often, there's a disconnect between the second and third steps. When we talk to each other, we rely on nonverbal cues: tone of voice, physical gestures, pauses, and accents. But if you need to convey that same idea to someone who's not in the room with you, you can't rely on any of those useful aids. You've got to make every word in your written sentence count.

And too often, written sentences are incomplete, bloated, incoherent, or rambling.

How do you know if you're communicating clearly? Put the sentence you're struggling with on a diagram. If you can't figure out where a part of the sentence fits into the diagram, you're probably dealing with a thought that doesn't belong. If the diagram doesn't make sense, neither does your sentence. (And the reader won't get the idea either.)

But if you can put your sentence on a diagram with confidence? You can be sure that you've had your say with as much clarity as possible.



WHY DIAGRAMMING IS HELPFUL FOR STUDENT LEARNERS

Imagine that you are sitting at a small table covered with Lego pieces of every kind: square ones, rounded sections, long bricks, and those flat rectangles that are so annoying to take apart. By themselves, these plastic blocks are not very useful. You could look at each one individually and identify its shape and color, but until you pick the pieces up and start connecting them, all you will have is a pile of bricks.

When students learn the parts of a sentence, they are collecting their own grammar pieces. They memorize, for example, that a direct object answers the question “who?” or “what?” and receives the action of a verb. They learn that a predicate nominative follows a linking verb and renames a subject. But they don’t always learn how those parts work together, and diagramming sentences is one of the best tools we have to show students how to connect these pieces and construct a good sentence.

Let’s say that a student adds a prepositional phrase to a sentence, in order to give some nice detail and add description. If a student has practiced diagramming, she will know, from seeing how the lines of the diagram connect, what word this prepositional phrase is modifying. If that phrase is acting as an adjective, the placement in the sentence becomes even more important. Here’s an example from *Grammar for the Well-Trained Mind*:

Inside the clock, Daniel watched the huge, swinging pendulum.

In this sentence, the prepositional phrase “Inside the clock” is in the wrong spot. Diagramming this phrase forces a student to make a decision: Is this phrase acting as an adjective or adverb? Does it belong under (modify) the word “watched” or something else? Is the pendulum inside the clock or is Daniel? Once a student recognizes this phrase as adjectival, she would then realize that the phrase is a misplaced modifier, and that it needs to be put directly after the noun “pendulum.”

Diagramming sentences creates a visual representation for the student of how the sentence parts she has studied all click together. It gives younger students a chance to try out some critical thinking skills and learn a bit of analysis, and it allows more experienced students to see how various types of clauses and structures all work together to create a lovely-sounding

group of words, much like how that jumbled pile of Lego bricks can, once connected, become something to enjoy.

It is our hope that, if you have never diagrammed before, this book will introduce you to a new, useful tool for you and your students as you craft your phrases and clauses and paragraphs. Happy diagramming!



PART I: HOW TO DIAGRAM THE SIMPLE SUBJECT AND SIMPLE PREDICATE OF A SENTENCE

IA. Simple subjects

1. Common nouns as subjects

1. Meteorologists issue *hurricane warnings*.
2. *The enormous* elephant entered *the elevator*.
3. *A heartbroken* hedgehog hijacked *the helicopter*!
4. *A light* rain fell *in the morning*.

2. The understood you as subject

1. Learn *quietly*.
2. Eat *your vegetables*!
3. Mail *the letter*.
4. Close *the oven*.

3. Pronouns as subjects

1. Are *you hungry*?
2. I see *a mouse*!
3. He stood *bravely at the fortress door*.¹
4. I mowed *the grass*.

4. Compound nouns as subjects

1. *Early* trout fishing succeeds.
2. *Kristi's* ice cream melted.
3. *Our* solar system moves.
4. *Sydney's* fishtank bubbled.

1. *The Phantom Tollbooth*, Norton Juster

5. Compound subjects

1. *The Rainbow's Daughter and the Rose Princess approached them.*²
2. Alexandra and Raphael play *tic-tac-toe* together.
3. Water and nutrients are *sufficient for the cultivation of tomatoes.*³
4. *The confusion and clangor lasted a few seconds.*⁴

6. Compound subjects with more than one coordinating conjunction

1. A plate and a cup and a fork sat *on the counter.*
2. Cheeseburgers or hot dogs or bratwurst are *the choices for the picnic.*
3. *The dog and the cat and the new puppy lay on the porch.*
4. Are pillows and blankets and towels *in the basket?*

7. Proper nouns as subjects

1. Juliana recycles.
2. Marie Curie researched.
3. Louisa May Alcott wrote.
4. *The homemade Flying Machine disappeared.*⁵

8. Indefinite pronouns as subjects

1. Nobody knows *him.*⁶
2. Something did happen.⁷
3. Nothing came *of the move.*⁸
4. Few are *angels.*⁹

2. *Tik-Tok of Oz*, L. Frank Baum

3. *Plants, Algae, and Fungi*, Britannica Illustrated Science Library

4. *Maese Perez, the Organist*, Gustavo Adolfo Bequer

5. *The Magical Land of Noom*, Johnny Gruelle

6. *Oliver Twist*, Charles Dickens

7. *The Borrowers*, Mary Norton

8. *The Knights Hospitaller: A Military History of the Knights of St. John*, John C. Carr

9. *King Henry the Eighth*, William Shakespeare

9. Prepositional phrases as subjects

If you do not know how to diagram a prepositional phrase, please see section IIIA 1 in *The Diagramming Dictionary*.

If you do not know how to diagram a prepositional phrase as a subject, please see section IIIB 1 in *The Diagramming Dictionary*.

1. Before breakfast is *too early*.
2. In *the sun* is *too hot today*.
3. In *her mother's arms* is *the newborn baby's favorite place*.
4. During *the class* is *a bad time for a nap*.

10. Demonstrative pronouns as subjects

1. This smells *funny*.
2. This was *a further indication of the truth*.¹⁰
3. In *text-only games*, this is *the only description available*.¹¹
4. That is *a most unjust accusation*.¹²

11. Interrogative pronouns as subjects

1. Who brought *this*?
2. Who spilled *this Smoking Bishop punch on the floor*?
3. Which is *the best fish market in Tokyo*?
4. Whose is *that beautiful garden*?

12. Contractions as subjects

1. We'll play *bandits, or forts, or soldiers, or any of the old games*.¹³
2. You're not making *that fuss about one old wolf*?¹⁴
3. It's the only book for all surfers.¹⁵
4. He's unbeatable and drops *the dehuller with a fat Yes*.¹⁶

10. *The Histories* by Herodotus (translation by Aubrey de Sélincourt)

11. *What is Your Quest?: From Adventure Games to Interactive Books*, Anastasia Salter

12. *The Devil to Pay*, Dorothy Sayers

13. *Five Children and It*, E. Nesbit

14. *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, Elizabeth George Speare

15. *Barbarian Days: A Surfing Life*, William Finnegan

16. "No Face," Junot Díaz

13. Intensive pronouns with a subject

1. *During those days, the sonnet itself exploded out of me.*¹⁷
2. *Of this, I myself am certain and am fully resolved.*
3. *I myself suffer from a different kind of education.*¹⁸
4. *Before the storm, the mayor herself will describe this new evacuation plan for the city.*

14. Gerunds as subjects

1. *Loving is never a waste of time.*¹⁹
2. *Arguing will not solve your problems.*
3. *Hoping propelled them forward.*
4. *Tracking was painfully slow work.*²⁰

15. Infinitives as subjects

1. *To stay seemed the best way to her.*²¹
2. *To exist is to change.*²²
3. *To live is to die.*
4. *To wish was to hope.*

17. Claude McKay, quoted in *The Civil Rights Movement*, Elizabeth Sirimarco

18. *The Library of the World's Best Literature, Ancient and Modern*, Vol. 12, ed. Charles Dudley Warner

19. Astrid Alauda

20. *Big Red*, Jim Kjelgaard

21. *The Matchlock Gun*, Walter D. Edmonds

22. Henri Bergson

16. Compound subjects with coordinating correlative conjunctions

1. Both *his* wife and *his* brothers were delighted to see the coming of the dawn.
2. Neither *your* discourse nor *your* remonstrances shall change my mind.²³
3. Neither *the* jackal nor *the* peacock was able to pass the test.
4. In 424, both *Darius II's* father and *his* half-brother died.²⁴

17. Appositive nouns after subjects

1. She would remain detached, a unit in an official crowd.²⁵
2. I, the man, have brought here a little of the Red Flower.²⁶
3. Adam's band, Shooting Star, is on an upward spiral, which is a great thing—mostly.²⁷
4. It was soaring, that voice, warm and complicated, utterly fearless.²⁸

18. Unknown subjects with hortative verbs

1. Let the Lord of the Black Lands come forth.²⁹
2. Let the song of celebration ring out!
3. The war is inevitable—and let it come!³⁰
4. My fellow citizens: let no one doubt that this is a difficult and dangerous effort on which we have set out.³¹

23. *The Arabian Nights*, edited by Kate Douglas Wiggin and Nora A. Smith

24. *The History of the Ancient World*, Susan Wise Bauer

25. *Gaudy Night*, Dorothy Sayers

26. *The Jungle Book*, Rudyard Kipling

27. *If I Stay*, Gayle Forman

28. *Bel Canto*, Ann Patchett

29. *The Return of the King*, J. R. R. Tolkien

30. "Liberty or Death!" Patrick Henry

31. "On the Cuban Missile Crisis," John F. Kennedy

1B. Simple predicates

1. Helping verbs

1. He was swimming.³²
2. Oliver was talking.³³
3. She was thinking.³⁴
4. Squirrels will gather.³⁵

2. Compound predicates

1. Leo rang *his bell twice* and tapped *his foot impatiently*.
2. I shut *the door* and looked.³⁶
3. Gloria and Caleb clapped *enthusiastically* and *then* stood.
4. He took *the gold* and hid *it*.³⁷

3. Compound predicates with more than one coordinating conjunction or comma

1. Reality might disconcert *her*, bewilder *her*, hurt *her*, *but it would not be reality*.³⁸
2. *Subsequent* dynasties repaired and added *more canals to the network* and created *a system of irrigation and flood control*.³⁹
3. *There, without a thought*, she left *the pathway*, plunged *into a field*, and fell *on the grass*.⁴⁰
4. He took *a large vase*, placed *money in the bottom*, filled *it with olives*, and carried *it to his friend for safekeeping*.⁴¹

32. *The Light Princess and Other Fairy Stories*, George MacDonald

33. *Oliver Twist*, Charles Dickens

34. *At the Back of the North Wind*, George MacDonald

35. *Stories the Iroquois Tell Their Children*, Mabel Powers

36. *Anne of Green Gables*, L.M. Montgomery

37. "The Story of Ali Cogia, Merchant of Bagdad," traditional Arab folktale

38. *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Jean Rhys

39. *Vietnam (Cultures of the World)*, Audrey Seah and Charissa M. Nair

40. *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, Elizabeth George Speare

41. "The Story of Ali Cogia, Merchant of Bagdad," traditional Arab folktale

4. Contractions as predicates

1. They'll arrive *today*.
2. I've *almost* broken *my neck*.⁴²
3. We're leaving *in the morning*.
4. *There's* no meat *for breakfast*.⁴³

5. The understood helping verb

1. *As for the ghosts*, we *ourselves* had never seen nor heard *them*.⁴⁴
2. Ella had watered and weeded *the garden before breakfast*.
3. *The* water was rising and filling *the basement*.
4. *Many* boaters will decorate *their vessels* and sail *down the canals of the city*.

6. Quasi-coordinators joining compound predicates

1. Much *of the snow at these great heights* is evaporated rather than thawed.⁴⁵
2. He would walk *in a hailstorm* sooner than pay *ten dollars for a cab*.
3. *My* friend would order *takeout* sooner than wait *for a table*.
4. *Once forward*, he fell rather than sat *in the pilot's seat* and *immediately* began checking *readouts and gauges*.⁴⁶

42. *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, Kate Douglas Wiggin

43. *The Story of the World, Volume 1: Ancient Times*, Susan Wise Bauer

44. *Where the Flame Trees Bloom*, Alma Flor Ada

45. *The Voyage of the Beagle*, Charles Darwin

46. *Star Wars Trilogy*, George Lucas



PART I: HOW TO DIAGRAM THE SIMPLE SUBJECT AND SIMPLE PREDICATE OF A SENTENCE

IA. Simple subjects

1. Common nouns as subjects

1. Meteorologists | issue

2. elephant | entered

3. hedgehog | hijacked

4. rain | fell

2. The understood you as subject

1. (you) | Learn

2. (you) | Eat

3. (you) | Mail

4. (you) | Close

3. Pronouns as subjects

1. you | Are

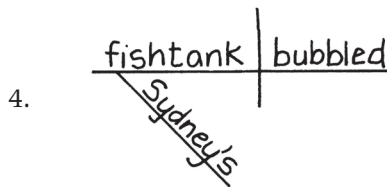
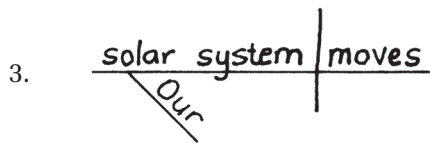
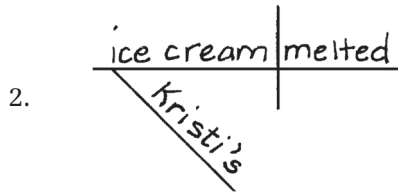
2. I | see

3. He | stood

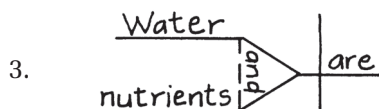
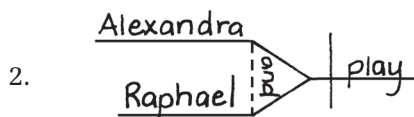
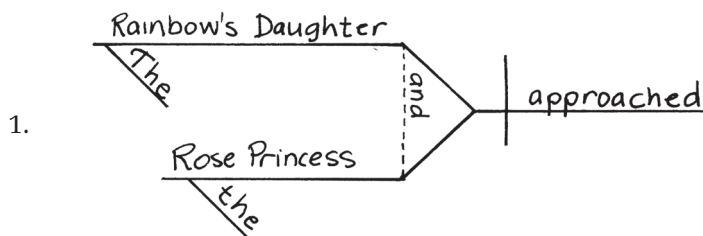
4. I | mowed

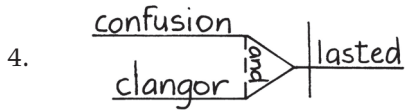
4. Compound nouns as subjects

1. trout fishing | succeeds
 Early

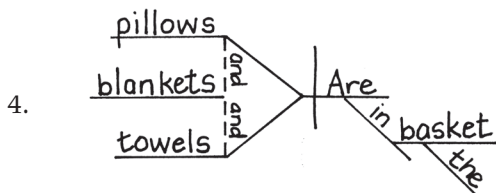
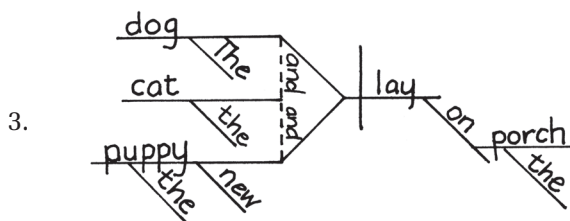
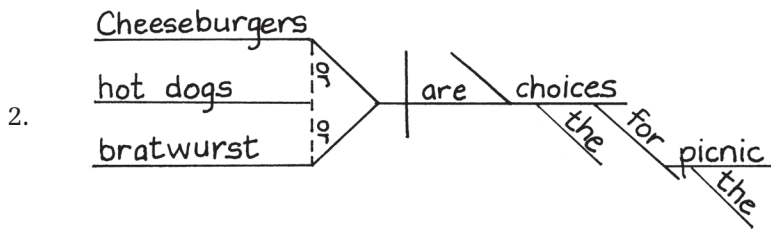
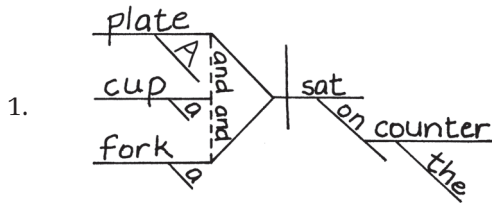


5. Compound subjects

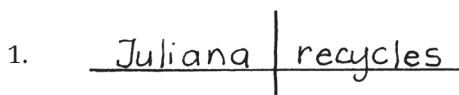




6. Compound subjects with more than one coordinating conjunction



7. Proper nouns as subjects



2. Marie Curie | researched

3. Louisa May Alcott | wrote

4. Flying Machine | disappeared
 The homemade

8. Indefinite pronouns as subjects

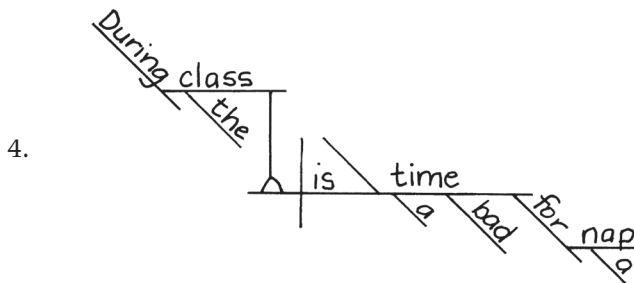
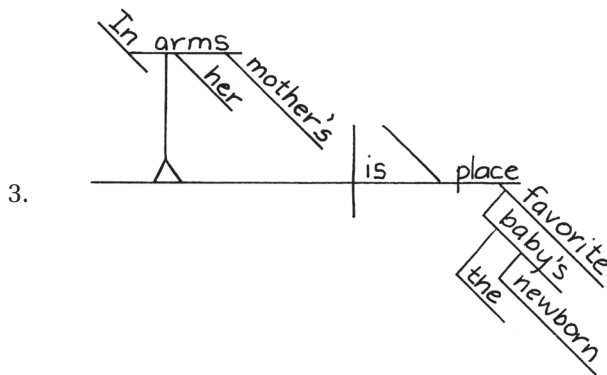
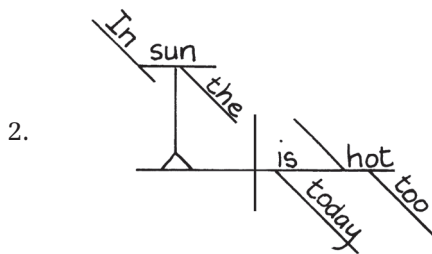
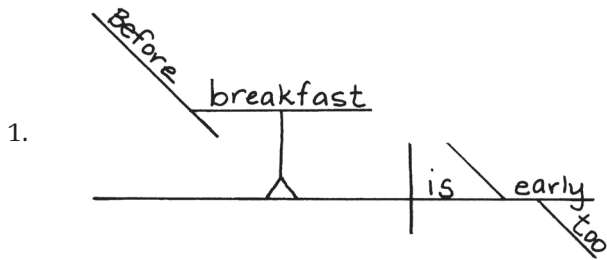
1. Nobody | knows | him

2. Something | did happen

3. Nothing | came
 of move
 the

4. Few | are | angels

9. Prepositional phrases as subjects



10. Demonstrative pronouns as subjects

1. This | smells | funny

2. This | was | indication
 a further of truth
 the

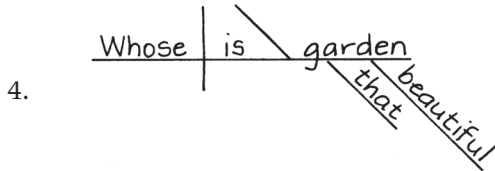
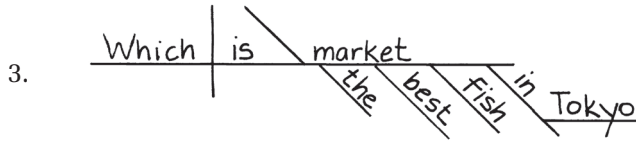
3. this | is | description
 In games the only available
 text-only

4. That | is | accusation
 a unjust
 most

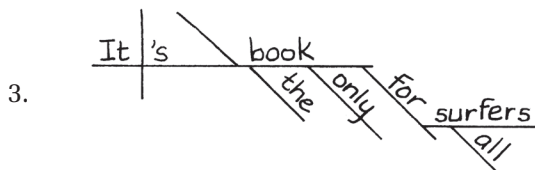
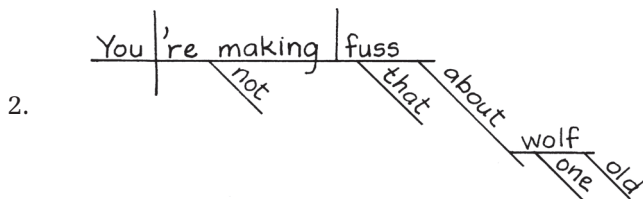
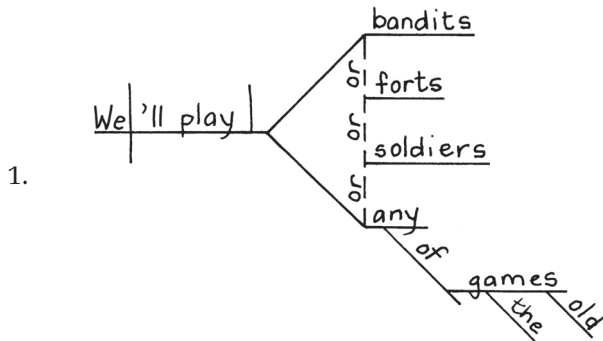
11. Interrogative pronouns as subjects

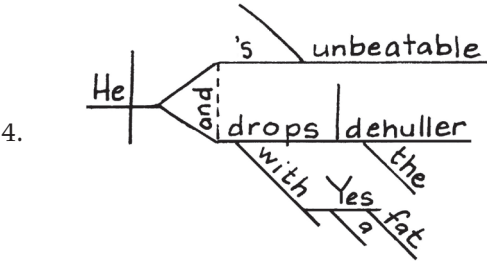
1. Who | brought | this

2. who | spilled | punch
 on floor this Smoking Bishop
 the

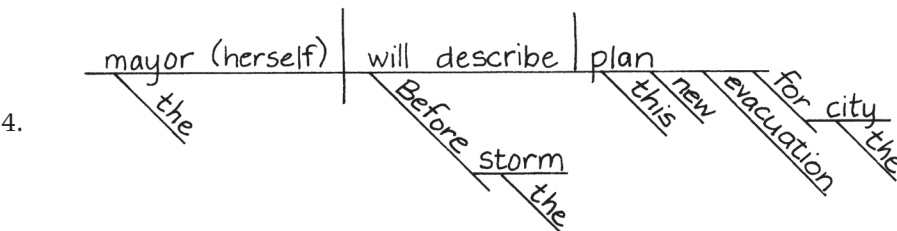
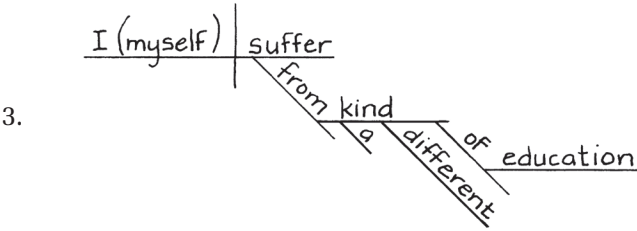
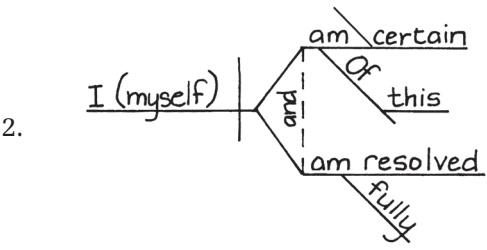
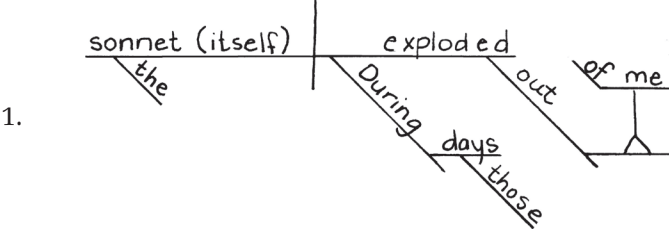


12. Contractions as subjects

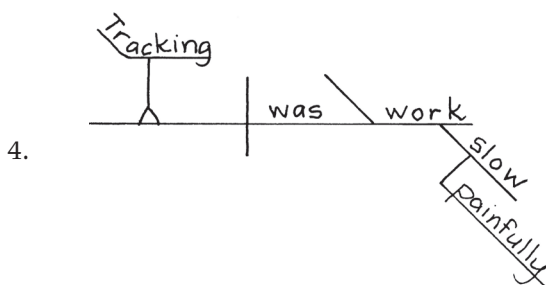
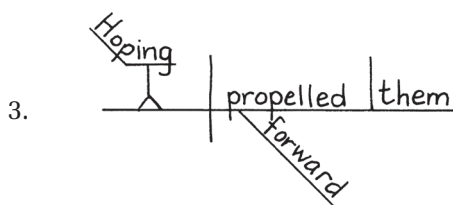
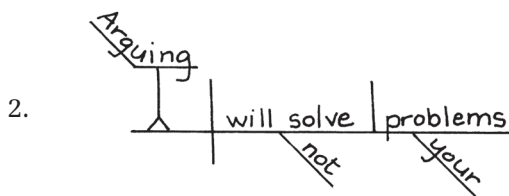
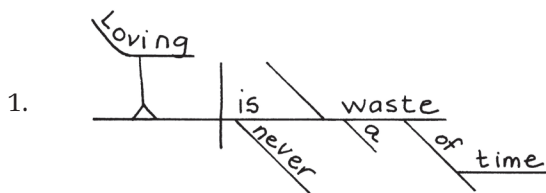




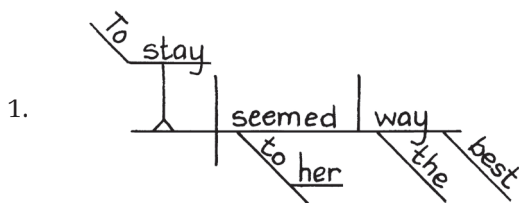
13. Intensive pronouns with a subject

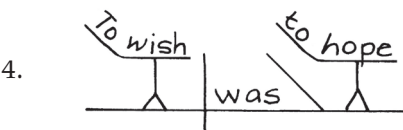
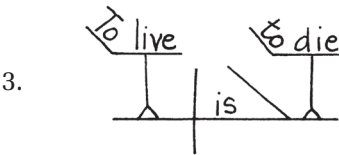
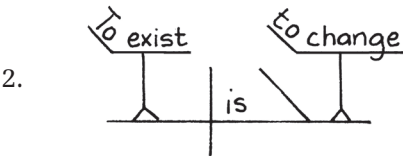


14. Gerunds as subjects

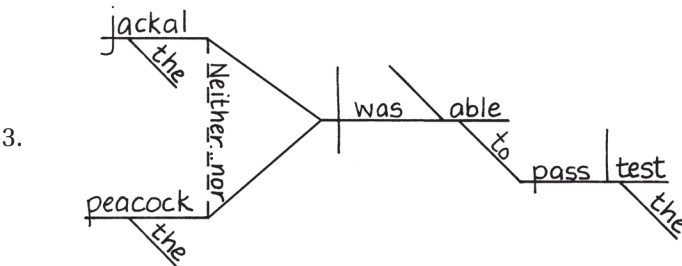
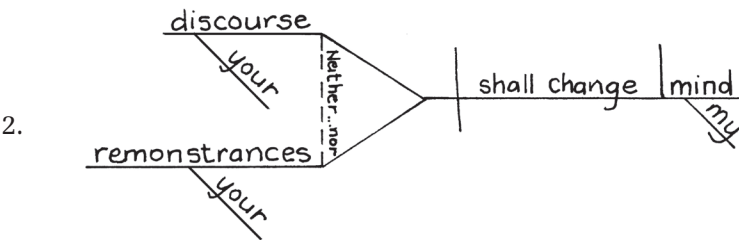
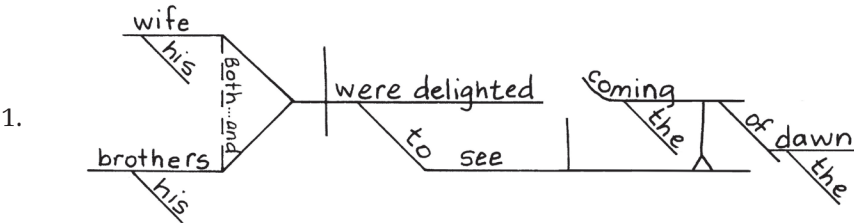


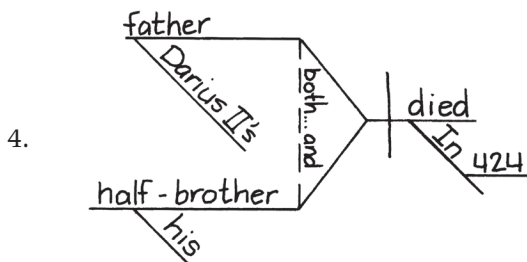
15. Infinitives as subjects



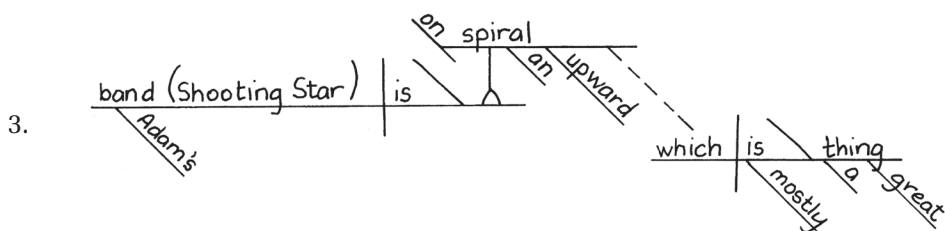
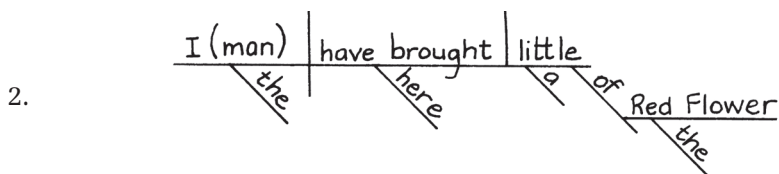
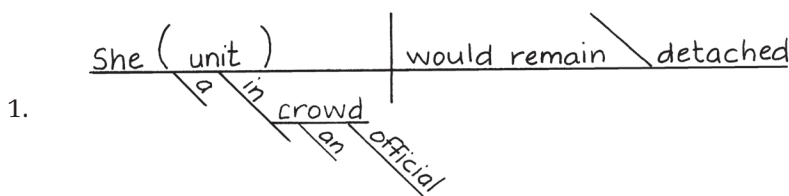


16. Compound subjects with coordinating correlative conjunctions



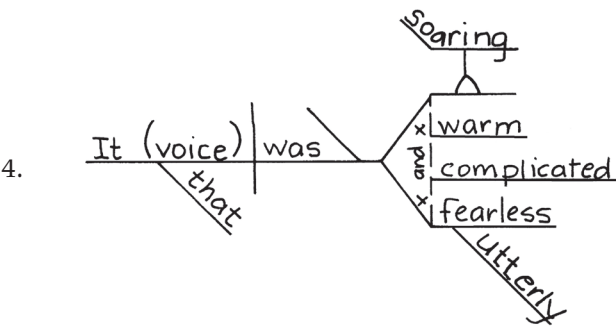


17. Appositive nouns after subjects

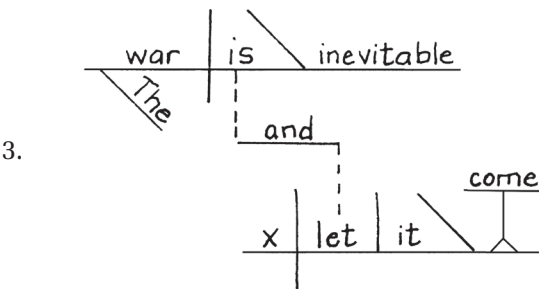
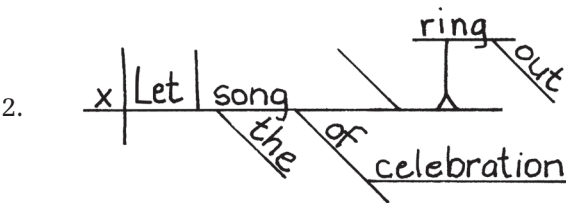
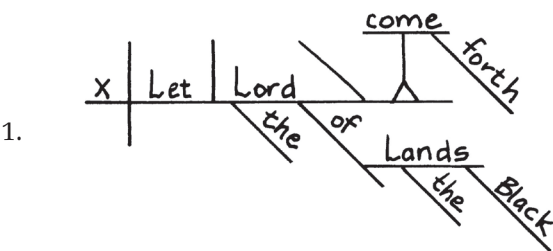


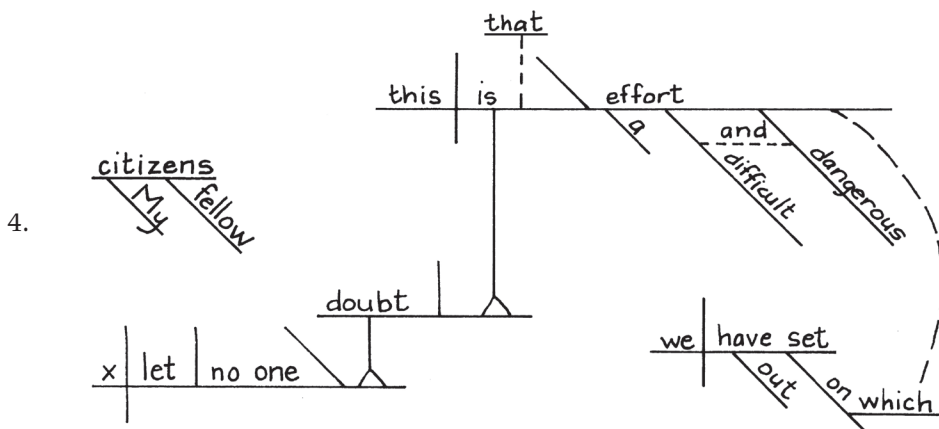
NOTE: In case you are wondering about how the predicate of this sentence is diagrammed, here's our explanation.

Although you may want to diagram *on an upward spiral* as an adverb phrase, since *is* is a linking verb, it makes more sense to diagram the prepositional phrase as a predicate adjective.



18. Unknown subjects with hortative verbs





1B. Simple predicates

1. Helping verbs

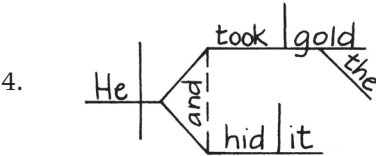
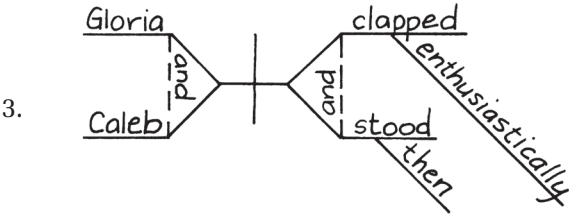
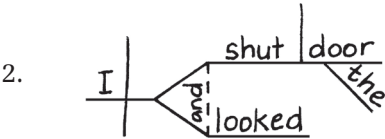
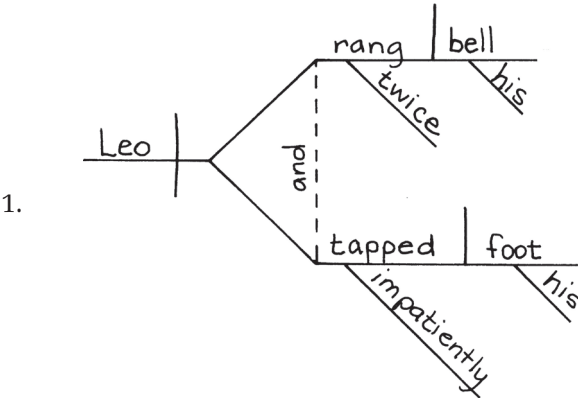
1. He was swimming

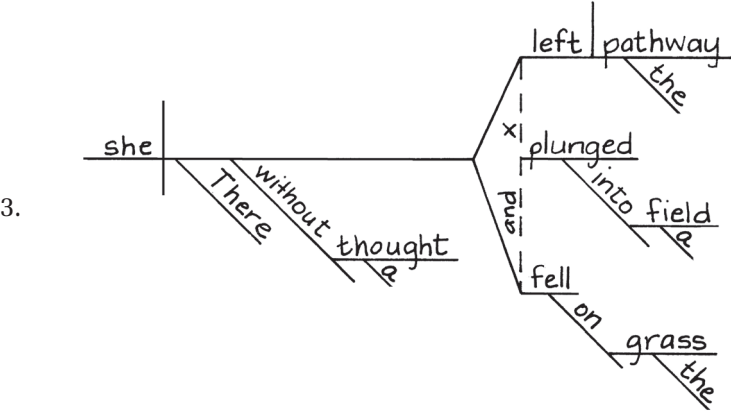
2. Oliver was talking

3. She was thinking

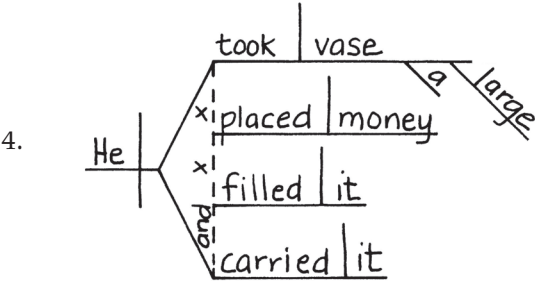
4. Squirrels will gather

2. Compound predicates

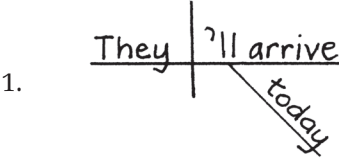


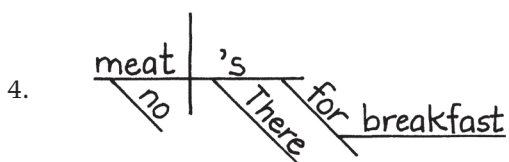
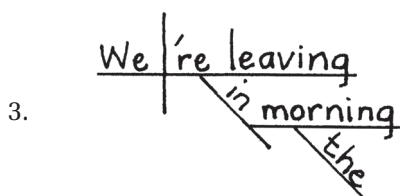
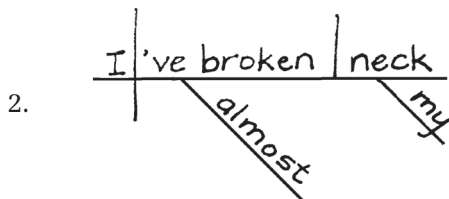


NOTE: You may choose to place an *X* to represent the comma on the dotted line between *left* and *plunged*. Additionally, if you're wondering about the phrase *There, without a thought*, we've diagrammed it as though it modifies all three verbs. An adverb modifying more than one verb can be placed after the verb-dividing line on the diagram, but before the branches of the compound verbs. A person could also simply diagram the phrase under *left*.

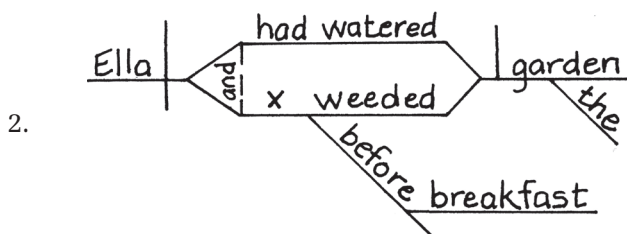
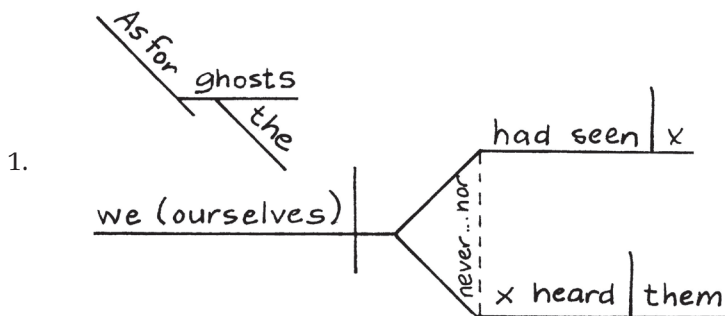


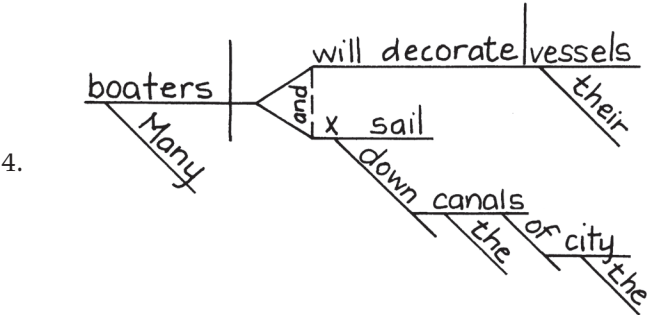
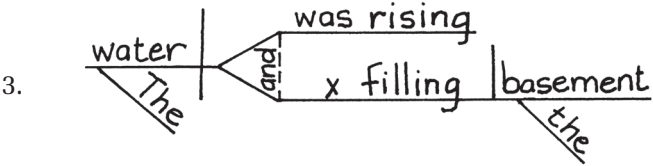
4. Contractions as predicates



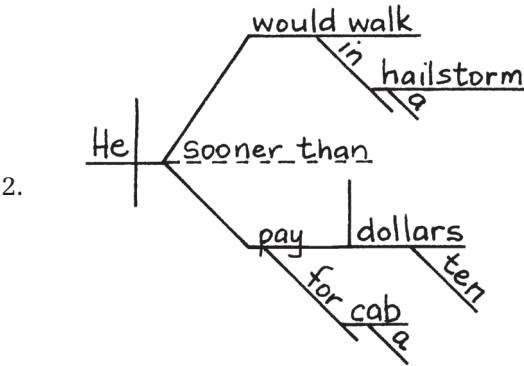
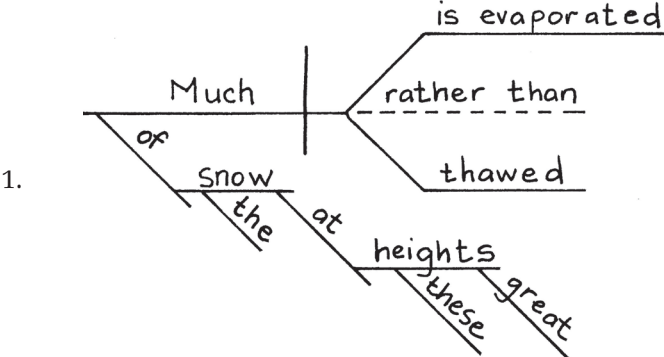


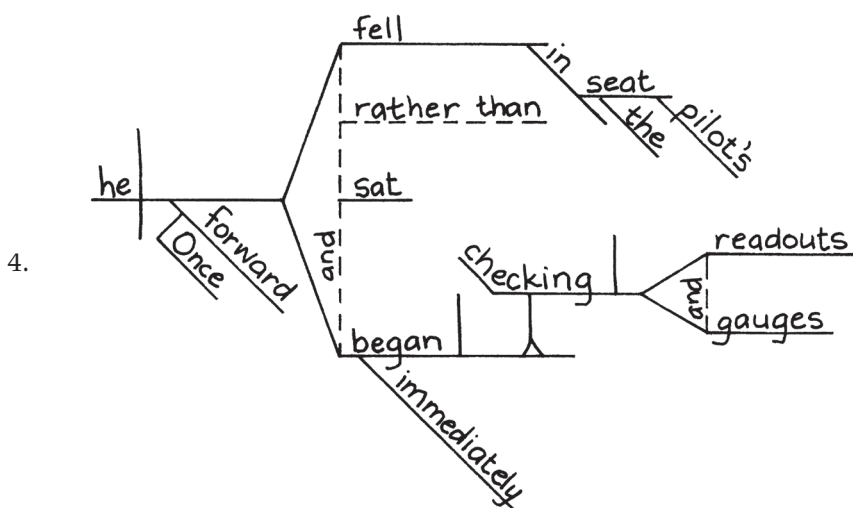
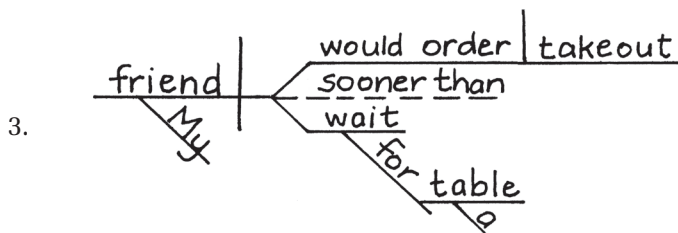
5. The understood helping verb





6. Quasi-coordinators joining compound predicates





NOTE: The subject *he* is followed by three predicates: *fell*, *sat*, and *began*. The first two are linked with the quasi-coordinator, the third by *and*. The adverb *forward* (modified by *once*) modifies all three predicates (all three actions happened once he was forward).