

# Linking Verbs<sup>1</sup>

*Linking verbs* (LV) link the *subject* (S) of a sentence to a *subject complement* (SC), a word or word group that completes the meaning of the subject by renaming or describing it.

**S      LV      SC**

Ex: The squirrel was a pest.

**S LV SC**

Ex: I am excited about my new car.

If the subject complement renames the subject, it is a *noun* (N) or *noun equivalent* (NE).

**S                  LV                  SC/NE**

Ex: George Washington was the first president.

If the subject complement describes the subject, it is an *adjective* (A) or *adjective equivalent* (AE).

**S   LV      SC/AE**

Ex: The little girl is enthusiastic about school.

Whenever the forms of *be* (*be, am, is, are, was, were, being, been*) appear as the main verb of the sentence rather than as a helping verb, they usually function as linking verbs.

Ex:    I **am** hungry.  
      She **is** a brunette.  
      They **are** hungry for pizza.  
      Mexico **was** my favorite vacation destination.  
      The ant bites **were** a painful reminder of our camping trip.

Some other verb that also sometimes appear as linking verbs are *appear, become, feel, grow, look, make, smell, sound, and taste*.

Ex:    The air by the refinery **smells** awful.  
      The soup **tasted** too salty.  
      It **felt** strange to leave work early.  
      She **looks** tired today.  
      My math homework **became** easier by the end of the semester.

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<sup>1</sup> This handout draws heavily from Hacker, Diana. (2002). *The Bedford Handbook*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 788-789.