

Less commonly, the pronouns *how*, *that*, *what*, and *whether* can also be used as subjects, sometimes as part of a much longer complete subject (underlined below).

- Correct: **How** bats hang upside down was a mystery until it was discovered that they possess specialized tendons in their feet.
- Correct: **That** Aldous Huxley exhibited many shortcomings in his ability to develop believable characters and create compelling storylines was overshadowed by his capacity to navigate a staggering panorama of ideas in his fiction.
- Correct: Although the technologies necessary for space travel were developed only recently, **what** drives humans' fascination with exploring the stars has remained unchanged for hundreds of years
- Correct: **Whether** markets will continue to rise or will begin to demonstrate signs of sluggishness over the next several months remains to be seen.

While the use of these pronouns as subjects may sound odd to you, the construction is perfectly correct. In fact, answer choices that contain this usage are probably more likely to be correct precisely because so many people will work by ear and eliminate such answers automatically.

III. Gerunds

Gerund = verb + -ING

- Correct: **Hang**ing upside down for long periods is a skill that both bats and sloths possess, but bats race quickly away when startled whereas sloths make no attempt to move.

IV. Infinitives

Infinitive = TO + verb

Infinitives are most commonly used to create the parallel construction “to do x is to do y.”

- Correct: **To hang** upside down from a branch for a long period of time is to experience the world much as a bat or sloth does.

What is a verb?

To reiterate, there are two main types of verbs:

- 1) **Action** verbs indicate specific activities, e.g. *talk*, *write*, *travel*.
- 2) **Being** verbs, also known as **linking verbs**, indicate states of being, seeming, and feeling, e.g. *be*, *become*, *appear*.

Either type of verb can be paired with any type of subject to create a full sentence. For example, *stocks plunge* is a complete sentence, but so is *they are*.

On the next page, we're going to look at a variety of sentence types as well as how they are constructed.