

English Subject Complement Puzzle, with solution

<http://www.umich.edu/~jlawler/EnglishSubjectComplementsSolution.pdf>

1. For you to explain it again is unnecessary.
2. It's unnecessary (for you) to explain it again.
3. That he arrived late is significant.
4. It's significant (that) he arrived late.
5. That we got here on time amazes me.
6. It amazes me (that) we got here on time.
7. For me to see that again makes me sad.
8. It makes me sad (for me) to see that again.
9. (My) seeing that again makes me sad.
10. It makes me sad (my) seeing that again.
11. That she would do that makes me sad.
12. It makes me sad (that) she would do that.
13. *That he is ill seems (to me).
14. It seems (to me) that he is ill.
15. *For him to be ill seems (to me).
16. *It seems (to me) (for) him to be ill.
17. He seems (to me) to be ill.
18. For him to pass the test is likely.
19. *It's likely (for him) to pass the test.
20. He's likely to pass the test.
21. *The test is likely (for him) to pass.
22. That he will pass the test is likely.
23. It's likely (that) he will pass the test.
24. (For him) to pass the test is easy.
25. It's easy (for him) to pass the test.
26. *He's easy to pass the test.
27. The test is easy (for him) to pass.
28. For him to pass the test is possible.
29. It's possible (for him) to pass the test.
30. *The test is possible for him to pass.
31. *He's possible to pass the test.
32. That he will pass the test is probable.
33. *For him to pass the test is probable.
34. *He's probable to pass the test.
35. *The test is probable for him to pass.

English Subject Complements

On the previous page you will find some example sentences illustrating several processes that apply to subject complements. The **matrix predicates** (i.e, the VPs of which the noun clauses are the subjects) are underlined in each. These predicates are:

<i>(be) unnecessary</i>	<i>(be) likely</i>	<i>seem</i>
<i>(be) significant</i>	<i>(be) easy</i>	<i>(be) probable</i>
<i>amaze someone [s.o.]</i>	<i>(be) possible</i>	<i>make s.o. sad</i>

Each of these (like all predicates – verb, noun, and adjective alike) has a special pattern of usage. The relevant variables in this pattern are the type of complement (infinitive, gerund, *that* S) allowed or required by the matrix predicate, and three rules that can apply to subject complements:

- 1) **Extraposition.** (1-2) is an example; extraposition moves a subject complement to the end of the sentence and leaves a dummy *it* to be the subject of the matrix predicate. *That* S and infinitives may be extraposed.
- 2) **Subject-Raising.** (18-20) is an example; subject-raising promotes the subject of an infinitive complement to be the subject of the matrix predicate, moving the remainder of the infinitive clause to the end of the sentence.
- 3) **Tough-Movement.** (25-27) is an example; *tough*-movement promotes the object of an infinitive complement to be the subject of the matrix predicate, moving the remainder of the infinitive clause to the end of the sentence.

Give syntax lab reports for each predicate, with example sentences (your own or ones from the data) for questions (1) – (3)d. Example:

Predicate: *amaze s.o* Test clause: PAST (WRITE (BILL, KK))

- 1) Does the predicate take a gerund complement?
No. *Bill's having written "King Kong" amazes me.
- 2)a Does the predicate take a *that*-complement?
Yes. That Bill wrote "King Kong" amazes me.
- 2)b Does the predicate take an Extraposed *that*-complement?
Yes. It amazes me that Bill wrote "King Kong".
- 3)a Does the predicate take an infinitive complement?
No. *For Bill to have written "King Kong" amazes me.
- 3)b Does the predicate take an Extraposed infinitive complement?
No. *It amazes me (for Bill) to have written "King Kong".
- 3)c Does the predicate take an infinitive with Subject-Raising?
No. *Bill amazes me to have written "King Kong".
- 3)d Does the predicate take an infinitive with *Tough*-Movement?
No. *"King Kong" amazes me for Bill to have written.

Summary: Only *that* (Extraposed optionally)

English Subject Complements

Predicate: *seem*

Test clause: PAST (WRITE (BILL, KK))

1) Gerund complement?

No. *Bill's having written "King Kong" seems.

2)a *that*-complement?

No. *That Bill wrote "King Kong" seems.

2)b Extraposed *that*-complement?

Yes. It seems that Bill wrote "King Kong".

3)a Infinitive complement?

No. *For Bill to have written "King Kong" seems.

3)b Extraposed infinitive?

No. *It seems (for Bill) to have written "King Kong".

3)c Infinitive with Subject-Raising?

Yes. Bill seems to have written "King Kong".

3)d Infinitive with *Tough*-Movement?

No. *"King Kong" seems for Bill to have written.

Summary: Extraposed *that* or Subject-Raised infinitive.

Predicate: (*be*) *possible*

Test clause: PAST (WRITE (BILL, KK))

1) Gerund?

No. *Bill's having written "King Kong" is possible.

2)a *that*?

Yes. That Bill wrote "King Kong" is possible.

2)b Extraposed *that*?

Yes. It is possible that Bill wrote "King Kong".

3)a Infinitive?

Yes. For Bill to have written "King Kong" is possible.

3)b Extraposed infinitive?

Yes. It is possible (for Bill) to have written "King Kong".

3)c Infinitive with Subject-Raising?

No. *Bill is possible to have written "King Kong".

3)d Infinitive with *Tough*-Movement?

No. *"King Kong" is possible for Bill to have written.

Summary: *that* and infinitive (plain and Extraposed)

English Subject Complements

Predicate: (*be*) **probable**

Test clause: PAST (WRITE (BILL, KK))

1) Gerund?

No. *Bill's having written "King Kong" is probable.

2)a *that*?

Yes. That Bill wrote "King Kong" is probable.

2)b Extraposed *that*?

Yes. It is probable that Bill wrote "King Kong".

3)a Infinitive?

No. *For Bill to have written "King Kong" is probable.

3)b Extraposed infinitive?

No. *It is probable (for Bill) to have written "King Kong".

3)c Infinitive with Subject-Raising?

No. *Bill is probable to have written "King Kong".

3)d Infinitive with *Tough*-Movement?

No. *"King Kong" is probable for Bill to have written.

Summary: Only *that* (Extraposed optionally)

Predicate: (*be*) **unnecessary**

Test clause: (WRITE (BILL, KK))

1) Gerund?

Yes. Bill's writing "King Kong" was unnecessary.

2)a *that*?

No. *That Bill wrote "King Kong" was unnecessary.

2)b Extraposed *that*?

No. *It was unnecessary that Bill wrote "King Kong".

3)a Infinitive?

Yes. For Bill to write "King Kong" was unnecessary.

3)b Extraposed infinitive?

Yes. It was unnecessary (for Bill) to write "King Kong".

3)c Infinitive with Subject-Raising?

No. *Bill was unnecessary to write "King Kong".

3)d Infinitive with *Tough*-Movement?

No. *"King Kong" was unnecessary for Bill to write.

Summary: Gerund and infinitive (plain and Extraposed)

English Subject Complements

Predicate: *(be) significant*

Test clause: PAST (WRITE (BILL, KK))

1) Gerund?

Yes. Bill's having written "King Kong" is significant.

2)a *that*?

Yes. That Bill wrote "King Kong" is significant.

2)b Extraposed *that*?

Yes. It is significant that Bill wrote "King Kong".

3)a Infinitive?

Yes. To have written "King Kong" is significant.

3)b Extraposed infinitive?

Yes. It is significant to have written "King Kong".

3)c Infinitive with Subject-Raising?

No. *Bill is significant to have written "King Kong".

3)d Infinitive with *Tough*-Movement?

No. *"King Kong" is significant for Bill to have written.

Summary: One with everything, hold the Raising,
hold the *Tough*-Movement

Predicate: *(be) likely*

Test clause: PAST (WRITE (BILL, KK))

1) Gerund?

Yes. Bill's having written "King Kong" is likely.

2)a *that*?

Yes. That Bill wrote "King Kong" is likely.

2)b Extraposed *that*?

Yes. It is likely that Bill wrote "King Kong".

3)a Infinitive?

No. *For Bill to have written "King Kong" is likely.

3)b Extraposed infinitive?

No. *It is likely (for Bill) to have written "King Kong".

3)c Infinitive with Subject-Raising?

Yes. Bill is likely to have written "King Kong".

3)d Infinitive with *Tough*-Movement?

No. *"King Kong" is likely for Bill to have written.

Summary: Gerund, *thats*, and Subject-Raised infinitive

English Subject Complements

Predicate: (*be*) *easy*

Test clause: WRITE (BILL, KK)

1) Gerund?

No. *Bill's writing "King Kong" was easy.

2)a *that*?

No. *That Bill wrote "King Kong" was easy.

2)b Extraposed *that*?

No. *It was easy that Bill wrote "King Kong".

3)a Infinitive?

Yes. For Bill to write "King Kong" was easy.

3)b Extraposed infinitive?

Yes. It was easy (for Bill) to write "King Kong".

3)c Infinitive with Subject-Raising?

No. *Bill was easy to write "King Kong".

3)d Infinitive with *Tough*-Movement?

Yes. "King Kong" was easy for Bill to write.

Summary: Infinitive with everything but Raising.

Predicate: *make s.o. sad*

Test clause: PAST (WRITE (BILL, KK))

1) Gerund?

No. *Bill's having written "King Kong" makes me sad.

2)a *that*?

Yes. That Bill wrote "King Kong" makes me sad.

2)b Extraposed *that*?

Yes. It makes me sad that Bill wrote "King Kong".

3)a Infinitive?

Yes. For Bill to write "King Kong" makes me sad.

3)b Extraposed infinitive?

Yes. It makes me sad (for Bill) to write "King Kong".

3)c Infinitive with Subject-Raising?

No. *Bill makes me sad to write "King Kong".

3)d Infinitive with *Tough*-Movement?

No. *"King Kong" makes me sad for Bill to write.

Summary: *that* and infinitive (plain and Extraposed).

These are **Subject** Complements. For **Object** Complements, see

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