

42 Verb patterns (2)

With its policy of affordable flights, JetBlue quickly became one of North America's most popular airlines.



1 Verb + complement

Some verbs are followed by complements (not objects). A complement is usually a noun phrase or an adjective that identifies, describes or gives information about the subject:

subject verb complement
Alexander Grant **is** our new head of marketing.
JetBlue quickly **became** one of North America's favourite airlines.

Verbs which introduce complements often describe states, e.g. *be, appear, feel, look, keep, remain, seem, sound, taste, make*, or changing states, e.g. *become, get, grow*.

We can usually use an adjective or a noun phrase to describe the subject after these verbs:

The whole group **seemed** very keen. Marie's new outfit **looked** fantastic!
That **sounds** a wonderful idea! Your suggestion **seems** the best solution.
You don't want to **remain** a shop assistant all your life, do you?

However, there are some differences in the way we use complements with these verbs:

- We only use an adjective after *make* if there is an object: *Shellfish make me ill.*
- If we use a noun phrase after *taste* and *smell* it describes an action, not a state. Compare:
I tasted the food. (= an action)
The food tasted delicious. (= information about the subject)
- If we use a noun phrase after *keep* it is an object, not a complement. Compare:
He kept quiet. (complement = information about the subject)
He keeps his money under the bed. (= object)
- When we use a noun phrase after *seem* or *appear* to identify (rather than describe) the subject, we have to use *to be* to introduce the noun phrase:
X Surprisingly, the young fresh-faced boy seemed the managing director.
✓ Surprisingly, the young fresh-faced boy seemed to be the managing director. (identifying)

2 Verb + object + complement

A complement can also describe the object of a verb. In this case, the object comes before the complement:

subject verb object complement
The journey **made** the children irritable. *X The journey made irritable the children.*

We often use verbs of naming, e.g. *name, call, elect*, with this pattern:

The members **elected** Geraldo treasurer of the society.
My nephew finally decided to **call** his new rabbit Snowy.

We can use a noun or an adjective as the complement after verbs such as *think, keep, consider, prove, call, find*:

Although he was twenty, Katherine still **considered** him a child/childish.
The judge **found** Sam's evidence unreliable. The judge **found** Sam an unreliable witness.

We can use an adjective as a complement in the same pattern in a number of idiomatic phrases after verbs such as *drive* and *turn*:

The noise of the planes flying over us at night **drives me crazy!**
Did you see his expression? It could **turn milk sour!**