

THE PRINCIPLES OF ENGLISH SYNTAX

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The Principles of English Syntax by William Richardson

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WILLIAM RICHARDSON

**THE PRINCIPLES OF
ENGLISH SYNTAX**

THE PRINCIPLES
—OF—
ENGLISH SYNTAX.

UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA
SECOND EDITION.

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This little book appears in response to many urgent requests from friends who, at some time, have been under the author's tuition or supervision, and who believe, with him, that instruction in English grammar may be much simplified; that often too much time is spent in going over unimportant details in parsing and analysis; and that the ability to illustrate synthetically every principle of syntax, and to correct any violation thereof, is of greater value than is generally considered.

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THE RULES OF SYNTAX.

The following principles of construction are observed by the best writers of the English language, and are, therefore, the Rules of Syntax.

RULE I.

The subject of a finite verb must be in the nominative case.

1. The subject may be placed before the verb.

"The day is dawning."

"Man goeth forth to his work."

2. The subject may be placed after the verb.

"Go thou to the ant."

"Straight is the gate, and narrow is the way."

"There was a man in the land of Uz."

3. The subject may be placed after the first auxiliary.

"Can mortal man be more just than God?"

"What did he say?"

4. The subject may be a word.

"The snow falls."

"Seeing is believing."

5. The subject may be a phrase.

"To see is to believe."

"To seek preferment is the privilege of American citizens."

6. The subject may be a clause.

"That you have wronged me doth appear in this."

"Whence he received such information is a matter of interest to the court."

"For me to labor and for you to be idle would be unjust."

RULE II.

A noun or pronoun used with a finite verb to form the predicate of a sentence must be in the nominative case.

1. The predicate nominative may be a word.

"Thou art the man."

"And am I he that is thus accused?"

"He returned a friend, who came a foe."

"She looked a goddess, and she walked a queen."

"Arnold was called a traitor."

"Art thou that traitor angel?"

"I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame."

"Do you know who she is?"

"Tis most just that thou turn rascal."

"The prisoner is supposed to be a murderer?"

2. The predicate nominative may be a phrase.

"To be good is to be happy."

"To rise high in noble citizenship is to honor Him who hath given power and privilege to man."

"To purpose is not necessarily to propose."

"To be friendless is to be without friends."

3. The predicate nominative may be a clause.

"The truth is that I am tired of ticking."

"The question is, Where shall we obtain witnesses?"

"The motion before the house is understood to be, 'That hereafter no base-ball games be allowed to be played on Sunday.'"

4. In many abridged forms of expression, the finite verb gives place to a participle, the subject of the finite verb becoming a possessive before the participle, or being omitted. In such

cases the predicate nominative remains a *nominative*, thus forming an exception to the rule.

"His being an Englishman was greatly in his favor."

"They were ridiculed for being a peculiar people."

"The atrocious crime of being a young man I shall attempt neither to palliate nor to deny."

"How many are injured by Adam's fall, who know nothing of there ever having been such a man in the world!"

"This our Saviour Himself was pleased to use as the strongest argument of His being the promised Messiah."

"I had a suspicion of the fellow's being a swindler."

"Who then can bear the thought of being an outcast from his presence?"

5. When the sentence is abridged in the form of the "nominative independent, or absolute, with a participle," the noun in the predicate is in the *same case*.

"Webster being a recognized authority, we consulted him."

"Addison being an author of the purest English, we advised the class to imitate his style."

RULE III.

The subject of an infinitive must be in the objective case.

"We have known Mr. Gough to cause tears and laughter at almost the same instant."

"All wished him to repeat the lecture."

"They supposed him to have gone by another route."

"The officers thought the man to be guilty."

RULE IV.

A noun or pronoun used with an infinitive to form the predicate must be in the objective case.

"I supposed you to have been the man."

"They thought it to be me."