

A creative exercise in Meta-Language skills (You are smarter than you think.)

Test yourself on your understanding of word order (syntax) and word construction (morphology) in the following exercises.

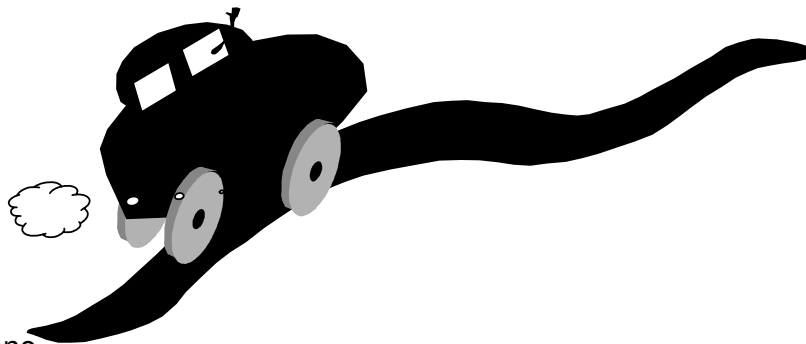
A small black car is roitling up the road.

Without knowing what the word “roitling” means we can see it is the action of the car. The word “roitling” is the verb in the sentence.

If we were to rewrite this sentence as if it happened yesterday we would write it this way.

A small black car roitlled up the road.

We know this because the English language frequently uses similar word endings or “Suffixes” and the past tense of “roitling” would be “roitled”



Now try another one.

Softly, a siffe larolled its beautiful laryl to the buckream.

In reality we don't know what “siffes, and buckream” are, nor what it means to “laroll” a “laryl”. However, we do know several things about them simply from their construction and their placement.

The “Siffe” is the subject of the sentence because it is the person or thing doing the action.

The action in the sentence is “larolling”. Verbs often end in “ing” and its placement after the noun tells us that this is what the noun was doing.

What we also know is that when we “laroll” it will be a “laryl”

If we put it into plain English, it might be (but isn't) "sang its beautiful song"

The "Buckream" is the object of the sentence because the action is directed onto him or it.

We know that "Siffe" and "Buckream" are nouns because only persons or things can take action or be acted upon. We also know they are nouns because the words "a" and "the" come just before them. That is a hint as to the role those words are playing in the sentence. "Laryl" is also a noun because it names the thing that the "Siffe" is "larolling".

This is what a Siffe looks like.

