

Constituency tests

Used to see if a particular group of words forms a constituent within a given sentence.

1. **Replacement test:** can you replace the group of words with a pro-form, like he, they, do so, did so, there, then, etc.?

The tired wizard lost his wand. --- **He** lost his wand --- “The tired wizard” can be replaced by “he”, so it is a constituent.

The tired wizard lost his wand. --- ***He** wizard lost his wand --- “The tired” cannot be replaced by “he” (or other pro-forms), so it is NOT a constituent

The tired wizard **lost his wand**. --- The tired wizard **did**. --- “Lost his wand” can be replaced by “did”, so it is a constituent.

The tired wizard **lost** his wand. --- ?The third wizard **did so** his wand. --- “Lost” cannot be replaced by “did so”, so it is NOT a constituent.

2. **Clefting/Move as a unit test:** can you move the group of words to the beginning of the sentence after “as for...”, “it was...”, or a similar frame?

The tired wizard lost his wand. --- As for **the tired wizard**, he lost his wand. --- “The tired wizard” can be moved after “as for...”, so it is a constituent.

The tired wizard lost his wand. --- *As for **the tired**, wizard lost his wand. --- “The tired” cannot be moved on its own, so it is NOT a constituent.

The tired wizard **lost his wand**. --- It was **losing his wand** that the tired wizard did. --- “Lost his wand” can be moved to the beginning of the sentence after “it was...”, so it is a constituent (we just had to change the verb tense a bit, but that’s ok).

The tired wizard **lost** his wand. --- *It was **losing** that the tired wizard did his wand. --- “lost” cannot be moved to the beginning of the sentence after “it was...” on its own, so it is NOT a constituent.

3. **Stand-alone test:** can the group of words stand on its own as the answer to a question?

Who lost his wand? **The tired wizard**. --- “The tired wizard” can be the answer to a question, so it is a constituent.

Which wizard lost his wand? ***The tired**. --- “The tired” cannot be an answer to a question on its own, so it is NOT a constituent.

What did the tired wizard do? **Lost his wand**. --- “Lost his wand” can be the answer to a question, so it is a constituent.

What did the tired wizard do with his wand? ***Lost**. --- “Lost” cannot be the answer to a question on its own, so it is NOT a constituent.

Complement vs. adjunct tests

Used to see if a particular phrase is a complement or an adjunct of a given head (usually a verb).

1. Iteration test: can you repeat another phrase of the same type immediately afterwards?

I saw **a tiny kitten** at the shelter. --- *I saw **a tiny kitten a large cat** at the shelter. --- You cannot repeat another noun phrase right after “a tiny kitten”, so it is a complement of “saw”.

I saw a tiny kitten **at the shelter**. --- I saw a tiny kitten **at the shelter on Cesar Chavez St.** --- You can repeat another prepositional phrase right after “at the shelter”, so it is an adjunct of “saw”.

2. Movement test: can you move the phrase to another position in the sentence?

I saw **a tiny kitten** at the shelter. --- *A tiny kitten, I saw at the shelter. / *I a tiny kitten saw at the shelter. / *I saw at the shelter a tiny kitten. / *I saw at the shelter on Cesar Chavez St. a tiny kitten. --- You cannot move “a tiny kitten” around in the sentence, so it is a complement of “saw”.

I saw a tiny kitten **at the shelter**. --- At the shelter, I saw a tiny kitten. / *I a tiny kitten saw at the shelter. / I saw a tiny kitten near the river at the shelter. --- You can move “at the shelter” around in the sentence (at least to some other positions, even though not all), so it is an adjunct of “saw”.

3. Omission test: can you get rid of the phrase without substantially changing the sentence?

I saw **a tiny kitten** at the shelter. --- *I saw at the shelter. --- You cannot delete “a tiny kitten”, so it is a complement of “saw”.

I saw a tiny kitten **at the shelter**. --- I saw a tiny kitten. --- You can delete “at the shelter”, so it is an adjunct of “saw”.

4. Constituents test: is the verb a constituent on its own without the phrase in question? [note: tricky, proceed with caution]

I saw **a tiny kitten** at the shelter. --- *I did so a tiny kitten at the shelter. / *See is what I did a tiny kitten at the shelter. / What did you do to the tiny kitten? *Saw. --- “Saw” is NOT a constituent on its own without “a tiny kitten”, so “a tiny kitten” is a complement of “saw”.

I saw a tiny kitten **at the shelter**. --- I did so at the shelter. / See a tiny kitten is what I did at the shelter. / What did you do at the shelter? Saw a tiny kitten. --- “Saw (a tiny kitten)” is a constituent on its own without “at the shelter”, so “at the shelter” is an adjunct of “saw”.