

Imperative Verb Structure

Imperative means “having power to control or direct.” So imperative verb structure means we have formed a sentence that commands a person to do something, like a parent telling a child, *Go to bed!*

The way we do this in English is to drop the subject, because when a person gives a command, it’s usually to another person who is present. What good does it do a parent to say, *Go to bed!* if the child isn’t there to hear the command?

The subject of the imperative structure is always an understood *you*, even though we don’t say, “You go to bed!”

Imperative verb structure examples

Put your shoes on.

Watch out!

Pass the salt, please.

Sit down.

Understood subject

(You) put your shoes on.

(You) watch out!

(You) pass the salt, please.

(You) sit down.

Because the person *you* is always the understood subject, we conjugate the verb for second person (singular or plural—they’re the same) present tense. Even if we say the person’s name, like John, we still use second person present tense.

John, put your shoes on.

Polina, pass the salt, please.

Elena, sit down.

WRONG: Elena, sits down! (“sits” is third person singular)

John, puts your shoes on! (“puts” is third person singular)

Write 5 of your own imperative sentences. Pretend you are speaking directly to another person, giving them an order. Whether you include the person’s name to whom you are speaking or not, use second person conjugation of the verb!

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.