

Linking verbs: **be, appear, seem; become, get, etc.**

A

When an adjective or noun phrase is used after a verb to describe the subject or say what or who the subject is, the adjective or noun phrase is a *complement* and the verb is a *linking verb*:

- Clara **is** a doctor. She **seemed** unable to concentrate.

Other linking verbs:

'being' linking verbs: e.g. **be, keep, prove, remain, stay**

'becoming' linking verbs:
e.g. **become, come, end up, grow, turn out**

'seeming' linking verbs:
e.g. **appear, look, seem, sound**

Most of these verbs can be followed by either an adjective or noun phrase (e.g. It **sounds nice / a nice place**).

When they are used as linking verbs, **come** and **grow** (e.g. **come to know, grow thoughtful**) can't be followed by a noun phrase.

Keep is only followed by a noun if an adjective follows it (e.g. It **kept him awake**).

B

After the verbs **appear** (= seems true), **look** (= seem), **prove, seem**, and **turn out** we can often either include or omit **to be**:

- The room **appears (to be)** brighter than when I last saw it.

However, following these verbs **to be** is usually included before the adjectives **alive, alone, asleep**, and **awake**, and before the **-ing** forms of verbs:

- I didn't go in because **she appeared to be asleep**. (*not ... she appeared asleep.*)

Before a noun we include **to be** when the noun tells us what the subject is, but often leave it out when we give our opinion of the person or thing in the subject. We leave out **to be** in formal English. Compare:

- He walked into what **seemed to be a cave**. (*not ... what seemed a cave.*) and
 She **seems (to be)** a very efficient salesperson.

C

We use the linking verb **become** to describe a process of change. A number of other linking verbs can be used instead of **become**, including **come, get, go, grow, turn (into)**.

We use **get** rather than **become**: in informal speech and writing before **difficult, ill, interested, pregnant, suspicious, unhappy, and worried**; in imperatives; and in phrases such as **get changed** (clothes), **get dressed, get married / divorced**:

- I first **got suspicious** when he looked into all the cars. (*more formally ... became suspicious ...*)
 Don't get upset about it! Where did you live before you **got married**?

We prefer **become** to talk about a more abstract or technical process of change:

- He **became recognised** as an expert.
 Their bodies **have become adapted** to high altitudes.

Also with: **apparent, aware, convinced, infected, irrelevant, obvious**

We use **become**, not **get**, if there is a noun phrase after the linking verb:

- Dr Morales **became an adviser** to the government.

D

We use **go** or **turn**, not usually **get** or **become**, when we talk about colours changing:

- The traffic lights **turned / went green** and I pulled away.

We often use **go** to talk about changes, particularly for unwanted situations. For example:

go deaf / blind / bald; go mad / crazy / wild; go bad / off / mouldy / rotten; go bust; go dead; go missing; go wrong.
But note: **get ill, get old, get tired.**

- The company **went bust** and had to close.
 My computer's **gone wrong** again.
 Some people **get ill** very easily.

After the verbs **come, get**, and **grow** (but not after **become**) we can use a **to-infinitive**. **Come** and **grow** are often used to talk about gradual change:

- I eventually **came / grew to appreciate** his work. (*not ... became to appreciate his work.*)

Exercises

21.1 Put brackets around **to be** in these sentences if it can be left out. **B**

- 1 The job turned out to be far easier than I'd expected.
- 2 When I looked through the window, Ella appeared to be alone.
- 3 What he called his 'little cottage in the country' proved to be a castle.
- 4 Hassan proved to be an excellent source of information about the town.
- 5 She appeared to be satisfied with the work I'd done.
- 6 I've adjusted the aerial and the television seems to be working okay now.
- 7 When I picked the crab up I thought it was dead, but it turned out to be alive and pinched me.
- 8 With only five minutes of the match left, Spain look to be heading to victory.
- 9 A: We've decided to buy a Ford. B: That seems to be a very good choice.
- 10 He only looked to be about ten years old, but I knew he must be a lot older.

21.2 Complete the sentences with an appropriate form of **become** or **get**. **C**

- 1 Give me a few minutes to changed, and then I'll be ready to go.
- 2 The state of the railways a major political issue during the last election campaign.
- 3 Research has shown that women who pregnant while dieting increase their child's risk of obesity.
- 4 The reasons for my decision will clear at the next meeting.
- 5 Don't annoyed with me, but I've lost the car keys.
- 6 I didn't finish the book. I just couldn't interested in it.
- 7 After the strange events in the house she convinced that it was haunted.
- 8 I had just divorced when I met Marianne.

21.3 Complete each sentence with an appropriate form of one of the verbs in brackets and a word or phrase from the box. **D**

~~berserk~~ blind bust dead to know to like red tired

- 1 I was at a zoo once when an elephant *went berserk* and attacked its keeper. (go / turn)
- 2 A few seconds later the line and Marc put down the handset. (go / turn)
- 3 After the spider bit Rachel her ankle and started to swell up. (go / get)
- 4 He's actually quite friendly when you him. (become / get)
- 5 I'll take over driving when you (get / go)
- 6 We soon each other and have been great friends ever since. (become / come)
- 7 The doctor told me that without immediate treatment I might (go / turn)
- 8 The company when the bank wouldn't lend it any more money. (go / get)

21.4 If necessary, correct the italicised parts of this blog. **A-D**

The morning we were going on holiday everything seemed to (1) *turn wrong*. The taxi was due at 8:00 to take us to the airport. When I looked in on Adam at 7:00 he (2) *seemed awake*, so I went downstairs to make breakfast. When I opened the fridge I found that the milk (3) *had gone off*, so we couldn't have breakfast. Then Adam (4) *seemed taking* a long time to come down, so at 7:30 I went back upstairs and he still (5) *hadn't become dressed*. He said he wasn't feeling well, but I just shouted, 'You can't (6) *get ill* when we're going on holiday!' After that the keys to the luggage (7) *got missing*, but Adam eventually found them in his jacket pocket. By 8:30 the taxi hadn't arrived and I was starting (8) *to become worried*. It was (9) *getting obvious* that we were going to miss our plane if we didn't leave soon. But just then the taxi arrived and we made it to the airport with minutes to spare. Surprisingly, after such a bad start, it (10) *turned out to be* an excellent holiday.