

An imperative sentence gives a command, demand, or instructions directly to an audience, and typically begins with an action word (or *verb*). These sentences often appear to lack a *subject*, or the person, place, or thing that performs the main action. This is because the subject of this type of sentence tends to be the audience that's being directly addressed or commanded to do something.

### Implied Subject

The subject of an imperative sentence is usually *you* (a stand-in for the audience, or whomever the speaker is talking to). Because this pattern is broadly understood, the subject is often left off of the sentence, and is *implied* (understood by the audience to be there without having to be said). Take, for example, "Eat your food." This imperative sentence starts with the verb *eat*, which functions as a command. The subject of the sentence is the *you* being told to eat, even though this subject doesn't directly appear. Because of the context, the subject can be left out of this imperative sentence, and the audience can still recognize it.

The subject of an imperative sentence isn't always omitted. Take this example from *The Fellowship of the Ring* by J. R. R. Tolkien: "**Bring out the Ring, Frodo!**" said Gandalf solemnly." Here, Gandalf is ordering Frodo to show the One Ring to the Council of Elrond. The verb *bring* is the direct command, and *Frodo* is the subject.

### Affirmative vs. Negative

Imperative sentences can be either *affirmative* or *negative*, which means they can tell a person to either do or not do something. The two examples provided above are both affirmative imperative sentences: they're telling someone to do something (*tell* or *bring* in these examples).

An example of a negative imperative sentence is: "Don't touch the hot stove." Here, rather than telling someone to do something, you're telling them not to do something.

### Helper Words

Imperative sentences don't always have to start with verbs. As these types of sentences can sometimes come across as bossy or impolite, you can use words like *please* to soften your message. For example, you could say "Please eat your food." While it doesn't start with a verb, this sentence is still imperative, as it's directly issuing a command.

Similarly, you can also describe how you want a specific action to be done by including *adverbs*, the words used to describe verbs. For example, you could say: "**Kindly** state your opinion" or "**Quickly** run to the store for me." In these cases, *kindly* and *quickly* both describe the the way you'd like an action to be done.