HOW TO DIAGRAM SENTENCES (AND WHY)

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Two types of diagrams

1. Reed-Kellogg – pedagogical tool
2. X-Bar – linguistic tool
How diagrams can help

1. Misplaced or dangling modifiers
2. Non-parallel construction
3. Subject and object placement
What diagrams don’t show

1. Word order
2. Punctuation
(They’re also no help with spelling or usage.)
Start with a line
Subject, then verb
I read books

Add a direct object
Or add a predicate nominative
I | read | many books

Add modifiers
Prepositional phrases

I read books in winter.
Add more modifiers
I am a voracious reader.

Add more modifiers.
Add an indirect object
Let’s try one

District lines are redrawn every 10 years after the census by the state Legislature.
Lines are redrawn by the legislature after every 10 years, after the census.
District lines are redrawn by the state Legislature every 10 years after the census.
She saw two rabbits and a squirrel on her walk.
mother was a teacher in math
and
She is an engineer.
Another practice

We saw the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre and ate at several street cafes.
We saw the Louvre.

Check parallel construction.
We saw the Eiffel Tower and the Louvre, and ate at several street cafes.
you are eating what
(you) LOOK at that
Participles

- She
- recited
- poem
- Having taken
- a
- deep
- breath
Gerunds
Infinitives

We began to cook dinner at 5 o'clock.
Another practice

Having finished my report, the boss is reading it.
boss is reading lit
having finished report
my
Rewrite!

I finished my report and now the boss is reading it.

After I finished my report, the boss started reading it.
I finished my report and my boss is reading it now.

Rewrite #1
The boss started reading the literature. After that, I finished my report.
Subordinate clauses
Subordinate clauses
(you) | Give | envelope

that

to

whoever is in charge

Practice
(I need the board for this one)
As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a monstrous vermin.

Kafka, *Metamorphosis*
Thank you for coming.