

DIAGRAMMING SENTENCES

Diagramming sentences provides a way of picturing the structure of a sentence. By placing the various parts of a sentence in relation to the basic subject-verb relationship, we can see how the parts fit together and how the meaning of a sentence branches out, just as the branches of a plant ramify from the stem in space and time. Most students who work at diagramming sentences derive a clearer understanding of how sentences work — as well as satisfaction in the pictorial rendering of sentence structure. This presentation touches upon only the basics of diagramming. Use the hyperlinks back to the Guide to Grammar and Writing ([this color](#)) for additional information.

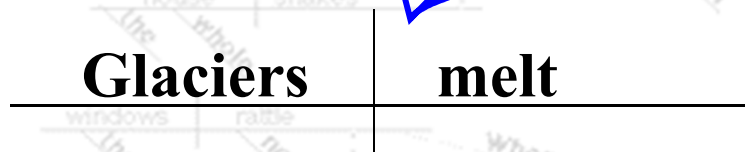


DIAGRAMMING SENTENCES

We begin, naturally, with the representation of a very simple sentence:

Glaciers melt.

We will place the subject-verb relationship on a straight horizontal line . . .



and separate the subject from its verb with a short vertical line extending through the horizontal line.

DIAGRAMMING SENTENCES

Modifiers (including articles) go under the words they modify on slanted lines.

The glacier is melting slowly.

glacier is melting

The

slowly

DIAGRAMMING SENTENCES

A **direct object** follows the verb on the horizontal line; it is separated from the verb by a vertical line that does not go through the horizontal line.

The glacier is slowly destroying the forest.

glacier

is destroying

forest

The

slowly

the



DIAGRAMMING SENTENCES

Predicate nouns and predicate adjectives follow the verb and are separated from the verb by a slanted line.

The glacier is not really dangerous.

glacier	is	dangerous
<i>The</i>		<i>not really</i>

Josiah Budnick is a brilliant professor.

Josiah Budnick	is	professor
		<i>a brilliant</i>

DIAGRAMMING SENTENCES

With compound subjects and predicates, the sentence diagram begins to branch out.

The professor and her colleagues are studying glaciers and avalanches.

professor

The

colleagues

her

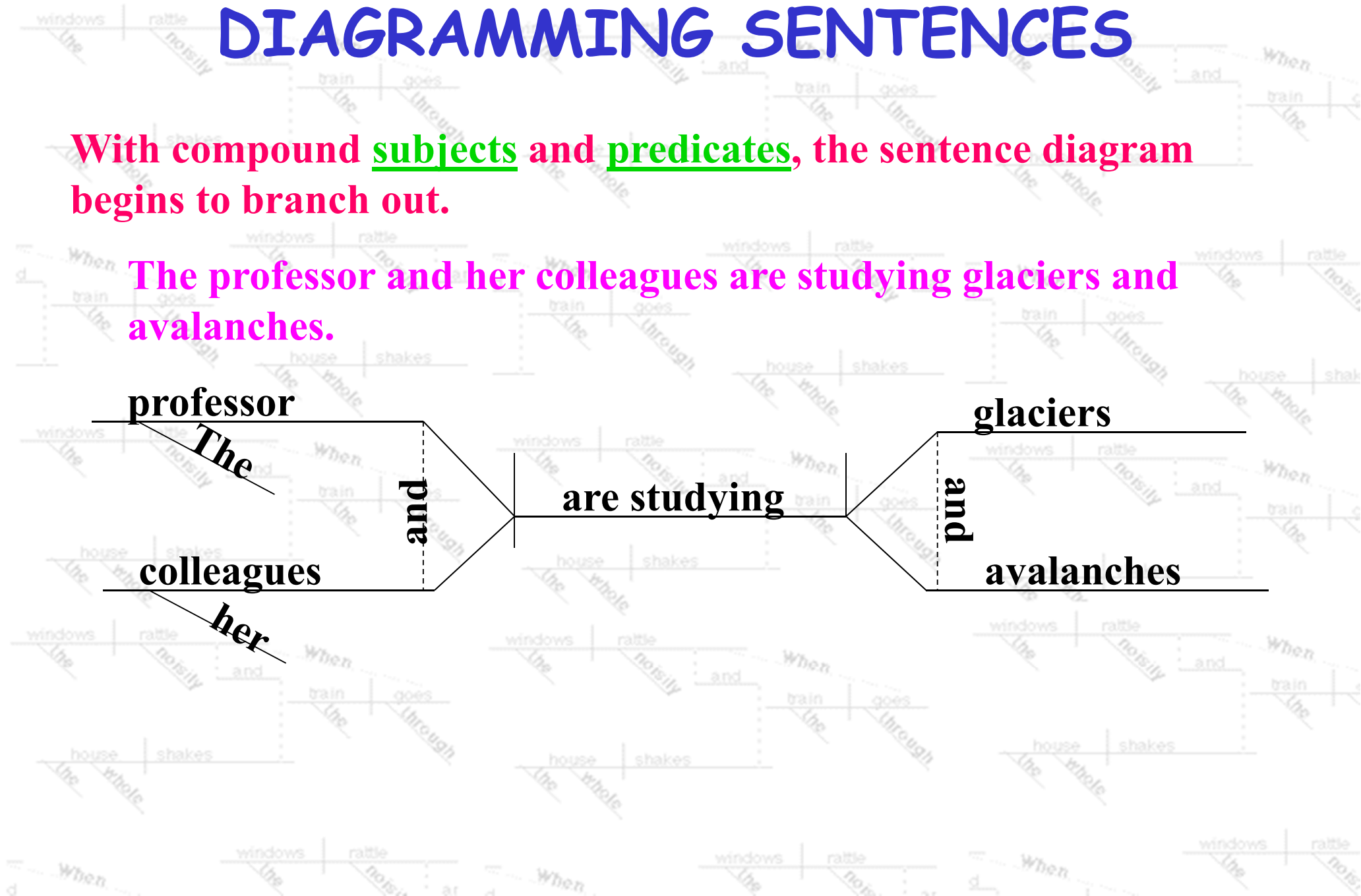
and

are studying

and

glaciers

avalanches



DIAGRAMMING SENTENCES

Compound verbs are put on branches in a similar fashion.

The professor and her colleagues are studying and classifying glaciers.

professor

~~The~~

colleagues

~~her~~

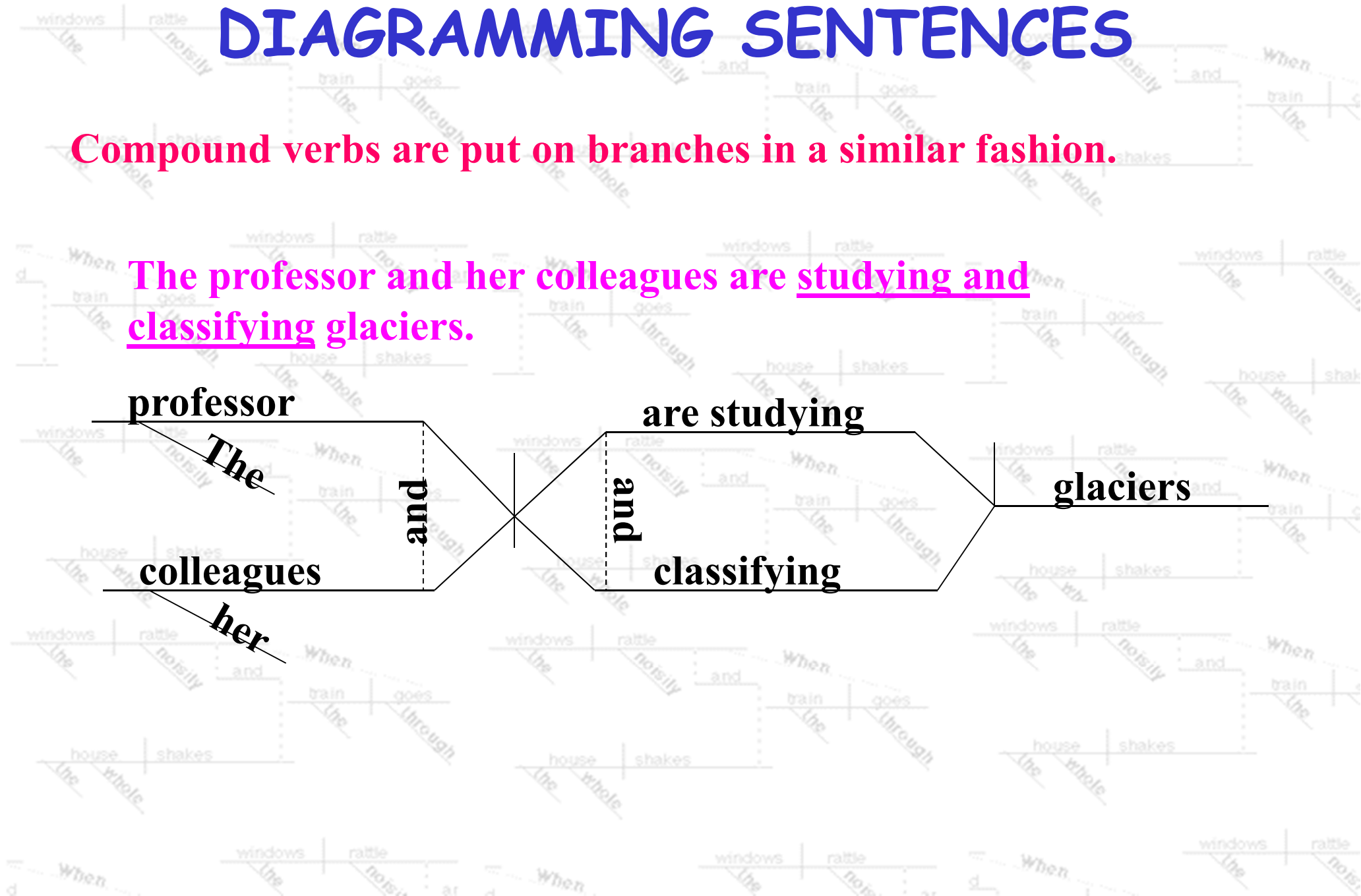
and

are studying

and

classifying

glaciers



DIAGRAMMING SENTENCES

Indirect objects are arranged under the main sentence line.

Professor Higgins gave her students two projects.

Professor Higgins | gave | projects

students

two

her

DIAGRAMMING SENTENCES

Prepositional phrases are arranged on branches below the words they modify.

Professor Higgins studied glaciers in Antarctica during the 1950s.

Professor Higgins

studied

glaciers

in

Antarctica

during

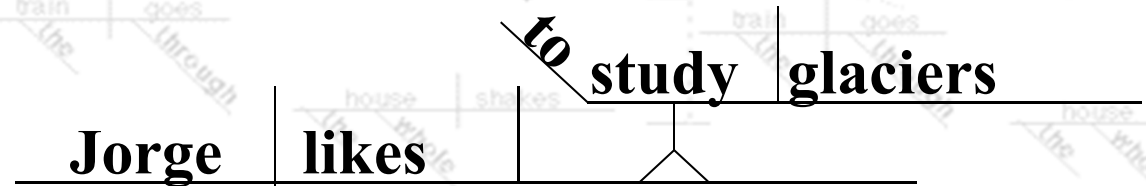
1950s

the

DIAGRAMMING SENTENCES

Gerund and infinitive phrases are displayed on standards — except when the infinitive is a modifier.

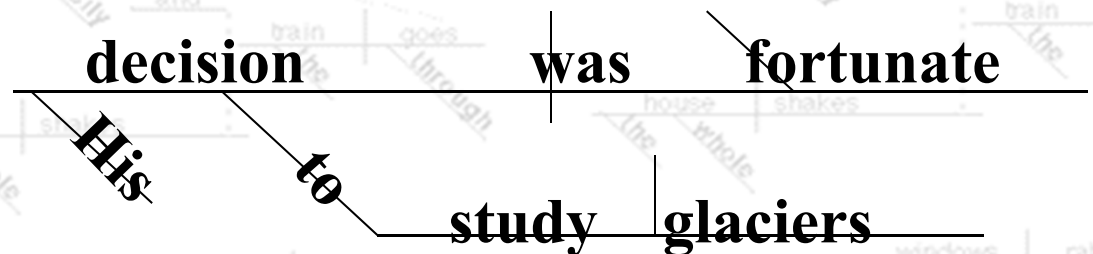
Jorge likes to study glaciers.



Studying glaciers is fun.



His decision to study glaciers
was fortunate.



DIAGRAMMING SENTENCES

The relationship between clauses in compound and complex sentences is shown with a dotted line.

Glaciers are powerful forces, but they move very slowly.

Glaciers

are

forces

powerful

but

they

move

slowly

very

DIAGRAMMING SENTENCES

One last diagram: a complex sentence.

Professor Higgins invited Jorge to the conference because he had written the best research paper.

Professor Higgins

invited

Jorge

to conference

because

he

had written

paper

the

best

research

DIAGRAMMING SENTENCES

Be sure to review the rest of the material on DIAGRAMMING SENTENCES in the Guide to Grammar and Writing. Soon, you will be diagramming sentences in your sleep and be the envy of the entire neighborhood! As a writer, you will be surprised at the additional confidence you gain by mastering these visual renderings of sentence patterns.

Congratulations!



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