

# Imperative

The label imperative refers to the formal sentence type which has the following distinctive sentence pattern: *Keep quiet!*

This pattern commonly expresses a command. In English, an imperative usually doesn't have a subject (though you is understood as its subject). In writing an imperative is often punctuated with an exclamation mark.

Examples:

Wash your hands!

Get lost!

Shut up!

Don't smoke in the kitchen!

It is possible, however, to put you into subject position, as in the following example: You do your homework.

Ideally, the label imperative should be reserved for sentences which have this form. However, in English it is possible to use an imperative sentence for a function other than giving a command. For example if you are going on a picnic I may say 'Have a nice time'. Although this sentence has the form of an imperative, it is not an order, only a hope.

Similarly it is possible to use another sentence form to give an order. For example an army officer is more likely to say '*I order you to hold your position*' instead of '*Hold your position*'.

This is certainly an order, although it doesn't have the form of an imperative sentence. Instead it has the form of a declarative sentence.