

Grammar Glossary

This is not an exhaustive list but should cover most primary school grammar and be useful as a quick refresher of the main aspects. Many of them have been adapted from a government publication for schools: Grammar for Writing, Dof E 2000

Abbreviations

An abbreviation is a shortened version of a word or group of words. For example:

Approx. (approximately)
PTO (please turn over)
Etc (et cetera =and so on)

An abbreviation becomes an acronym when the initial letters of a group of words and can be pronounced as a single word itself:

e.g. RAM – Random Access memory
Laser – (Light Amplification by the Stimulated Emission of Radiation)

Adjective

An adjective is a word that describes somebody or something.

They can be used before a noun : A **busy** day
bright shirt

Or after a verb: I'm **busy**
That shirt looks **bright**

Adverb

In many cases adverbs tells us:

| | | |
|-----------|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| How | (slowly, cheekily, carefully) | something is done |
| Where | (here, there, away, outside) | something is done |
| When | (now yesterday, soon, tomorrow) | something is done |
| How often | (often, never, frequently) | something is done |

Many adverbs do have the ending 'ly' but there are many that don't so this can't be given as the general rule.

Also there are some adjectives that have the 'ly' ending (lovely, silly, friendly) so it could become confusing just sticking to that as a rule. It is more about the 'job' that the word does in the sentence that should help you decide whether it is an adverb.

Adverbs can extra meaning to a verb, an adjective or another adverb or even a whole sentence.

I **really enjoyed** the holiday (adverb with a verb)

She's **really pretty** (adverb with adjective)

He walks **really slowly** (adverb with another adverb)

Really, she could much better that that. (adverb with whole sentence)

Sometimes we get **adverbial phrases** – more than one word coming together to do the same job:

She moved out **yesterday**. (one word adverb)

She moved out **a few days ago**. (adverbial phrase)

The teacher looked at him **strangely**.

The teacher looked at him **in a strange way**.

Alliteration

A phrase where the words share the same sound at the beginning of the word:

Two shiny snakes slithered silently..

Four fat fairies flew away.

Antonym

An antonym is a word that is the opposite in meaning to another.

So the antonym of hot is cold

light – dark

There can be more than one antonym for a word:

Hot – cold/ chilly/cool/ freezing

Apostrophe

An apostrophe is a punctuation mark that shows where a letter or letters are missing (omission) or where we show something belongs (possession):

Omission

Let us = let's

Of the clock = o'clock

With verbs two words usually become joined when we shorten them with an apostrophe:

Do not = Don't

Who is = who's

It is = It's

Could not = couldn't

Apostrophes also show that something belongs:

If something belongs to ONE thing or person:

My mother's car

The dog's tail

One week's holiday

If there is more than one person or thing - the apostrophe goes after the plural. Mostly that is after the 's' because it is the 's' that makes the word plural in the first place:

My parents' car

The boys' football kit .

But some plurals (like children) they are irregular – i.e. we don't have to put an 's' on to make it plural. So in these cases when we want to show something belongs to them the apostrophe goes before the 's'

The children's toys.

The women's dresses

The teeth's enamel

The exception to note: possessive words: yours, hers, ours, theirs and its.

These are NOT written with an apostrophe.

This causes lots of confusion – especially with its and it's

The council office is close to one of its local schools. (no apostrophe because in this case we are saying that the school belongs to the council)

The council employs nearly 1000 people. It's one of the largest employers in the town. (in this case it is = it's which is an omission)

Ascenders

In writing, either handwriting or typed, many letters are formed at the same height:
a.c.e.m.n.o.r.s.u.v.w.z.

Some letters have parts that extend above this (often called 'above the line' when handwriting on lined paper): b,d,f,h,k,l,t

In some styles of writing/fonts f and z have a **descender** – formed below the line.

Clause

A clause is a group of words that give information about an event (I drank a cup of tea)
Or a situation (I was tired and needed a drink)
It usually contains a subject (in this case I) and a verb (drank / tired)

A clause is different from a **phrase**:

A large horse (a phrase – this refers to the horse but it doesn't say what the horse did or what happened to it)

A large horse galloped down the road (a clause because we now know what happened)

A sentence is made up of one or more clauses. A clause can be a complete sentence on its own – a simple sentence (see **Sentences**)

But often there are **Subordinate Clauses** in a sentence.

A subordinate clause can't exist on its own as a complete sentence but is linked to the main clause and adds more information.

| | |
|---|---|
| It was sunny. | (main clause) |
| It was sunny and we were very warm. | (two main clauses joined by 'and') |
| It was sunny <u>when we arrived at the airport.</u> | (main clause containing a subordinate clause which is underlined) |

Here are some more sentences, with the subordinate clause underlined. You can see that the subordinate clause couldn't exist on its own as a full sentence – it plays a 'supporting role' to the main clause. It can be at the beginning, middle or end of a sentence.

Although it was very cold, Simon climbed the mountain in good time.
You'll be successful if you work hard.

A subordinate clause sometimes doesn't even have a verb in it: The verb is implied.

Glad to be back, Tom opened his front door and went inside.
The porridge, although rather hot, was eaten greedily by Goldilocks.

Colon

A colon is a punctuation mark that is used to introduce a list.
It is also used between clauses when the second clause links to the first and gives additional information.

He was turning blue with the cold; the thermometer reading was below zero.

Comma

A comma is a punctuation mark that is there to help the reader by separating parts of a sentence.

It sometimes shows a pause in speech.

In particular we use commas :

to separate items listed in a sentence: (but not before the 'and):

My favourite foods are chocolate, chips, sausages and jelly.

I arrived at the gym, had a swim and then came home.

to mark off extra information:

Bob, my faithful dog, is nearly fifteen years old.

after a subordinate clause, when it is at the start of a sentence:

Although it was raining, we didn't put up our umbrellas.

when we use connecting adverbs:

However, there was no harm done.

On the other hand, I think that might be a good idea.

Compound word

A word that is made up from two other words:

Football

Headrest

Bedroom

Connectives

A word to link clauses or sentences together.

Some connectives are also called conjunctions. They link two clauses together within a sentence

It was snowing but we didn't feel the cold.
The young children won't go out if the snow is too deep.

There are also connecting adverbs. These connect ideas but the clauses remain as separate sentences:

We were very hungry because we hadn't taken our lunch with us.
Although he worked very hard, he still didn't pass the exam.
We were exhausted when we arrived at the hotel.

Connectives that are adverbs (or adverbial phrases) provide the 'glue' in a piece of writing. Connectives can

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| add something - | (also, furthermore, moreover) |
| oppose | (however, nevertheless, on the other hand) |
| reinforce | (besides, anyway, after all) |
| explain | (for example, in other words, that is to say) |
| list | (firstly, finally, last of all) |
| indicate a result | (therefore, consequently, as a result) |
| indicate time | (just then, meanwhile, later) |

Consonant

A consonant is a speech sound which obstructs the flow of air through the vocal tract. E.g, when we say the letters 'p' or 'l' the lips and tongue are used to interrupt the flow of air,

The term consonant is more widely known as the letters of the alphabet that do not make the vowel sounds (a,e,i,o,u,). But the letter 'y' can represent a consonant sound (yellow) as well as a vowel sound (baby)

Dash

A dash is a punctuation mark often used in more informal writing (although increasing in other forms too) that can replace other punctuation marks such as colons , semi-colons, commas or brackets.

It was a fabulous concert – everyone applauded loudly.

Descender

In writing, either handwriting or typed, many letters are formed at the same height: a.c.e.m.n.o.r.s.u.v.w.z.

Some letters have parts that extend below this (often called 'below the line when handwriting on lined paper): g,j,p,q,y

The part that is formed 'below the line' are called descenders.

In some styles of writing/fonts f and z also have descenders.

Determiner

Determiners are the most frequently used words in English. They are used with nouns to give more information about that noun - who it belongs to, how many, or sometimes to ask questions:

They include:

A, an, the

This/that, these/those

My/your/his/her/its/our/their

Some/any,no,many,much,few,little,both,all,either,neither,each,every,enough

Three, twenty, three thousand.

Which/(which car?), what (what size?) whose (whose car?)

These show how the determiner is linked to the noun:

This car is yours.

Which colour do you prefer?

Some new cars.

This is yours. (in this case the noun is implied – this book, this bag...)

I've got some. (again the noun will be known by reading other parts of the text)

Digraph

Where two letters rep

Direct speech and indirect speech

There are two ways of showing what somebody says:

Direct speech: This is where the actual words that the person says are shown in speech marks (in some forms they would be in speech bubbles)

John said, 'I want to go home now.'

'Would you like to come with me?' said mum.

With indirect speech no speech marks are needed as we report what was said but don't use the exact words that were spoken by the original speaker:

John said he wanted to go home.

Mum asked them if they wanted to go with her.

Double negative

.Whilst we often hear double negatives being used in spoken forms:

I didn't do nothing.

She never saw nobody.

Double negatives are not considered to be standard English and should be written as:

I didn't do anything.

She didn't see anybody.

Exclamation mark

An exclamation mark is used at the end of a sentence to demonstrate emotion:

What stunning scenery!

How stupid he is!

When very strong emotion is being expressed this is called an **interjection**

Oh dear!

Good grief!

Get out now!

Ouch!

Grapheme

A grapheme is the written form of a sound – the letter or letters that represent one of the 44 phonemes.

For example the 's' sound can have these different graphemes:

S, **se**, **c**, **sc** and **ce** as in **s**un, **mou**se****, **ci**ty****, **sci**ence****,

Homograph

Words which have the same spelling but can have different meanings.

The calf stayed close to his mother.

My calf was very sore after running.

NB - pronunciation might be different – **homographs don't have to sound the same:**

I **read** my book in the library

I'm going to **read** the newspaper in the lounge.

Homophone

Words which have the **same sound** as another but a different meaning or different spelling.

Right/write/rite
Their/there/they're
Pair/pear

Idiom

An idiom is an expression or 'saying' that is not taken literally. They come from a variety of different sources, some are regional as well as historical but can be heard in everyday conversations even though on their own they don't appear to make any sense.

You look a bit under the weather today.
If you're not careful you'll crack under the strain.
She's the apple of his eye.

Metaphor

This is where a writer describes something as if it were something else. (This is different to a simile where we say something is like something else.)
A metaphor paints an imaginative picture in the reader's head – using two things that might be considered unrelated but making a strong link between them. Often called a 'figure of speech'

Examples include:

Life is a journey.
I planted the idea with them yesterday.
He was barking up the wrong tree.
Spill the beans.

Noun

A noun is a word that denotes something or somebody.
My youngest **son** ran in a **race** wearing **shorts** and **shoes**.

A collective noun: A word that refers to a group. For example, flock, crowd, team.

Proper nouns: are the names of people, places, organisations etc. They normally need a capital letter. David, Manchester, September, Tesco.

Paragraph

A section in a piece of writing. A new paragraph marks a change of focus
a change of time
a change of place
or a change of speaker in a passage of dialogue

A new paragraph usually begins on a new line with a gap after the previous paragraph. Sometimes a new paragraph is indented.

Paragraphs are to help writers organise their thoughts and create some logical order and helps readers follow a story-line, argument or line of thinking in a piece of writing.

Phoneme

The smallest sound in a word. There are approximately 44 phonemes in the English language (some regional accent variations). A phoneme can be represented by one, two, three or even four letters.

To (1 phoneme / 1 letter)
Shoe (1 phoneme 2 letters)
Through (1 phoneme 4 letters)

Judge (1 phoneme / 3 letters)
giant 1 letter
barge 2 letters

Phrase

A phrase is a group of words that act as 'one unit'.
So cat is a word but the cat, that cat over there, that black cat are all phrases.

Strictly speaking there can be one word phrases but they tend to be thought of as a cluster of words working together. - as a noun, an adjective or an adverb. A phrase isn't a sentence

A noun phrase: my last holiday, my fluffy cat.
An adjectival phrase: really pretty, as old as you
An adverbial phrase: ten minutes ago, very slowly

Prefix

A prefix is a unit of meaning (a morpheme) that can be added to the beginning of a word to change its meaning.

inaccessible
disappear
supermarket
unnecessary

Preposition

A preposition is a word like at, over, before, under, by, with.

Examples:

They can
indicate time - **at** noon / **during** the day / **on** Sunday
the position of something - **next** to the house / **in** the library
direction - **over** the fields / **to** the station
as well as other meanings.

Prepositions sometimes come at the end of a sentence:

Who would you like to go **with**?

Will you have enough to live **on**?

I eventually found the person I was searching **for**.

Pronouns

There are several kinds of pronouns including:

Personal pronouns

I/me, you, he/him, she/her, we/us, they/them. It

Possessive pronouns

Mine,yours,his,hers,ours,theirs,its

Reflexive pronouns

Myself, herself, themselves etc.

Indefinite pronouns

Someone, anything,, nobody, everything etc.

Interrogative pronouns

Who/whom,whose, which, what

Pronouns often replace a noun or noun phrase so we can avoid repetition in our writing:

I saw your sister but I didn't get a chance to speak to her (= your sister)
I'm going to Spain next week. 'Oh, that's nice' (the fact you're going away)

Semi-colon

A semi-colon can be used to separate two main clauses in a sentence.

I liked the book; it was a pleasure to read.

This is possible to write as two separate sentences:

I liked the book.

It was a pleasure to read.

But when the two sentences are closely related as above then a writer might prefer to use a semi-colon rather than write them as two separate sentences

Semi-colons can also be used to separate items in a list if these items are longer phrases (rather than single words where you would use commas)

I would like to have large ripe melons; a kilo of ripe red tomatoes; a bag of new potatoes; some pasta and a French loaf.

Sentence

A sentence can be simple, compound or complex.

A **simple sentence** consists of one clause:

It was late.

A **compound sentence** has two or more clauses joined by and, or, but or so. The clauses are of equal weight (they are both main clauses):

It was late but I wasn't tired.

A **complex sentence** consists of a main clause which itself includes one or more subordinate clauses:

Although it was late, I wasn't tired. (subordinate clause underlined)

In writing we begin a sentence with a capital letter and end with a full stop (or question mark or exclamation mark)

Simile

The writer creates an image by comparing one thing to something else. As hard as a rock, as sharp as a knife, as strong as an ox etc.

Many similes are also considered to be idioms: smokes like a chimney.

Suffix

A suffix is a morpheme which is added to the end of a word. There are two main categories:

a. An inflectional suffix – this changes the tense or grammatical status of a word, eg from present to past (work**ed**)

or from singular to plural (accident**s**).

b. A derivational suffix changes the word class, eg from verb to noun (work**er**) or from noun to adjective (accident**al**).

Syllable

Each beat in a word is a syllable. Words with only one beat (cat, fright, jail) are called monosyllabic; words with more than one beat (super, coward, superficiality) are polysyllabic.

Synonym

Words which have the same meaning as another word, or very similar: wet/damp.

Adds variety to writing because the same word doesn't keep being repeated.

Tense

A tense is a verb form that most often indicates time. English verbs have two basic tenses, present and past, and each of these can be simple or continuous.

For example:

present / past

I play (simple) / I played (simple)

I am playing (continuous) I was playing (continuous)

Additionally, all these forms can be perfect (with the word have in them):

present perfect past perfect

I have played (perfect) I had played (past perfect)

I have been playing (perfect continuous) I had been playing (perfect continuous)

English has no specific future tense. Future time can be expressed in a number of ways using will or present tenses.

For example:

John will arrive tomorrow.

John will be arriving tomorrow.

John is going to arrive tomorrow.
John is arriving tomorrow.
John arrives tomorrow.

Text type

This term describes texts which share a purpose.

For example, texts are written to inform/persuade/describe/entertain etc.. Whole texts or parts of texts with specific features - patterns of language, structure, vocabulary - which help them achieve this purpose may be described as belonging to a particular text type.

For example recipes are instructional texts and have some language and layout features that are common to all of them.

They might not be found in every text but can be useful in discussing the different texts that do exist, why and how they are written and in turn supporting the development of a range of writing skills.

Texts may consist of mixed text types: for example, a guide-book may contain procedural text (the path or route) and report (information about exhibits).

Verb

A verb is a word that expresses an action, a happening, a process or a state. It can be thought of as a 'doing' or 'being' word.

In the sentence Mark is tired and wants to go to bed, 'is', 'wants' and 'go' are verbs.

Sometimes two or more words make up a verb phrase, such as are going, didn't want, has been waiting.

Most verbs have four or five different forms.

For example:

wait waits waiting waited
make makes making made
drive drives driving drove driven

A verb can be present or past:

I wait/she waits (present)

I waited/she waited (past)

Most verbs can occur in simple or continuous forms (be + -ing):

I make (simple present)/I'm making (present continuous)

she drove (simple past)/she was driving (past continuous)

A verb can also be perfect (with have):

I have made/I have been making (present perfect)

he had driven/he had been driving (past perfect)

If a verb is regular, the simple past and the past participle are the same, and end in 'ed.'

For example:

wanted

played

answered

Verbs that do not follow this pattern are irregular.

For example:

make/made

catch/caught

see/saw/seen

come/came/come

Vowel

A sound produced by the vocal cords with relatively little restriction from the mouth.

Every syllable contains a vowel. A vowel phoneme may be represented by one or more letters.

A letter representing the sound of vowel; in English, the vowels are a, e, i, o and u, and sometimes y.