



## 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. This glossary also combines definitions from the *Glossary for the programmes of study for English (non-statutory)*, set out in the National curriculum (2014).

### 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)

### Active Voice

An active verb has its usual pattern of subject and object (in contrast with the passive)

Active: *The school arranged a visit.*

Passive: *A visit was arranged by the school.*

### Adjective

The surest way to identify adjectives is by the ways they can be used:

- before a noun, to make the noun's meaning more specific (i.e. to modify the noun),

*The pupils did some really good work.* [adjective used before a noun, to modify it]

or

- after the verb *be*, as its complement.

*Their work was good.* [adjective used after the verb *be*, as its complement]

Adjectives cannot be modified by other adjectives. This distinguishes them from nouns, which can be.

Adjectives are sometimes called 'describing words' because they pick out single characteristics such as size or colour. This is often true, but it doesn't help to distinguish adjectives from other word classes, because verbs, nouns and adverbs can do the same thing.

Not adjectives:

*The lamp glowed.* [verb]

*It was such a bright red!* [noun]

*He spoke loudly.* [adverb]

*It was a French grammar book.* [noun]

## Adverb

In many cases adverbs tell 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.

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**.

## Adverbial

An adverbial is a word or phrase that is used, like an adverb, to modify a verb or clause. Of course, adverbs can be used as adverbials, but many other types of words and phrases can be used this way, including preposition phrases and subordinate clauses.

The *bus leaves in five minutes*. [preposition phrase as adverbial: modifies *leaves*]

*She promised to see him last night*. [noun phrase modifying either *promised* or *see*, according to the intended meaning]

*She worked until she had finished*. [subordinate clause as adverbial]

## 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

***Apostrophies have two completely different uses:***

It 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)

## Article

The articles *the* (definite) and *a* or *an* (indefinite) are the most common types of determiner.

## 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.

## Auxilliary verb

the auxiliary verbs are:

*be, have do*, (along with the modal verbs ) can be used to make negative statements and questions:

They are winning the match – *be* used in the progressive.

*be-* is used in the progressive and the passive

*Have* you finished your picture? - *have* used to make a question and the perfect.

*Have* is used in the perfect

No, I don't know him.

*do* is used to form questions and negative statements of no other auxiliary verb is present

*Will* you come with me or not? – modal verb *will* used to make a question about the other person's willingness.

## 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 when we arrived at the airport. (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.*

### **Cohesion**

A text has cohesion if it is clear how the parts fit together. Cohesive devices can help to do this:

**A visit** had been arranged for **Year 6**, to the *Belchamps Activity Centre*, leaving school at 9:30am. **This is a residential visit.** *The centre* has beautiful grounds and a nature trail. During the afternoons, the children will follow the trail.

In this example, there are repeated references to the same thing (shown by the different style pairings), and the logical relations between the different parts, is clear.

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.

### **Cohesive Devices**

Cohesive devices are words used to show how the different parts of a text fit together. In other words, they create cohesion.

Some examples of cohesive devices are:

- determiners and pronouns, which can refer back to earlier words

*Julia's dad bought her a football. The football was expensive!* [determiner; refers us back to a particular football]

*Joe was given a bike for Christmas. He liked it very much.* [the pronouns refer back to Joe and the bike]

- conjunctions and adverbs, which can make relations between words clear

*We'll be going shopping before we go to the park.* [conjunction; makes a relationship of time clear]

*I'm afraid we're going to have to wait for the next train. Meanwhile, we could have a cup of tea.* [adverb; refers back to the time of waiting]

- ellipsis of expected words.

*Where are you going? [ ] To school!* [ellipsis of the expected words *I'm going*; links the answer back to the question]

### **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.

### **Complement**

A verb's subject complement adds more information about its subject, and its object complement does the same for its object. Unlike the verb's object, its complement may be an adjective. The verb *be* normally has a complement.

*She is our teacher.* [adds more information about the subject, *she*]

*They seem very competent.* [adds more information about the subject, *they*]

*Learning makes me happy.* [adds more information about the object, *me*]

### **Compound word, compounding**

A compound word has at least two root words in its morphology:

*blackbird, blow-dry, bookshop, ice-cream, English teacher, inkjet, one-eyed, bone-dry, baby-sit, daydream, outgrow*

### **Connectives**

(see conjunctions)

#### **Conjunction (connectives)**

A word used to link clauses within a sentence. For example, in the following sentences, *but* and *if* are conjunctions:

*It was raining but it wasn't cold.*

*We won't go out if the weather's bad.*

There are two kinds of conjunction:

a. Co-ordinating conjunctions (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so - FANBOYS). These join (and are placed between) two clauses of equal weight.

*Do you want to go now or shall we wait a bit longer?*

*And, but* and *or* are also used to join words or phrases within a clause.

b. Subordinating conjunctions:

although, as, before, once, though, until, whether, since, because, even though, before, provided, after, whenever, once, so that

These go at the beginning of a subordinate clause:

*We were hungry because we hadn't eaten all day.*

*Although we'd had plenty to eat, we were still hungry.*

*We were hungry when we got home.*

**C. Correlative conjunctions** are pairs of conjunctions used in a sentence to join different words or groups of words in a sentence together. Correlative conjunctions are generally used to link two or more words of equal importance within the sentence itself.

**neither/nor, just as/so, either/or, both/and, not only/but, whether/or,**

*Sam enjoyed both the film and the popcorn.*

What has happened to connectives?

Many of the words which were previously called connectives now come under the umbrella of Conjunctions – which is more correct grammatically speaking.

## 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 't' 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)

## Co-ordinate, Co-ordination

Words or phrases are co-ordinated if they are linked as an equal pair by a co-ordinating conjunction (i.e. *and, but, or*). In the examples, the co-ordinated elements are shown in bold, and the conjunction is underlined. The difference between co-ordination and subordination is that, in subordination, the two linked elements are not equal.

**Susan and Amra** met in a café. [links the words *Susan* and *Amra* as an equal pair]

**They talked and drank tea** for an hour. [links two clauses as an equal pair]

**Susan got a bus but Amra walked**. [links two clauses as an equal pair] Not co-ordination:  
*They ate before they met*. [*before* introduces a subordinate clause]

## 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 represent a phoneme (a sound)

ea in each

sh

sometimes, these two letters are not beside each other; this is called a split digraph

o-e in zone

### **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.

### **Ellipsis**

Ellipsis is the omission of a word or phrase which is expected and predictable.

*Frankie waved to Ivana and ~~she~~ watched her drive away.*

*She did it because she wanted to ~~do it~~.*

### **Etymology**

A word's etymology is its history: its origins in earlier forms of English or other languages, and how its form and meaning have changed. Many words in English have come from Greek, Latin or French.

The word *school* was borrowed from a Greek word *σχολή* (*skholé*) meaning 'leisure'.

The word *verb* comes from Latin *verbum*, meaning 'word'.

The word *mutton* comes from French *mouton*, meaning 'sheep'.

### **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!

### **Finite Verb**

Every sentence typically has at least one verb which is either past or present tense. Such verbs are called 'finite'. The imperative verb in a command is also finite. Verbs that are not finite, such as participles or infinitives, cannot stand on their own: they are linked to another verb in the sentence.

*Lizzie does the dishes every day.* [present tense]

*Even Hana did the dishes yesterday.* [past tense]

*Do the dishes, Naser!* [imperative]

Not finite verbs:

- *I have done them.* [combined with the finite verb *have*]
- *I will do them.* [combined with the finite verb *will*]
- *I want to do them!* [combined with the finite verb *want*]

### Fronting, Fronted

A word or phrase that normally comes after the verb may be moved before the verb: when this happens, we say it has been 'fronted'. For example, a fronted adverbial is an adverbial which has been moved before the verb. When writing fronted phrases, we often follow them with a comma.

*Before we begin, make sure you've got a pencil.* [Without fronting: *Make sure you've got a pencil before we begin.*]

*The day after tomorrow, I'm visiting my granddad.* [Without fronting: *I'm visiting my granddad the day after tomorrow.*]

### Future

Reference to future time can be marked in a number of different ways in English. All these ways involve the use of a present-tense verb.

See also tense.

Unlike many other languages (such as French, Spanish or Italian), English has no distinct 'future tense' form of the verb comparable with its present and past tenses.

*He will leave tomorrow.* [present-tense *will* followed by infinitive *leave*]

*He may leave tomorrow.* [present-tense *may* followed by infinitive *leave*]

*He leaves tomorrow.* [present-tense *leaves*]

*He is going to leave tomorrow.* [present tense *is* followed by *going to* plus the infinitive *leave*]

### 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 sun, mouse, city, science,

### Grapheme-phoneme correspondences

The links between letters, or combinations of letters (graphemes) and the speech sounds (phonemes) that they represent.

The grapheme s corresponds to the phoneme /s/ in the word *see*, but...

...it corresponds to the phoneme /z/ in the word *easy*.

In the English writing system, graphemes may correspond to different phonemes in different words.

### Homograph

Words which have the same spelling but can have different a meaning.

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.

### Homonym

Two different words are homonyms if they both look exactly the same when written, and sound exactly the same when pronounced.

*Has he left yet? Yes – he went through the door on the left.*

*The noise a dog makes is called a bark. Trees have bark.*

### Homophone

Two different words are homophones if they sound exactly the same when pronounced.

*hear, here*

*some, sum*

### 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.*

### Infinitive

A verb's infinitive is the basic form used as the head-word in a dictionary (e.g. *walk, be*).

Infinitives are often used:

- after *to*                      *I want to walk*
- after modal verbs.        *I will be quiet.*

### Inflection

When we add *-ed* to *walk*, or change *mouse* to *mice*, this change of morphology produces an inflection ('bending') of the basic word which has special grammar (e.g. past tense or plural). In contrast, adding *-er* to *walk* produces a completely different word, *walker*, which is part of the same word family. Inflection is sometimes thought of as merely a change of ending, but, in fact, some words change completely when inflected.

*dogs* is an inflection of *dog*.

*went* is an inflection of *go*.

*better* is an inflection of *good*.

### Intransitive Verb

A verb which does not need an object in a sentence to complete its meaning is described as intransitive. (See 'transitive verb'.)

*We all laughed.*

*We would like to stay longer, but we must leave.*

### Main Clause

A sentence contains at least one clause which is not a subordinate clause; such a clause is a main clause. A main clause may contain any number of subordinate clauses.

*It was raining but the sun was shining.* [two main clauses]

*The man **who wrote it** told me **that it was true**.* [one main clause containing two subordinate clauses.]

*She said, "It rained all day."* [one main clause containing another.]

### 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.*

### **Modal Verb**

Modal verbs are used to change the meaning of other verbs. They can express meanings such as certainty, ability, or obligation. The main modal verbs are *will, would, can, could, may, might, shall, should, must* and *ought*.

*I can do this maths work by myself.*

*This ride may be too scary for you!*

*You should help your little brother.*

*Is it going to rain? Yes, it might.*

A modal verb only has finite forms and has no suffixes (e.g. *I sing – he sings*, but not *I must – he musts*).

*Canning swim is important* - not possible because *can* must be finite;  
contrast:

*Being able to swim is important* - where *being* is not a modal verb.

### **Modify, Modifier**

One word or phrase modifies another by making its meaning more specific. Because the two words make a phrase, the 'modifier' is normally close to the modified word:

In the phrase *primary-school teacher*

- *teacher* is modified by *primary-school* (to mean a specific kind of teacher)
- *school* is modified by *primary* (to mean a specific kind of school).

### **Morphology**

A word's morphology is its internal make-up in terms of root words and suffixes or prefixes, as well as other kinds of change such as the change of *mouse* to *mice*. Morphology may be used to produce different inflections of the same word (e.g. *boy – boys*), or entirely new words (e.g. *boy – boyish*) belonging to the same word family. A word that contains two or more root words is a compound (e.g. *news+paper, ice+cream*).

- *dogs* has the morphological make-up: *dog + s*.
- *unhelpfulness* has the morphological make-up: *unhelpful + ness*
- where *unhelpful* = *un + helpful*
- and *helpful* = *help + ful*

### **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.

and also as

**countable** (e.g. *thing, boy*)

or

**non-countable** (e.g. *stuff, money*).

These classes can be recognised by the determiners they combine with.

**common, countable:** *a book, books, two chocolates, one day, fewer ideas*

**common, non-countable:** *money, some chocolate, less imagination*

**proper, countable:** *Marilyn, London, Wednesday*

## **Noun Phrase**

A noun phrase is a phrase with a noun as its head, e.g. *some foxes, foxes with bushy tails*. Some grammarians recognise one-word phrases, so that *foxes are multiplying* would contain the noun *foxes* acting as the head of the noun phrase *foxes*.

*Adult foxes can jump.* [*adult* modifies *foxes*, so *adult* belongs to the noun phrase]

*Almost all healthy adult foxes in this area can jump.* [all the other words help to modify *foxes*, so they all belong to the noun phrase]

## **Object**

An object is normally a noun, pronoun or noun phrase that comes straight after the verb, and shows what the verb is acting upon.

*Year 2 designed puppets.* [noun acting as object]

*I like that.* [pronoun acting as object]

Objects can be turned into the subject of a passive verb, and cannot be adjectives (contrast with complements).

*Some people suggested a pretty display.* [noun phrase acting as object]

Contrast:

- *A display was suggested.* [object of active verb becomes the subject of the passive verb]
- *Year 2 designed pretty.* [incorrect, because adjectives cannot be objects]

## **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.

## **Participle**

Verbs in English have two participles, called 'present participle' (e.g. *walking, taking*) and 'past participle' (e.g. *walked, taken*). Unfortunately, these terms can be confusing to learners, because:

- they don't necessarily have anything to do with present or past time

*He is walking to school.* [present participle in a progressive]

*He has taken the bus to school.* [past participle in a perfect]

- although past participles are used as perfects (e.g. *has eaten*) they are also used as passives (e.g. *was eaten*).

*The photo was taken in the rain.* [past participle in a passive]

## **Passive**

The sentence: *It was eaten by our dog* is the passive of *Our dog ate it*. A passive is recognisable from:

- the past participle form *eaten*
- the normal object (*it*) turned into the subject
- the normal subject (*our dog*) turned into an optional preposition phrase with *by* as its head
- the verb *be* (*was*), or some other verb such as *get*.

Contrast active.

A verb is not 'passive' just because it has a passive meaning: it must be the passive version of an active verb.

*A visit was arranged by the school.*

*Our cat got run over by a bus.*

Active versions:

- *The School arranged a visit.*
- *A bus ran over our cat.*

Not passive:

- *He received a warning.* [past tense, active *received*]
- *We had an accident.* [past tense, active *had*]

### **Past Tense**

Verbs in the past tense are commonly used to:

- talk about the past  
*Tom and Chris showed me their new TV.* [names an event in the past]  
*Antonio went on holiday to Brazil.* [names an event in the past; irregular past of *go*]
- talk about imagined situations  
*I wish I had a puppy.* [names an imagined situation, not a situation in the past]
- make a request sound more polite  
*I was hoping you'd help tomorrow.* [makes an implied request sound more polite]

Most verbs take a suffix -ed, to form their past tense, but many commonly-used verbs are irregular. See also tense.

### **Perfect**

The perfect form of a verb generally calls attention to the consequences of a prior event; for example, *he has gone to lunch* implies that he is still away, in contrast with *he went to lunch*. 'Had gone to lunch' takes a past time point (i.e. when we arrived) as its reference point and is another way of establishing time relations in a text.

The perfect tense is formed by:

- turning the verb into its past participle inflection  
*She has downloaded some songs.* [present perfect; now she has some songs]
- adding a form of the verb *have* before it.  
*I had eaten lunch when you came.* [past perfect; I wasn't hungry when you came]

It can also be combined with the progressive (e.g. *he has been going*).

### **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.

T (1 phoneme / 1 letter)

Sho (1 phoneme 2 letters)

Throug (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*

### **Plural**

A plural noun normally has a suffix -s or -es and means 'more than one'.  
*dogs* [more than one dog];  
*boxes* [more than one box]  
There are a few nouns with different morphology in the plural (e.g. *mice*, *formulae*).

### **Prefix**

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

**in**accessible  
**dis**appear  
**super**market  
**unn**ecessary

### **Possessive**

A possessive can be:

- a noun followed by an apostrophe,

*Tariq's book* [Tariq has the book]

with or without s

*The boys' arrival* [the boys arrive]

- a possessive pronoun.

*His obituary* [the obituary is about him]

The relation expressed by a possessive goes well beyond ordinary ideas of 'possession'. A possessive may act as a determiner.

*That essay is mine.* [I wrote the essay]

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**dis**appear  
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Contrast suffix.

### **Preposition**

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

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.

### **Preposition Phrase**

A preposition phrase has a preposition as its head followed by a noun, pronoun or noun phrase.

*He was in bed.*

*I met them after the party.*

### **Present Tense**

Verbs in the present tense are commonly used to:

- talk about the present

*Jamal goes to the pool every day.* [describes a habit that exists now]

*He can swim.* [describes a state that is true now]

- talk about the future. They may take a suffix –s (depending on the subject).

*The bus arrives at three.* [scheduled now]

*My friends are coming to play.* [describes a plan in progress now]

See also tense.

### **Progressive**

The progressive (also known as the ‘continuous’) form of a verb generally describes events in progress. It is formed by combining the verb’s present participle (e.g. *singing*) with a form of the verb *be* (e.g. *he was singing*). The progressive can also be combined with the perfect (e.g. *he has been singing*).

*Michael is singing in the store room.* [present progressive]

*Amanda was making a patchwork quilt.* [past progressive]

*Usha had been practising for an hour when I called.* [past perfect progressive]

### **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)

### **Punctuation**

Punctuation includes any conventional features of writing other than spelling and general layout: the standard punctuation marks . , ; : ? ! - - ( ) “ ” ‘ ’ , and also word-spaces, capital letters, apostrophes, paragraph breaks and bullet points.

One important role of punctuation is to indicate sentence boundaries.

### **Register**

Classroom lessons, football commentaries and novels use different registers of the same language, recognised by differences of vocabulary and grammar. Registers are ‘varieties’ of a language which are each tied to a range of uses, in contrast with dialects, which are tied to groups of users.

*I regret to inform you that Mr Joseph Smith has passed away.* [formal letter]

*Have you heard that Joe has died?* [casual speech]

*Joe falls down and dies, centre stage.* [stage direction]

### **Relative Clause**

A relative clause is a special type of subordinate clause that modifies a noun. It often does this by using a relative pronoun such as *who* or *that* to refer back to that noun, though the relative pronoun *that* is often omitted. A relative clause may also be attached to a clause. In that case, the pronoun refers back to the whole clause, rather than referring back to a noun. In the examples, the relative clauses are underlined, and both the pronouns and the words they refer back to are in bold.

*That's the **boy who** lives near school.* [*who* refers back to *boy*]

*The **prize that** I won was a book.* [*that* refers back to *prize*]

*The **prize** I won was a book.* [the pronoun *that* is omitted]

***Tom broke the game, which** annoyed Ali.* [*which* refers back to the whole clause]

### **Root Word**

Morphology breaks words down into root words, which can stand alone, and suffixes or prefixes which can't.

For example, *help* is the root word for other words in its word family such as *helpful* and *helpless*, and also for its inflections such as *helping*.

Compound words (e.g. *help-desk*) contain two or more root words.

When looking in a dictionary, we sometimes have to look for the root word (or words) of the word we are interested in.

*played* [the root word is *play*]

*unfair* [the root word is *fair*]

*football* [the root words are *foot* and *ball*]

### **Schwa**

The name of a vowel sound that is found only in unstressed positions in English. It is the most common vowel sound in English.

It is written as /ə/ in the International Phonetic Alphabet. In the English writing system, it can be written in many different ways.

/əlɒŋ/ [*along*]

/bʌtə/ [*butter*]

/dɒktə/ [*doctor*]

### **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.

## **Split-digraph**

See digraph

## **Subject**

The subject of a verb is normally the noun, noun phrase or pronoun that names the 'do-er' or 'be-er'. The subject's normal position is:

- just before the verb in a statement

*Rula's mother went out.*

*That is uncertain.*

*The children will study the animals.*

- just after the auxiliary verb, in a question.

*Will the children study the animals?*

Unlike the verb's object and complement, the subject can determine the form of the verb (e.g. *I am, you are*).

## **Subjunctive**

In some languages, the inflections of a verb include a large range of special forms which are used typically in subordinate clauses, and are called 'subjunctives'. English has very few such forms and those it has tend to be used in rather formal styles.

*The school requires that all pupils be honest.*

*The school rules demand that pupils not enter the gym at lunchtime.*

*If Zoë were the class president, things would be much better.*

## **Subordinate, Subordination**

A subordinate word or phrase tells us more about the meaning of the word it is subordinate to.

Subordination can be thought of as an unequal relationship between a subordinate word and a main word. For example:

- an adjective is subordinate to the noun it modifies

*big dogs* [*big* is subordinate to *dogs*]

- subjects and objects are subordinate to their verbs.

*Big dogs need long walks.* [*big dogs* and *long walks* are subordinate to *need*]

Subordination is much more common than the equal relationship of co-ordination.

*We can watch TV when we've finished.* [*when we've finished* is subordinate to *watch*]

See also subordinate clause.

## Suffix

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

- An inflectional suffix – this changes the tense or grammatical status of a word, eg from present to past (*worked*) or from singular to plural (*accidents*).
- A derivational suffix changes the word class, from verb to noun (*worker*) or from noun to adjective (*accidental*).

## 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.

Syllables consist of at least one vowel, and possibly one or more consonants.

*Cat* has one syllable.

*Fairy* has two syllables.

*Hippopotamus* has five syllables.

## 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 is arriving tomorrow.

John arrives tomorrow.

John will be arriving tomorrow

John is going to arrive tomorrow.

### **Transitive Verb**

A transitive verb takes at least one object in a sentence to complete its meaning, in contrast to an intransitive verb, which does not.

*He loves Juliet*

*She understands English grammar.*

### **Tirgraph**

A type of grapheme where three letters represent one phoneme.

*High, pure, hedge*

### **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.

### **Word Class**

Every word belongs to a word class which summarises the ways in which it can be used in grammar. The major word classes for English are: noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, determiner, pronoun, conjunction. Word classes are sometimes called 'parts of speech'.

### **Word Family**

The words in a word family are normally related to each other by a combination of morphology, grammar and meaning. *teach – teacher ; extend – extent – extensive*