

St Osmund's Middle School



**Glossary of terms relating to Grammar,
Punctuation, Spelling and Phonics
Based on the 2015 National Curriculum**

active

An active verb has its usual pattern of subject (noun doing the verb) before the verb and object (noun having the verb done to it) after the verb (in contrast with the passive)

Active: *The school arranged a visit.*

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

See also passive

adjective

Adjectives are often called "describing words"; they often occur before a noun or after *be*.

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), or

The pupils did some really good work.

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

Their work was good.

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]

?, , . : -

- Dash

A dash is a punctuation mark used especially in informal writing (such as letters to friends, postcards or notes). Dashes may be used to replace other punctuation marks (colons, semi-colons, commas) or brackets:

It was a great day out – everybody enjoyed it.

They are often used in parenthesis:

Tom glared at Patrick—Patrick owed him £500—and shook his fist at him

...Ellipsis

The ellipsis signifies that words or figures are missing. It is most often used in long quotations but can also be used to indicate a pause:

Kylie thought and thought ... and then thought some more.

"I was wondering ..." Jason said, bemused.

Ellipsis is often used to create mystery, ambiguity or suspense:

He could feel the eyes watching him from dark corners...

?, , . : -



' ' Inverted Commas

We mostly use inverted commas (quotation marks) in direct speech:

Helen said, 'I'm going home.'

'What do you want?' I asked

They are also used to quote existing texts and to draw attention to a word or phrase (often suggesting that it is unusual, inaccurate or ironic)

Thank you for that unhelpful 'advice'

() Brackets

Brackets are used to add additional information to sentences without changing their meaning. They may be explaining another word in the sentence or giving other information to explain parts of the sentence:

If you would like
more information
please contact us



adverb

Adverbs often add detail to verbs, and can also add detail to adjectives, other adverbs, or entire clauses.

Adverbs are sometimes said to describe manner or time. This is often true, but it doesn't help to distinguish adverbs from other word classes that can be used as adverbials, such as preposition phrases, noun phrases and subordinate clauses.

Usha soon started snoring loudly. [adverbs modifying the verbs *started* and *snoring*]

That match was really exciting! [adverb modifying the adjective *exciting*]

We don't get to play games very often. [adverb modifying the other adverb, *often*]

Fortunately, it didn't rain. [adverb modifying the whole clause 'it didn't rain' by commenting on it]

adverbial

An Adverbial is a word or phrase that is used, like an adverb, to add detail to 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]

antonym

Two words are antonyms if their meanings are opposites.

hot - cold

light - dark

light - heavy

apostrophe

The apostrophe (written ') is one of the main punctuation marks in English.

Apostrophes have two completely different uses:

- showing the place of missing letters (e.g. *I'm* for *I am*)
- marking possessives (e.g. *Hannah's mother*)

I'm going out and I won't be long. [showing missing letters]

Hannah's mother went to town in Justin's car. [marking possessives]

See also possessive

article

The articles are *the*, *a*, and *an*.

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

The dog found a bone in an old box.

auxiliary verb

Auxiliary verbs 'help' the main verb they precede by adding further shades of meaning such as aspect or modality. E.g. *They are leaving*; *She has finished*; *We should help him*.

The auxiliary verbs are *be*, *have* and *do* and the modal verbs (*will*, *would*, *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *shall*, *should*, *must* and *ought*). They can be used to make questions and negative statements. In addition:

be is used in the progressive and passive

have is used in the perfect

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

They are winning the match. [*be* used in the progressive]

Have you finished your picture? [*have* used to make a question, and the perfect]

No, I don't know him. [*do* used to make a negative; no other auxiliary is present]

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

? , . : -

: Colon

Used to introduce a list or a following example (like on this sheet!):

On your school trip you must bring:

Shorts

Swimming costume

Trainers

It may also be used before a second clause that expands or illustrates the first:

He was very cold: the temperature was below zero.

; Semi-Colon

A semi-colon can be used to separate two main clauses that are closely related in meaning:

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

A semi-colon can be used to join two main clauses (simple sentences) in the same way as 'and' or 'but'

Semi-colons are also used to separate a list of phrases (where additional commas may be confusing):

; ' " ()



Perfect Punctuation

. Full Stop

A full stop marks the end of a sentence. It is always followed by a capital letter.

, Comma

A punctuation mark used to help the reader by separating parts of a sentence:

- To separate items in a list: *My favourite sports are football, tennis, swimming and gymnastics.*
- To mark off extra information: *Jill, my boss, is 28 years old.*
- To separate a subordinate clause: *Although it was cold, we didn't wear our coats.*

clause

A clause is a special type of phrase whose head is a verb. Clauses can sometimes be complete sentences. Clauses may be main or subordinate.

main clause

A main clause is a clause which is not subordinate to any other clause and can stand alone as a sentence, e.g. *I saw them last night.* It differs from a subordinate clause, which functions as part of a larger clause.

A sentence contains at least one 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.]

subordinate clause

A subordinate clause does not function as a sentence on its own but functions instead as part of a larger clause. A clause which is subordinate to some other part of the same sentence is a subordinate clause; for example, in *The apple that I ate was sour*, the clause *that I ate* is subordinate to *apple* (which it modifies). However, clauses that are directly quoted as direct speech are not subordinate clauses.

That's the street where Ben lives. [relative clause; modifies *street*]

He watched her as she disappeared. [Adverbial; modifies *watched*]

cohesion

Cohesion refers to the grammatical relationships that exist within a text between words, phrases, etc. When we talk only of the semantic links, i.e. the meaning links, we speak of coherence.

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

cohesive device

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

conjunctions and adverbs, which can make relations between words clear

ellipsis of expected 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]

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]

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

comparative

The form of adjectives (and some adverbs) that ends in *-er* (e.g. *quieter, faster*). Sometimes a periphrastic form is used, e.g. *more competent* (rather than **competenter*).

compound word

A compound word contains at least two root words in its morphology; e.g. *whiteboard, superman*.

Compounding is very important in English.

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

word

A word is a unit of grammar: it can be selected and moved around relatively independently, but cannot easily be split. In punctuation, words are normally separated by word spaces. Sometimes, a sequence that appears grammatically to be two words is collapsed into a single written word, indicated with a hyphen or apostrophe (e.g. *well-built, he's*).

headteacher or *head teacher* [can be written with or without a space]

I'm going out.

9.30 am

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

grammar – grammatical – grammarian

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.

A word class is a group of words which show similar grammatical behaviour. For example, words which belong to the class of nouns occur as the Heads of noun phrases, can be preceded by determiners, and so on.

trigraph

A type of grapheme where three letters represent one phoneme.

High

pure

patch

hedge

verb

Verbs constitute one of the major word classes, including words for actions (e.g. *shout, work, travel*) and states (e.g. *be, belong, remain*). There are two main types of verb: main verbs and auxiliary verbs.

The surest way to identify verbs is by the ways they can be used: they can usually have a tense, either present tense or past tense (see also future).

Verbs are sometimes called 'doing words' because many verbs name an action that someone does; while this can be a way of recognising verbs, it doesn't distinguish verbs from nouns (which can also name actions). Moreover many verbs name states or feelings rather than actions.

He lives in Birmingham. [present tense]

The teacher wrote a song for the class. [past tense]

He likes chocolate. [present tense; not an action]

He knew my father. [past tense; not an action]

Not verbs:

The walk to Halina's house will take an hour. [noun]

All that surfing makes Morwenna so sleepy! [noun]

vowel

A vowel is a speech sound which is produced without any closure or obstruction of the vocal tract.

Vowels can form syllables by themselves, or they may combine with consonants.

In the English writing system, the letters *a, e, i, o, u* and *y* can represent vowels.

conjunction

A conjunction links two words or phrases together.

There are two main types of conjunctions:

coordinating conjunctions (e.g. *and*) link two words or phrases together as an equal pair (also known as a co-ordinator)

subordinating conjunctions (e.g. *when*) introduce a subordinate clause.

James bought a bat and ball. [links the words *bat* and *ball* as an equal pair]

Kylie is young but she can kick the ball hard. [links two clauses as an equal pair]

Everyone watches when Kyle does back-flips. [introduces a subordinate clause]

Joe can't practise kicking because he's injured. [introduces a subordinate clause]

The 2016 GPaS test sample papers also refer to conjunctions as *joining words*.

connective (approach with caution!)

'Connective' is an old term that has been widely used by teachers to group words that can connect units of information in various ways. These include words like *however, so* and *nonetheless*, and *because, although* and *after*.

In most contemporary discussions of grammar, and in the 2014 National Curriculum, the term 'connective' is not used. Instead, we distinguish between subordinating conjunctions, coordinating conjunctions and certain types of adverbs.

You may find that the term 'connective' is useful as a general notion that encourages students to think about how they might connect one piece of information to another. However, it is not considered a part of speech in the 2014 National Curriculum, and we would strongly encourage you to avoid it.

consonant

A sound which is produced when the speaker closes off or obstructs the flow of air through the vocal tract, usually using lips, tongue or teeth.

Most of the letters of the alphabet represent consonants. Only the letters *a, e, i, o, u* and *y* can represent vowel sounds.

The term 'consonant' is used either for a sound made by bringing the vocal organs together or close to each other, or for a letter used to write a consonant sound: for example, the sound at the start and end of the word *mat* is a consonant sound, written with the consonant letter *m*.

coordination

Words or phrases are coordinated if they are linked as an equal pair by a coordinating conjunction (i.e. *and, but, or*).

In the examples below, the coordinated elements are shown in bold, and the conjunction is in red.

The difference between coordination and subordination is that, in subordination, the two linked elements are not equal.

*Susan **and** Amra met in a cafe.* [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 on a bus **but** Amra walked.* [links two clauses as an equal pair]

Not coordination: *They ate **before** they met.* [*before* introduces a subordinate clause]

past tense

The past tense is a grammatical marking on verbs. (See also inflection.) E.g. the verb in *She sounded tired* is a past tense form (compare the present tense form in *She sounds tired*).

Verbs in the past tense are commonly used to:

- talk about the past
- talk about imagined situations
- make a request sound more polite.

Most verbs take a suffix *-ed*, to form their past tense, but many commonly-used verbs don't.

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*]

I wish I had a puppy. [names an imagined situation, not a situation in the past]

I was hoping you'd help tomorrow. [makes an implied request sound more polite]

perfect

The perfect construction is composed of a form of *have* followed by a past participle, e.g. *has cooked, have walked, had eaten*.

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

adding a form of the verb *have* before it.

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

She has downloaded some songs. [present perfect; now she has some songs]

I had eaten lunch when you came. [past perfect; I wasn't hungry when you came]

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]

suffix

A suffix is an 'ending', used at the end of one word to turn it into another word. Contrast prefix.

call – called

teach – teacher [turns a verb into a noun]

terror – terrorise [turns a noun into a verb]

green – greenish [leaves word class unchanged]

tense

Tense is a grammatical notion, and refers to the way that time is encoded in language, typically through verb endings (inflections).

In English, tense is the choice between present tense and past tense verbs, which is special because it is signalled by inflections and normally indicates differences of time. In contrast, languages like French, Spanish and Italian have three or more distinct tense forms, including a future tense. (See also: future.)

The simple tenses (present and past) may be combined in English with the perfect and progressive.

present tense

The present tense is a grammatical marking on verbs which often, but not always, expresses present time. E.g. the verb in *She sounds tired* is a present tense form (compare the past tense form in *She sounded tired*).

They may take a suffix –s (depending on the subject).

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

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

The bus arrives at three. [scheduled now]

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

determiner

A determiner specifies a noun as known or unknown, and it goes before any modifiers (e.g. adjectives or other nouns).

Some examples of determiners are:

articles (*the, a or an*)

demonstratives (e.g. *this, those*)

possessives (e.g. *my, your*)

quantifiers (e.g. *some, every*).¹

Determiner is a word class label. It's a cover term for a range of word classes that are also known by other names. Determiners typically occur before a noun within a noun phrase to indicate the type of reference the noun has, e.g. *the, a/an, this, that, many, all*.

digraph

A type of grapheme (letter or combination of letters) where two letters represent one phoneme (unit of sound). Sometimes, these two letters are not next to one another; this is called a split digraph.

The digraph *ea* in *each*

The digraph *sh* in *shed*

The split digraph *i–e* in *line*

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].

In addition to grammatical ellipsis, the term *ellipsis* can also refer to the punctuation mark written with three dots: ...

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

An utterance that expresses an emotion such as surprise, anger or admiration such as *What a wonderful sight they are!*

finite

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*]

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.

superlative

The form of adjectives (and some adverbs) that ends in *-est* (e.g. *quietest*, *fastest*). Sometimes a periphrastic form is used, e.g. *most competent* (rather than **competentest*).

syllable

A syllable sounds like a beat in a word. 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

Two words are synonyms if they have the same meaning, or similar meanings.

Contrast antonym.

talk – *speak*

old – *elderly*

tag question

A short question added to the end of a clause, such as *did he?* or *wasn't there?*. These short additional interrogative clauses are usually incomplete and refer back to the main clause of the sentence, as in *...there was a large picture of your mother's mother wasn't there?* Tag questions are common in conversational speech, frequently used to seek agreement.

singular

A term describing a form of a noun or pronoun which refers to a single person or thing. Singular and plural are contrasting values of number. For example, *banana* is a singular form which contrasts with the plural form *bananas*.

Standard English

Standard English is the variety of English which is used, with only minor variation, as a major world language. Some people use Standard English all the time, in all situations from the most casual to the most formal, so it covers most registers. The aim of the national curriculum is that everyone should be able to use Standard English as needed in writing and in relatively formal speaking.

I did it because they were not willing to undertake any more work on those houses. [formal Standard English]

I did it cos they wouldn't do any more work on those houses. [casual Standard English]

I done it cos they wouldn't do no more work on them houses. [casual non-Standard English]

stress

A syllable is stressed if it is pronounced more forcefully than the syllables next to it. The other syllables are unstressed.

about

visit

The emphasis that a speaker places on a word or syllable of a word makes the word or syllable louder, higher, and/or longer than other words or syllables. Words have characteristic stress patterns: for example, *tiger* is stressed on the first syllable while *about* is stressed on the second syllable.

Unstressed syllables can be particularly difficult to spell as they are difficult to hear e.g.

Separate

Definite

Primary

fronting

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

Future time can be expressed in many different ways in English, but English does not have a future tense.

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 letter, or combination of letters, that corresponds to a single phoneme within a word.

The grapheme *t* in the words *ten*, *bet* and *ate*

The grapheme *ph* in the word *dolphin*

grapheme-phoneme correspondence

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

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

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

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

head

A functional label which refers to the principal word in a phrase. For example, an adjective phrase has an adjective as its Head, and a verb phrase has a verb as its head.

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 that is unique to a particular language. The meaning of an idiom cannot be derived from its constituent parts. For example, the phrase *paint the town red* means 'to have a good time while going out'.

sentence

A sentence is a group of words which are grammatically connected to each other but not to any words outside the sentence.

The form of a sentence's main clause shows whether it is being used as a statement, a question, a command or an exclamation.

A sentence may consist of a single clause or it may contain several clauses held together by subordination or co-ordination

John went to his friend's house. He stayed there till tea-time.

John went to his friend's house, he stayed there till tea-time. [comma splice]

This is a 'comma splice', a common error in which a comma is used where either a full stop or a semi-colon is needed to indicate the lack of any grammatical connection between the two clauses.

You are my friend. [statement]

Are you my friend? [question]

Be my friend! [command]

What a good friend you are! [exclamation]

Ali went home on his bike to his goldfish and his current library book about pets. [single-clause sentence]

She went shopping but took back everything she had bought because she didn't like any of it. [multi-clause sentence]

The sentence is the largest unit of grammar, which in the written language begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop.

simple sentence

A sentence containing only one main clause, with no subordinate clauses inside it, e.g. *Kate visited her cousins yesterday.* It may also be referred to as a single-clause sentence.

compound sentence

A sentence where two or more main clauses are joined together, e.g. [*Sam made a cake*] and [*Anna bought some biscuits*]. The clauses which are joined are 'equal' in status, as each could stand alone. A compound sentence is thus a kind of multi-clause sentence.

complex sentence

A sentence containing a main clause with at least one subordinate clause inside it, e.g. *I looked after the children while Sam was away.* The subordinate clause, *while Sam was away*, does not make sense as a stand-alone sentence but adds detail to the main clause, *I looked after the children*.

relative pronoun

A pronoun which is used at the start of a relative clause, e.g. *who, which, that* (*the girl who won the race, the necklace which/that I found*).

root word

Root words are words that can stand alone, unlike prefixes and suffixes, which cannot stand alone.

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*]

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*

after modal verbs.

I want to walk.

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*.

An inflection is a change to the base form of a word to express grammatical information, usually by adding an ending (or suffix). Sometimes inflection involves another kind of change to the base form (e.g. *mouse/mice*).

modal verb

A modal verb is an auxiliary verb which expresses modality (meanings to do with what is possible, necessary, and so on).

Modal verbs are used to change the meaning of other verbs. 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.

modifier

Modifier is a functional label for an element in a phrase which supports (or 'modifies') the Head word.

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).

Other examples of modifiers are *happy* in the noun phrase *a happy bunny*, *very* in the adjective phrase *very cheeky* and *extremely* in the adverb phrase *extremely quickly*.

morphology

Morphology is the study of the internal structure of words.

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 looks at how words can be made up from smaller parts, e.g. *bright* + *-er* gives *brighter*; *white* + *board* = *whiteboard*; *study* + *-ed* = *studied*.

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.

"I'm going out, Usha, and I won't be long," Mum said.

register

'Register' is a broad description of the type of sociolinguistic context of written and spoken language, similar to genre in meaning.

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

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]

'Register' is frequently used to refer to the degree of formality/informality of a text

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]

prefix

A prefix is added at the beginning of a word in order to turn it into another word.

Contrast suffix.

overtake, disappear

preposition

A preposition links a following noun, pronoun or noun phrase to some other word in the sentence. Prepositions often describe locations or directions, but can describe other things, such as relations of time.

Tom waved goodbye to Christy.

She'll be back from Australia in two weeks.

I haven't seen my dog since this morning.

preposition/ prepositional 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.

pronoun

Pronouns are normally used like nouns

In the examples, each sentence is written twice: once with nouns, and once with pronouns (underlined). Where the same thing is being talked about, the words are shown in bold.

Amanda waved to Michael. She waved to him.

John's mother is over there. His mother is over there.

The visit will be an overnight visit. This will be an overnight visit.

Simon is the person: Simon broke it. He is the one who broke it.

noun

Nouns constitute one of the major word classes, which includes words for people, animals, and things (*teacher, rabbit, desk*) and also many words for abstract concepts (*kindness, mystery, technology*).

The surest way to identify nouns is by the ways they can be used after determiners such as *the*: for example, most nouns will fit into the frame "*The ___ matters/matter.*"

Nouns may be classified as common (e.g. *boy, day*) or proper (e.g. *Ivan, Wednesday*), 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.

Our dog bit the burglar on his behind!

My big brother did an amazing jump on his skateboard.

Actions speak louder than words.

Typical nouns share a number of grammatical properties, such as the ability to form a plural (*teachers, kindnesses*) and to occur after *a/an* or *the* (*a teacher, the kindness of strangers*).

concrete noun

A noun that refers to something that can be directly perceived by the five senses, such as *baby, frog, or skyscraper*.

abstract noun

A noun with an abstract (non-material) meaning, e.g. *imagination, unhappiness, truth*.

common noun

Any noun which does not belong to the special class of proper nouns; examples are *bus, politician, bravery*.

proper noun

A special subclass of noun whose members refer to specific people, places, organisations and so on, e.g.

Sarah, Liverpool, Microsoft. Other, ordinary nouns (like *dog* or *happiness*) are called common nouns. See also proper name.

count noun

A type of noun which can be counted, like *computer* (*one computer, two computers, three computers, etc.*). In contrast, there are non-count nouns like *software* which can't be counted.

mass noun/ non-count noun

A noun which can't be counted, such as *furniture* or *software*. We can't talk about **one furniture* or **two furnitures*, for instance. Because many non-count nouns refer to an undivided mass (e.g. *lemonade, coal*), they are sometimes called mass nouns.

noun phrase

A noun phrase is a phrase with a noun as its Head, e.g. *some foxes, foxes with bushy tails.*

A noun phrase can be replaced in its entirety by a pronoun.

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.

Objects can be turned into the Subject of a passive verb, and cannot be adjectives

Year 2 designed puppets. [noun acting as Object]

I like that. [pronoun acting as object]

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]

parenthesis

Additional information provided in a sentence, which can be taken out without affecting the grammatical sense of the sentence. This information can be marked by brackets, dashes or commas.

If you would like more information please contact us (see above).

Jill, my boss, is 28 years old.

Kent Oliver — the only professional jockey from Jersey — won his first race on Tuesday.

plural

A plural noun normally has a suffix *–s* or *–es* and means 'more than one'.

There are a few nouns with different morphology in the plural (e.g. mice, formulae).

dogs [more than one dog]; *boxes* [more than one box]

mice [more than one mouse]

possessive

A form of noun (with ' or 's added) or pronoun that is often used to show possession.

A possessive can be:

- a noun followed by an apostrophe, with or without s
- a possessive pronoun.

Tariq's book [Tariq has the book]

The boys' arrival [the boys arrive]

His obituary [the obituary is about him]

That essay is mine. [I wrote the essay]

The meaning of a possessive is not always 'possession' in a literal sense, e.g. *John's arrival*.

There is often confusion when using apostrophes to show possession with plurals e.g.

The boys' arrival [the arrival of the boys]

In contrast to

The boy's arrival [the arrival of the boy]

If it is a plural, the full plural needs to be written before the '

If a noun ends in s but is not a plural then either 's or ' can be used e.g.

James' arrival

Or

James's arrival

phoneme

A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound that signals a distinct, contrasting meaning. For example:

/t/ contrasts with /k/ to signal the difference between *tap* and *cap*

/t/ contrasts with /l/ to signal the difference between *bought* and *ball*.

It is this contrast in meaning that tells us there are two distinct phonemes at work.

There are around 44 phonemes in English; the exact number depends on regional accents.

A single phoneme may be represented in writing by one, two, three or four letters constituting a single grapheme.

The word *cat* has three letters and three phonemes

The word *catch* has five letters and three phonemes

The word *caught* has six letters and three phonemes

phrase

A phrase is a group of words that are grammatically connected so that they stay together, and that expand a single word, called the Head. The phrase is a noun phrase if its Head is a noun, a preposition phrase if its Head is a preposition, and so on; but if the Head is a verb, the phrase is called a clause.

She waved to her mother. [a noun phrase, with the noun *mother* as its Head]

She waved to her mother. [a preposition phrase, with the preposition *to* as its Head]

She waved to her mother. [a clause, with the verb *waved* as its Head]

We distinguish noun phrases, verb phrases, adjective phrases, prepositional phrases and adverb phrases. You can think of the Head of a phrase as the most important element that tells you what the phrase is a 'kind of'. For example, *an unbelievably weird story* is a kind of *story*. Phrases may include other elements which function as Modifier of the Head. For example, in the phrase above *unbelievably weird* is a Modifier.

passive

'Passive' is a term applied to a special pattern (or voice) used in a sentence or clause, formed with the auxiliary verb *be* followed by a verb in the *-ed* participle form, as in *The fence was painted by my sister*. Compare this with the more usual active pattern, as in *My sister painted the fence*. In the active example, the agent or 'doer' of the action (*my sister*) is expressed as the Subject; but in the passive example, the patient of the action (*the fence*) becomes the Subject.

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*.

A visit was arranged by the school.

Our cat got run over by a bus.

Active versions (for contrast):

The school arranged a visit.

A bus ran over our cat.

Using the passive voice allows the agent (doer) to be removed from the sentence.

A visit was arranged.

Our cat got run over.

This can be useful when the agent is unknown, where this information is not necessary (for instance in impersonal writing) or where a sense of ambiguity is required.

person

A three-level grammatical system which applies particularly to certain kinds of pronoun. For example, *I* (the speaker/writer) is a first person pronoun, *you* (the addressee) is a second person pronoun, and *he/she/it* are third person pronouns. A noun phrase like *the chair* also belongs to the third person.