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1 An Introduction to Word classes

Words are fundamental units in every sentence, so we will begin by looking at these. Consider the words in the following sentence:

my brother drives a big car

We can tell almost instinctively that *brother* and *car* are the same type of word, and also that *brother* and *drives* are different types of words. By this we mean that *brother* and *car* belong to the same word class. Similarly, when we recognise that *brother* and *drives* are different types, we mean that they belong to different word classes. We recognise seven MAJOR word classes:

Verb	*be, drive, grow, sing, think*
Noun	*brother, car, David, house, London*
Determiner	*a, an, my, some, the*
Adjective	*big, foolish, happy, talented, tidy*
Adverb	*happily, recently, soon, then, there*
Preposition	*at, in, of, over, with*
Conjunction	*and, because, but, if, or*

You may find that other grammars recognise different word classes from the ones listed here. They may also define the boundaries between the classes in different ways. In some grammars, for instance, pronouns are treated as a separate word class, whereas we treat them as a subclass of nouns. A difference like this should not cause confusion. Instead, it highlights an important principle in grammar, known as GRADIENCE. This refers to the fact that the boundaries between the word classes are not absolutely fixed. Many word classes share characteristics with others, and there is considerable overlap between some of the classes. In other words, the boundaries are "fuzzy", so different grammars draw them in different places.

We will discuss each of the major word classes in turn. Then we will look briefly at some MINOR word classes. But first, let us consider how we distinguish between word classes in general.

1.1 Criteria for Word Classes

We began by grouping words more or less on the basis of our instincts about English. We somehow "feel" that *brother* and *car* belong to the same class, and that *brother* and *drives* belong to different classes. However, in order to conduct an informed study of grammar, we need a much more reliable and more systematic method than this for distinguishing between word classes.

We use a combination of three criteria for determining the word class of a word:

1. The meaning of the word
2. The form or `shape' of the word
3. The position or `environment' of the word in a sentence

1.1.1 Meaning

Using this criterion, we generalize about the kind of meanings that words convey. For example, we could group together the words *brother* and *car,* as well as *David*, *house*, and *London*, on the basis that they all refer to people, places, or things. In fact, this has traditionally been a popular approach to determining members of the class of nouns. It has also been applied to verbs, by saying that they denote some kind of "action", like *cook*, *drive*, *eat*, *run*, *shout*, *walk*.

This approach has certain merits, since it allows us to determine word classes by replacing words in a sentence with words of "similar" meaning. For instance, in the sentence *My son cooks dinner every Sunday*, we can replace the verb *cooks* with other "action" words:

My son *cooks* dinner every Sunday
My son *prepares* dinner every Sunday
My son *eats* dinner every Sunday
My son *misses* dinner every Sunday

On the basis of this replacement test, we can conclude that all of these words belong to the same class, that of "action" words, or verbs.

However, this approach also has some serious limitations. The definition of a noun as a word denoting a person, place, or thing, is wholly inadequate, since it excludes abstract nouns such as *time*, *imagination*, *repetition*, *wisdom*, and *chance*. Similarly, to say that verbs are "action" words excludes a verb like *be*, as in *I want to be happy*. What "action" does *be* refer to here? So although this criterion has a certain validity when applied to some words, we need other, more stringent criteria as well.

1.1.2 The form or `shape' of a word

Some words can be assigned to a word class on the basis of their form or `shape'. For example, many nouns have a characteristic *-tion* ending:

action, *condition*, *contemplation*, *demonstration*, *organization*, *repetition*

Similarly, many adjectives end in *-able* or *-ible*:

acceptable, *credible*, *miserable*, *responsible*, *suitable*, *terrible*

Many words also take what are called INFLECTIONS, that is, regular changes in their form under certain conditions. For example, nouns can take a plural inflection, usually by adding an *-s* at the end:

car -- car*s*
dinner -- dinner*s*
book -- book*s*

Verbs also take inflections:

walk -- walk*s* -- walk*ed* -- walk*ing*

1.1.3 The position or `environment' of a word in a sentence

This criterion refers to where words typically occur in a sentence, and the kinds of words which typically occur near to them. We can illustrate the use of this criterion using a simple example. Compare the following:

[1] I *cook* dinner every Sunday
[2] The *cook* is on holiday

In [1], *cook* is a verb, but in [2], it is a noun. We can see that it is a verb in [1] because it takes the inflections which are typical of verbs:

I *cook* dinner every Sunday
I *cooked* dinner last Sunday
I am *cooking* dinner today
My son *cooks* dinner every Sunday

And we can see that *cook* is a noun in [2] because it takes the plural *-s* inflection

The *cooks* are on holiday

If we really need to, we can also apply a replacement test, based on our first criterion, replacing *cook* in each sentence with "similar" words:

Notice that we can replace verbs with verbs, and nouns with nouns, but we cannot replace verbs with nouns or nouns with verbs:

*I *chef* dinner every Sunday
*The *eat* is on holiday

It should be clear from this discussion that there is no one-to-one relation between words and their classes. *Cook* can be a verb or a noun -- it all depends on how the word is used. In fact, many words can belong to more than one word class. Here are some more examples:

She *looks* very pale (verb)
She's very proud of her *looks* (noun)

He drives a *fast* car (adjective)
He drives very *fast* on the motorway (adverb)

Turn on the *light* (noun)
I'm trying to *light* the fire (verb)
I usually have a *light* lunch (adjective)

You will see here that each italicised word can belong to more than one word class. However, they only belong to one word class at a time, depending on how they are used. So it is quite wrong to say, for example, "*cook* is a verb". Instead, we have to say something like "*cook* is a verb in the sentence *I cook dinner every Sunday*, but it is a noun in *The cook is on holiday*".

Of the three criteria for word classes that we have discussed here, the Internet Grammar will emphasise the second and third - the form of words, and how they are positioned or how they function in sentences.

1.2 Open and Closed Word Classes

Some word classes are OPEN, that is, new words can be added to the class as the need arises. The class of nouns, for instance, is potentially infinite, since it is continually being expanded as new scientific discoveries are made, new products are developed, and new ideas are explored. In the late twentieth century, for example, developments in computer technology have given rise to many new nouns:

Internet, *website*, *URL*, *CD-ROM*, *email*, *newsgroup*, *bitmap*, *modem*, *multimedia*

New verbs have also been introduced:

download, *upload*, *reboot*, *right-click*, *double-click*

The adjective and adverb classes can also be expanded by the addition of new words, though less prolifically.

On the other hand, we never invent new prepositions, determiners, or conjunctions. These classes include words like *of*, *the*, and *but*. They are called CLOSED word classes because they are made up of finite sets of words which are never expanded (though their members may change their spelling, for example, over long periods of time). The subclass of pronouns, within the open noun class, is also closed.

Words in an open class are known as *open-class items*. Words in a closed class are known as *closed-class items*.

In the pages which follow, we will look in detail at each of the seven major word classes.

2 Nouns

Nouns are commonly thought of as "naming" words, and specifically as the names of "people, places, or things". Nouns such as *John*, *London*, and *computer* certainly fit this description, but the class of nouns is much broader than this. Nouns also denote abstract and intangible concepts such as *birth*, *happiness*, *evolution*, *technology*, *management*, *imagination*, *revenge, politics*, *hope*, *cookery*, *sport*, *literacy*....

Because of this enormous diversity of reference, it is not very useful to study nouns solely in terms of their meaning. It is much more fruitful to consider them from the point of view of their formal characteristics.

2.1 Characteristics of Nouns

Many nouns can be recognised by their endings. Typical noun endings include:

-er/-or	*actor, painter, plumber, writer*
-ism	*criticism, egotism, magnetism, vandalism*
-ist	*artist, capitalist, journalist, scientist*
-ment	*arrangement, development, establishment, government*
-tion	*foundation, organisation, recognition, supposition*

Most nouns have distinctive SINGULAR and PLURAL forms. The plural of regular nouns is formed by adding *-s* to the singular:

Singular	**Plural**
car	*cars*
dog	*dogs*
house	*houses*

However, there are many irregular nouns which do not form the plural in this way:

Singular	**Plural**
man	*men*
child	*children*
sheep	*sheep*

The distinction between singular and plural is known as NUMBER CONTRAST.

We can recognise many nouns because they often have *the*, *a*, or *an* in front of them:

the *car*
an *artist*
a *surprise*
the *egg*
a *review*

These words are called determiners, which is the next word class we will look at.

Nouns may take an -'*s* ("apostrophe *s*") or GENITIVE MARKER to indicate possession:

the *boy*'*s* pen
a *spider*'*s* web
my *girlfriend*'*s* brother
John'*s* house

If the noun already has an *-s* ending to mark the plural, then the genitive marker appears only as an apostrophe after the plural form:

the *boys*' pens
the *spiders*' webs
the *Browns*' house

The genitive marker should not be confused with the '*s* form of contracted verbs, as in *John*'*s a good boy* (= John *is* a good boy).

Nouns often co-occur without a genitive marker between them:

rally car
table top
cheese grater
University entrance examination

We will look at these in more detail later, when we discuss noun phrases.

2.2 Common and Proper Nouns

Nouns which name specific people or places are known as PROPER NOUNS.

John
Mary
London

France

Many names consist of more than one word:

John Wesley
Queen Mary
South Africa
Atlantic Ocean
Buckingham Palace

Proper nouns may also refer to times or to dates in the calendar:

January, February, Monday, Tuesday, Christmas, Thanksgiving

All other nouns are COMMON NOUNS.

Since proper nouns usually refer to something or someone unique, they do not normally take plurals. However, they may do so, especially when number is being specifically referred to:

there are three *Davids* in my class
we met two *Christmases* ago

For the same reason, names of people and places are not normally preceded by determiners *the* or *a/an*, though they can be in certain circumstances:

it's nothing like the *America* I remember
my brother is an *Einstein* at maths

2.3 Count and Non-count Nouns

Common nouns are either count or non-count. COUNT nouns can be "counted", as follows:

one *pen*, two *pens*, three *pens*, four *pens*...

NON-COUNT nouns, on the other hand, cannot be counted in this way:

one *software*, *two *softwares*, *three *softwares*, *four *softwares*...

From the point of view of grammar, this means that count nouns have singular as well as plural forms, whereas non-count nouns have only a singular form.

It also means that non-count nouns do not take *a/an* before them:

Count	**Non-count**

a pen *a software

In general, non-count nouns are considered to refer to indivisible wholes. For this reason, they are sometimes called MASS nouns.

Some common nouns may be either count or non-count, depending on the kind of reference they have. For example, in *I made a cake*, *cake* is a count noun, and the *a* before it indicates singular number. However, in *I like cake*, the reference is less specific. It refers to "cake in general", and so *cake* is non-count in this sentence.

2.4 Pronouns

Pronouns are a major subclass of nouns. We call them a subclass of nouns because they can sometimes replace a noun in a sentence:

Noun	Pronoun
John got a new job	*~He* got a new job
Children should watch less television	*~They* should watch less television

In these examples the pronouns have the same reference as the nouns which they replace. In each case, they refer to people, and so we call them PERSONAL PRONOUNS. However, we also include in this group the pronoun *it*, although this pronoun does not usually refer to a person. There are three personal pronouns, and each has a singular and a plural form:

Person	Singular	Plural
1st	*I*	*we*
2nd	*you*	*you*
3rd	*he/she/it*	*they*

These pronouns also have another set of forms, which we show here:

Person	Singular	Plural
1st	*me*	*us*
2nd	*you*	*you*
3rd	*him/her/it*	*them*

The first set of forms (*I, you, he*...) exemplifies the SUBJECTIVE CASE, and the second set (*me, you, him*...) exemplifies the OBJECTIVE CASE. The distinction between the two cases relates to how they can be used in sentences. For instance, in our first example above, we say that *he* can replace *John*

John got a new job ~*He* got a new job

But *he* cannot replace *John* in *I gave John a new job*. Here, we have to use the objective form *him*: *I gave him a new job*.

2.5 Other Types of Pronoun

As well as personal pronouns, there are many other types, which we summarise here.

Pronoun Type	Members of the Subclass	Example
Possessive	*mine, yours, his, hers, ours, theirs*	The white car is *mine*
Reflexive	*myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, oneself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves*	He injured *himself* playing football
Reciprocal	*each other, one another*	They really hate *each other*
Relative	*that, which, who, whose, whom, where, when*	The book *that* you gave me was really boring
Demonstrative	*this, that, these, those*	*This* is a new car

Interrogative	*who, what, why, where, when, whatever*	*What* did he say to you?
Indefinite	*anything, anybody, anyone, something, somebody, someone, nothing, nobody, none, no one*	There's *something* in my shoe

Case and number distinctions do not apply to all pronoun types. In fact, they apply only to personal pronouns, possessive pronouns, and reflexive pronouns. It is only in these types, too, that gender differences are shown (personal *he/she*, possessive *his/hers*, reflexive *himself/herself*). All other types are unvarying in their form.

Many of the pronouns listed above also belong to another word class - the class of determiners. They are pronouns when they occur independently, that is, without a noun following them, as in *This is a new car*. But when a noun follows them - *This car is new* - they are determiners. We will look at determiners in the next section.

A major difference between pronouns and nouns generally is that pronouns do not take *the* or *a/an* before them. Further, pronouns do not take adjectives before them, except in very restricted constructions involving some indefinite pronouns (*a little something*, *a certain someone*).

While the class of nouns as a whole is an open class, the subclass of pronouns is closed.

2.6 Numerals

Numerals include all numbers, whether as words or as digits. They may be divided into two major types. CARDINAL numerals include words like:

nought, zero, one, two, 3, fifty-six, 100, a thousand

ORDINAL numerals include

first, 2nd, third, fourth, 500th

We classify numerals as a subclass of nouns because in certain circumstances they can take plurals:

five *twos* are ten
he's in his *eighties*

They may also take *the*:

the *fourth* of July
a product of the *1960s*

And some plural numerals can take an adjective before them, just like other nouns:

the house was built in the *late 1960s*
he's in his *early twenties*
the temperature is in the *high nineties*

In each of our examples, the numerals occur independently, that is, without a noun following them. In these positions, we can classify them as a type of noun because they behave in much the same way as nouns do. Notice, for example, that we can replace the numerals in our examples with common nouns:

he is in his *eighties*	~he is in his *bedroom*
the *fourth* of July	~the *beginning* of July
a product of the *1960s*	~a product of the *revolution*

Numerals do not always occur independently. They often occur before a noun, as in

one day
three pages
the *fourth* day of July

In this position, we classify them as determiners, which we will examine in the next section.

Finally, see if you can answer this question:

Is the subclass of numerals open or closed?

2.7 The Gender of Nouns

The gender of nouns plays an important role in the grammar of some languages. In French, for instance, a masculine noun can only take the masculine form of an adjective. If the noun is feminine, then it will take a different form of the same adjective - its feminine form.

In English, however, nouns are not in themselves masculine or feminine. They do not have grammatical gender, though they may refer to male or female people or animals:

the *waiter* is very prompt	~the *waitress* is very prompt

the *lion* roars at night	~the *lioness* roars at night

These distinctions in spelling reflect differences in sex, but they have no grammatical implications. For instance, we use the same form of an adjective whether we are referring to a waiter or to a waitress:

an efficient *waiter*	~an efficient *waitress*

Similarly, the natural distinctions reflected in such pairs as *brother/sister*, *nephew/niece*, and *king/queen* have no consequence for grammar. While they refer to specific sexes, these words are not masculine or feminine in themselves.

However, gender is significant in the choice of a personal pronoun to replace a noun:

John is late	~*He* is late
Mary is late	~*She* is late

Here the choice of pronoun is determined by the sex of the person being referred to. However, this distinction is lost in the plural:

John and *Mary* are late	~*They* are late
John and *David* are late	~*They* are late
Mary and *Jane* are late	~*They* are late

Gender differences are also manifested in possessive pronouns (*his/hers*) and in reflexive pronouns (*himself/herself*).

When the notion of sex does not apply -- when we refer to inanimate objects, for instance -- we use the pronoun *it*:

the letter arrived late	*~it* arrived late

3 Determiners

Nouns are often preceded by the words *the*, *a*, or *an*. These words are called DETERMINERS. They indicate the kind of reference which the noun has. The determiner *the* is known as the DEFINITE ARTICLE. It is used before both singular and plural nouns:

Singular	Plural
the *taxi*	the *taxis*
the *paper*	the *papers*
the *apple*	the *apples*

The determiner *a* (or *an*, when the following noun begins with a vowel) is the INDEFINITE ARTICLE. It is used when the noun is singular:

a taxi
a paper
an apple

The articles *the* and *a/an* are the most common determiners, but there are many others:

any taxi
that question
those apples
this paper
some apple
whatever taxi
whichever taxi

Many determiners express quantity:

all examples
both parents
many people

each person
every night
several computers
few excuses
enough water
no escape

Perhaps the most common way to express quantity is to use a numeral. We look at numerals as determiners in the next section.

3.1 Numerals and Determiners

Numerals are determiners when they appear before a noun. In this position, cardinal numerals express quantity:

one book
two books
twenty books

In the same position, ordinal numerals express sequence:

first impressions
second chance
third prize

The subclass of ordinals includes a set of words which are not directly related to numbers (as *first* is related to *one*, *second* is related to *two*, etc). These are called general ordinals, and they include *last*, *latter*, *next*, *previous*, and *subsequent*. These words also function as determiners:

next week
last orders
previous engagement
subsequent developments

When they do not come before a noun, as we've already seen, numerals are a subclass of nouns. And like nouns, they can take determiners:

the two of us
the first of many

They can even have numerals as determiners before them:

five twos are ten

In this example, *twos* is a plural noun and it has the determiner *five* before it.

3.2 Pronouns and Determiners

There is considerable overlap between the determiner class and the subclass of pronouns. Many words can be both:

Pronoun	Determiner
This is a very boring book	*This* book is very boring
That's an excellent film	*That* film is excellent

As this table shows, determiners always come before a noun, but pronouns are more independent than this. They function in much the same way as nouns, and they can be replaced by nouns in the sentences above:

This is a very boring book ~*Ivanhoe* is a very boring book

That's an excellent film ~*Witness* is an excellent film

On the other hand, when these words are determiners, they cannot be replaced by nouns:

This book is very boring ~**Ivanhoe* book is very boring

That film is excellent ~**Witness* film is excellent

The personal pronouns (*I*, *you*, *he*, etc) cannot be determiners. This is also true of the possessive pronouns (*mine*, *yours*, *his/hers*, *ours*, and *theirs*). However, these pronouns do have corresponding forms which are determiners:

Possessive Pronoun	Determiner

The white car is *mine*	*My* car is white
Yours is the blue coat	*Your* coat is blue
The car in the garage is *his/hers*	*His/her* car is in the garage
David's house is big, but *ours* is bigger	*Our* house is bigger than David's
Theirs is the house on the left	*Their* house is on the left

The definite and the indefinite articles can never be pronouns. They are always determiners.

3.3 The Ordering of Determiners

Determiners occur before nouns, and they indicate the kind of reference which the nouns have. Depending on their relative position before a noun, we distinguish three classes of determiners.

	Predeterminer	**Central Determiner**	**Postdeterminer**	**Noun**
I met	*all*	*my*	*many*	friends

A sentence like this is somewhat unusual, because it is rare for all three determiner slots to be filled in the same sentence. Generally, only one or two slots are filled.

3.4 Predeterminers

Predeterminers specify quantity in the noun which follows them, and they are of three major types:

1. "Multiplying" expressions, including expressions ending in *times*:

    twice my salary
    double my salary
    ten times my salary

2. Fractions

    half my salary
    one-third my salary

3. The words *all* and *both*:

all my salary
both my salaries

Predeterminers do not normally co-occur:

**all half* my salary

3.5 Central Determiners

The definite article *the* and the indefinite article *a/an* are the most common central determiners:

all *the* book
half *a* chapter

As many of our previous examples show, the word *my* can also occupy the central determiner slot. This is equally true of the other possessives:

all *your* money
all *his/her* money
all *our* money
all *their* money

The demonstratives, too, are central determiners:

all *these* problems
twice *that* size
four times *this* amount

3.6 Postdeterminers

Cardinal and ordinal numerals occupy the postdeterminer slot:

the *two* children
his *fourth* birthday

This applies also to general ordinals:

my *next* project
our *last* meeting
your *previous* remark

her *subsequent* letter

Other quantifying expressions are also postdeterminers:

my *many* friends
our *several* achievements
the *few* friends that I have

Unlike predeterminers, postdeterminers can co-occur:

my *next two* projects
several other people

4 Verbs

Verbs have traditionally been defined as "action" words or "doing" words. The verb in the following sentence is *rides*:

Paul *rides* a bicycle

Here, the verb *rides* certainly denotes an action which Paul performs - the action of riding a bicycle. However, there are many verbs which do not denote an action at all. For example, in *Paul seems unhappy*, we cannot say that the verb *seems* denotes an action. We would hardly say that Paul is performing any action when he seems unhappy. So the notion of verbs as "action" words is somewhat limited.

We can achieve a more robust definition of verbs by looking first at their formal features.

4.1 The Base Form

Here are some examples of verbs in sentences:

[1] She *travels* to work by train
[2] David *sings* in the choir
[3] We *walked* five miles to a garage
[4] I *cooked* a meal for the family

Notice that in [1] and [2], the verbs have an *-s* ending, while in [3] and [4], they have an *-ed* ending. These endings are known as INFLECTIONS, and they are added to the BASE FORM of the verb. In [1], for instance, the *-s* inflection is added to the base form *travel*.

Certain endings are characteristic of the base forms of verbs:

Ending	Base Form
-ate	concentr*ate*, demonstr*ate*, illustr*ate*
-ify	clar*ify*, dign*ify*, magn*ify*
-ise/-ize	bapt*ize*, conceptual*ize*, real*ise*

4.2 Past and Present Forms

When we refer to a verb in general terms, we usually cite its base form, as in "the verb *travel*", "the verb *sing*". We then add inflections to the base form as required.

	Base Form	+	Inflection	
[1] She	***travel***	**+**	***s***	to work by train
[2] David	***sing***	**+**	***s***	in the choir
[3] We	***walk***	**+**	***ed***	five miles to a garage
[4] I	***cook***	**+**	***ed***	a meal for the whole family

These inflections indicate TENSE. The *-s* inflection indicates the PRESENT TENSE, and the *-ed* inflection indicates the PAST TENSE.

Verb endings also indicate PERSON. Recall that when we looked at nouns and pronouns, we saw that there are three persons, each with a singular and a plural form. These are shown in the table below.

Person	Singular	Plural
1st Person	*I*	*we*
2nd person	*you*	*you*

3rd Person	*he/she/John/the dog*	*they/the dogs*

In sentence [1], *She travels to work by train*, we have a third person singular pronoun *she*, and the present tense ending *-s*. However, if we replace *she* with a plural pronoun, then the verb will change:

[1] She *travels* to work by train
[1a] They *travel* to work by train

The verb *travel* in [1a] is still in the present tense, but it has changed because the pronoun in front of it has changed. This correspondence between the pronoun (or noun) and the verb is called AGREEMENT or CONCORD. Agreement applies only to verbs in the present tense. In the past tense, there is no distinction between verb forms: *she travelled/they travelled.*

4.3 The Infinitive Form

The INFINITIVE form of a verb is the form which follows *to*:

to *ask*	to *protect*
to *believe*	to *sing*
to *cry*	to *talk*
to *go*	to *wish*

This form is indistinguishable from the base form. Indeed, many people cite this form when they identify a verb, as in "This is the verb *to be*", although *to* is not part of the verb.

Infinitives with *to* are referred to specifically as TO-INFINITIVES, in order to distinguish them from BARE INFINITIVES, in which *to* is absent:

To-infinitive	**Bare infinitive**
Help me to *open* the gate	Help me *open* the gate

4.4 More Verb Forms: *-ing* and *-ed*

So far we have looked at three verb forms: the present form, the past form, and the infinitive/base form. Verbs have two further forms which we will look at now.

[1] The old lady is *writing* a play
[2] The film was *produced* in Hollywood

The verb form *writing* in [1] is known as the *-ing* form, or the *-ING* PARTICIPLE form. In [2], the verb form *produced* is called the *-ed* form, or *-ED* PARTICIPLE form.

Many so-called *-ed* participle forms do not end in *-ed* at all:

The film was *written* by John Brown
The film was *bought* by a British company
The film was *made* in Hollywood

All of these forms are called *-ed* participle forms, despite their various endings. The term "*-ed* participle form" is simply a cover term for all of these forms.

The *-ed* participle form should not be confused with the *-ed* inflection which is used to indicate the past tense of many verbs.

We have now looked at all five verb forms. By way of summary, let us bring them together and see how they look for different verbs. For convenience, we will illustrate only the third person singular forms (the forms which agree with *he/she/it*) of each verb. Notice that some verbs have irregular past forms and *-ed* forms.

Base/Infinitive Form	**Present Tense Form**	**Past Tense Form**	***-ing* Form**	***-ed* Form**
cook	he *cooks*	he *cooked*	he is *cooking*	he has *cooked*
walk	he *walks*	he *walked*	he is *walking*	he has *walked*
take	he *takes*	he *took*	he is *taking*	he has *taken*
bring	he *brings*	he *brought*	he is *bringing*	he has *brought*

be	he *is*	he *was*	he is *being*	he has *been*

4.5 Finite and Nonfinite Verbs

Verbs which have the past or the present form are called FINITE verbs. Verbs in any other form (infinitive, *-ing*, or *-ed*) are called NONFINITE verbs. This means that verbs with tense are finite, and verbs without tense are nonfinite. The distinction between finite and nonfinite verbs is a very important one in grammar, since it affects how verbs behave in sentences. Here are some examples of each type:

	Tense	**Finite *or* Nonfinite?**
David *plays* the piano	Present	Finite
My sister *spoke* French on holiday	Past	Finite
It took courage to *continue* after the accident	NONE -- the verb has the infinitive form	Nonfinite
Leaving home can be very traumatic	NONE -- the verb has the *-ing* form	Nonfinite
Leave immediately when you are *asked* to do so	NONE -- the verb has the *-ed* form	Nonfinite

4.6 Auxiliary Verbs

In the examples of *-ing* and *-ed* forms which we looked at, you may have noticed that in each case two verbs appeared:

[1] The old lady *is writing* a play
[2] The film *was produced* in Hollywood

Writing and *produced* each has another verb before it. These other verbs (*is* and *was*) are known as AUXILIARY VERBS, while *writing* and *produced* are known as MAIN VERBS or LEXICAL VERBS. In fact, all the verbs we have looked at on the previous pages have been main verbs.

Auxiliary verbs are sometimes called HELPING VERBS. This is because they may be said to "help" the main verb which comes after them. For example, in *The old lady is writing a play*, the auxiliary *is* helps the main verb *writing* by specifying that the action it denotes is still in progress.

4.7 Auxiliary Verb Types

In this section we will give a brief account of of each type of auxiliary verb in English. There are five types in total:

Passive *be*	This is used to form passive constructions, eg. *The film was produced in Hollywood* It has a corresponding present form: *The film is produced in Hollywood* We will return to passives later, when we look at *voice*.
Progressive *be*	As the name suggests, the progressive expresses action in progress: The old lady *is* writing a play It also has a past form: The old lady *was* writing a play
Perfective *have*	The perfective auxiliary expresses an action accomplished in the past but retaining current relevance: She *has* broken her leg (Compare: *She broke her leg*) Together with the progressive auxiliary, the perfective auxiliary encodes *aspect*, which we will look at later.
Modal	Modals express permission, ability, obligation, or

can/could ***may/might*** ***shall/should*** ***will/would*** ***must***	prediction: You *can* have a sweet if you like He *may* arrive early Paul *will* be a footballer some day I really *should* leave now
Dummy *Do*	This subclass contains only the verb *do*. It is used to form questions: *Do you like cheese?* to form negative statements: *I do not like cheese* and in giving orders: *Do not eat the cheese* Finally, dummy *do* can be used for emphasis: *I do like cheese*

An important difference between auxiliary verbs and main verbs is that auxiliaries never occur alone in a sentence. For instance, we cannot remove the main verb from a sentence, leaving only the auxiliary:

I *would like* a new job	~*I *would* a new job
You *should buy* a new car	~*You *should* a new car
She *must be* crazy	~*She *must* crazy

Auxiliaries always occur with a main verb. On the other hand, main verbs can occur without an auxiliary.

I *like* my new job

I *bought* a new car
She *sings* like a bird

In some sentences, it may appear that an auxiliary does occur alone. This is especially true in responses to questions:

Q. Can you sing?
A. Yes, I *can*

Here the auxiliary *can* does not really occur without a main verb, since the main verb -- *sing* -- is in the question. The response is understood to mean:

Yes, I *can sing*

This is known as *ellipsis* -- the main verb has been *ellipted* from the response.

Auxiliaries often appear in a shortened or contracted form, especially in informal contexts. For instance, auxiliary *have* is often shortened to '*ve*:

I *have* won the lottery ~I'*ve* won the lottery

These shortened forms are called *enclitic* forms. Sometimes different auxiliaries have the same enclitic forms, so you should distinguish carefully between them:

I'*d* like a new job (= modal auxiliary *would*)
We'*d* already spent the money by then (= perfective auxiliary *had*)

He'*s* been in there for ages (= perfective auxiliary *has*)
She'*s* eating her lunch (= progressive auxiliary *is*)

The following exercise concentrates on three of the most important auxiliaries -- *be*, *have*, and *do*.

4.8 The NICE Properties of Auxiliaries

The so-called NICE properties of auxiliaries serve to distinguish them from main verbs. NICE is an acronym for:

Negation	Auxiliaries take *not* or *n't* to form the negative, eg. *cannot, don't, wouldn't*
Inversion	Auxiliaries invert with what precedes them when we form questions: [I *will*] see you soon ~[*Will* I] see you soon?

Code	Auxiliaries may occur "stranded" where a main verb has been omitted: John never sings, but Mary *does*
Emphasis	Auxiliaries can be used for emphasis: I *do* like cheese

Main verbs do not exhibit these properties. For instance, when we form a question using a main verb, we cannot invert:

[John *sings*] in the choir ~*[*Sings* John] in the choir?

Instead, we have to use the auxiliary verb *do*:

[John *sings*] in the choir ~[*Does* John *sing*] in the choir?

4.9 Semi-auxiliaries

Among the auxiliary verbs, we distinguish a large number of multi-word verbs, which are called SEMI-AUXILIARIES. These are two-or three-word combinations, and they include the following:

get to	*seem to*	*be about to*
happen to	*tend to*	*be going to*
	turn out to	*be likely to*
have to		*be supposed to*
mean to	*used to*	

Like other auxiliaries, the semi-auxiliaries occur before main verbs:

The film *is about to* start

I'*m going to* interview the Lord Mayor

I *have to* leave early today

You *are supposed to* sign both forms

I *used to* live in that house

Some of these combinations may, of course, occur in other contexts in which they are not semi-auxiliaries. For example:

I'm going to London

Here, the combination is not a semi-auxiliary, since it does not occur with a main verb. In this sentence, *going* is a main verb. Notice that it could be replaced by another main verb such as *travel* (*I'm travelling to London*). The word '*m* is the contracted form of *am*, the progressive auxiliary, and *to*, as we'll see later, is a preposition.

4.10 Tense and Aspect

TENSE refers to the absolute location of an event or action in time, either the present or the past. It is marked by an inflection of the verb:

David *walks* to school (present tense)
David *walked* to school (past tense)

Reference to other times -- the future, for instance -- can be made in a number of ways, by using the modal auxiliary *will*, or the semi-auxiliary *be going to*:

David *will walk* to school tomorrow
David *is going to walk* to school tomorrow.

Since the expression of future time does not involve any inflecton of the verb, we do not refer to a "future tense". Strictly speaking, there are only two tenses in English: present and past.

ASPECT refers to how an event or action is to be viewed with respect to time, rather than to its actual location in time. We can illustrate this using the following examples:

[1] David *fell* in love on his eighteenth birthday
[2] David *has fallen* in love
[3] David *is falling* in love

In [1], the verb *fell* tells us that David fell in love in the past, and specifically on his eighteenth birthday. This is a simple past tense verb.

In [2] also, the action took place in the past, but it is implied that it took place quite recently. Furthermore, it is implied that is still relevant at the time of speaking -- David has fallen in love, and that's why he's behaving strangely. It is worth noting that we cannot say **David has fallen in love*

on his eighteenth birthday. The auxiliary *has* here encodes what is known as PERFECTIVE ASPECT, and the auxiliary itself is known as the PERFECTIVE AUXILIARY.

In [3], the action of falling in love is still in progress -- David is falling in love at the time of speaking. For this reason, we call it PROGRESSIVE ASPECT, and the auxiliary is called the PROGRESSIVE AUXILIARY.

Aspect always includes tense. In [2] and [3] above, the aspectual auxiliaries are in the present tense, but they could also be in the past tense:

David *had fallen* in love -- Perfective Aspect, Past Tense
David *was falling* in love -- Progressive Aspect, Past Tense

The perfective auxiliary is always followed by a main verb in the *-ed* form, while the progressive auxiliary is followed by a main verb in the *-ing* form. We exemplify these points in the table below:

	Perfective Aspect	**Progressive Aspect**
Present Tense	*has fallen*	*is falling*
Past Tense	*had fallen*	*was falling*

While aspect always includes tense, tense can occur without aspect (David *falls* in love, David *fell* in love).

4.11 Voice

There are two voices in English, the active voice and the passive voice:

Active Voice	**Passive Voice**
[1] Paul congratulated David	[2] David was congratulated by Paul

Passive constructions are formed using the PASSIVE AUXILIARY *be*, and the main verb has an *-ed* inflection. In active constructions, there is no passive auxiliary, though other auxiliaries may occur:

Paul *is* congratulating David
Paul *will* congratulate David
Paul *has* congratulated David

All of these examples are active constructions, since they contain no passive auxiliary. Notice that in the first example (*Paul is congratulating David*), the auxiliary is the progressive auxiliary, not the passive auxiliary. We know this because the main verb *congratulate* has an *-ing* inflection, not an *-ed* inflection.

In the passive construction in [2], we refer to *Paul* as the AGENT. This is the one who performs the action of congratulating David. Sometimes no agent is specified:

David was congratulated

We refer to this as an AGENTLESS PASSIVE

5 Adjectives

Adjectives can be identified using a number of formal criteria. However, we may begin by saying that they typically describe an attribute of a noun:

cold weather
large windows
violent storms

Some adjectives can be identified by their endings. Typical adjective endings include:

-able/-ible	*achievable, capable, illegible, remarkable*
-al	*biographical, functional, internal, logical*
-ful	*beautiful, careful, grateful, harmful*
-ic	*cubic, manic, rustic, terrific*
-ive	*attractive, dismissive, inventive, persuasive*
-less	*breathless, careless, groundless, restless*
-ous	*courageous, dangerous, disastrous, fabulous*

However, a large number of very common adjectives cannot be identified in this way. They do not have typical adjectival form:

bad	*distant*	*quiet*
bright	*elementary*	*real*
clever		*red*
cold	*good*	*silent*
common	*great*	*simple*
complete	*honest*	*strange*
	hot	
dark	*main*	*wicked*
deep	*morose*	*wide*
difficult	*old*	*young*

As this list shows, adjectives are formally very diverse. However, they have a number of characteristics which we can use to identify them.

5.1 Characteristics of Adjectives

Adjectives can take a modifying word, such as *very*, *extremely*, or *less*, before them:

very cold weather
extremely large windows
less violent storms

Here, the modifying word locates the adjective on a scale of comparison, at a position higher or lower than the one indicated by the adjective alone.

This characteristic is known as GRADABILITY. Most adjectives are gradable, though if the adjective already denotes the highest position on a scale, then it is non-gradable:

my *main* reason for coming	~*my very *main* reason for coming
the *principal* role in the play	~*the very *principal* role in the play

As well as taking modifying words like *very* and *extremely*,adjectives also take different forms to indicate their position on a scale of comparison:

big *bigger* *biggest*

The lowest point on the scale is known as the ABSOLUTE form, the middle point is known as the COMPARATIVE form, and the highest point is known as the SUPERLATIVE form. Here are some more examples:

Absolute	**Comparative**	**Superlative**
dark	*darker*	*darkest*
new	*newer*	*newest*
old	*older*	*oldest*
young	*younger*	*youngest*

In most cases, the comparative is formed by adding ***-er*** , and the superlative is formed by adding ***-est***, to the absolute form. However, a number of very common adjectives are irregular in this respect:

Absolute	**Comparative**	**Superlative**
good	*better*	*best*
bad	*worse*	*worst*
far	*farther*	*farthest*

Some adjectives form the comparative and superlative using *more* and *most* respectively:

Absolute	Comparative	Superlative
important	*more important*	*most important*
miserable	*more miserable*	*most miserable*
recent	*more recent*	*most recent*

5.2 Attributive and Predicative Adjectives

Most adjectives can occur both before and after a noun:

the *blue* sea	~ the sea is *blue*
the *old* man	~ the man is *old*
happy children	~ the children are *happy*

Adjectives in the first position - before the noun - are called ATTRIBUTIVE adjectives. Those in the second position - after the noun - are called PREDICATIVE adjectives. Notice that predicative adjectives do not occur *immediately* after the noun. Instead, they follow a verb.

Sometimes an adjective *does* occur immediately after a noun, especially in certain institutionalised expressions:

the Governor *General*
the Princess *Royal*
times *past*

We refer to these as POSTPOSITIVE adjectives. Postposition is obligatory when the adjective modifies a pronoun:

something *useful*
everyone *present*
those *responsible*

Postpositive adjectives are commonly found together with superlative, attributive adjectives:

the *shortest* route *possible*
the *worst* conditions *imaginable*
the *best* hotel *available*

Most adjectives can freely occur in both the attributive and the predicative positions. However, a small number of adjectives are restricted to one position only. For example, the adjective *main* (the

main reason) can only occur in the attributive position (predicative: *the reason is *main*). Conversely, the adjective *afraid* (the child was *afraid*) can only occur predicatively (attributive: *an *afraid* child).

We have now looked at the main criteria for the adjective class - gradability, comparative and superlative forms, and the ability to occur attributively and predicatively. Most adjectives fulfil all these criteria, and are known as CENTRAL adjectives. Those which do not fulfil all the criteria are known as PERIPHERAL adjectives.

We will now examine the adjective class in more detail.

5.3 Inherent and Non-inherent Adjectives

Most attributive adjectives denote some attribute of the noun which they modify. For instance, the phrase *a red car* may be said to denote *a car which is red*. In fact most adjective-noun sequences such as this can be loosely reformulated in a similar way:

an *old* man	~a man who is *old*
difficult questions	~questions which are *difficult*
round glasses	~glasses which are *round*

This applies equally to postpositive adjectives:

something *understood*	~something which is *understood*
the people *responsible*	~the people who are *responsible*

In each case the adjective denotes an attribute or quality of the noun, as the reformulations show. Adjectives of this type are known as INHERENT adjectives. The attribute they denote is, as it were, inherent in the noun which they modify.

However, not all adjectives are related to the noun in the same way. For example, the adjective *small* in *a small businessman* does not describe an attribute of the businessman. It cannot be reformulated as *a businessman who is small*. Instead, it refers to *a businessman whose business is small*. We refer to adjectives of this type as NON-INHERENT adjectives. They refer less directly to an attribute of the noun than inherent adjectives do. Here are some more examples, showing the contrast betwen inherent and non-inherent:

Inherent	Non-inherent
distant hills	*distant* relatives
a *complete* chapter	a *complete* idiot
a *heavy* burden	a *heavy* smoker
a *social* survey	a *social* animal
an *old* man	an *old* friend

5.4 Stative and Dynamic Adjectives

As their name suggests, STATIVE adjectives denote a state or condition, which may generally be considered permanent, such as *big*, *red*, *small*. Stative adjectives cannot normally be used in imperative constructions:

*Be *big/red/small*

Further, they cannot normally be used in progressive constructions:

*He is being *big/red/small*

In contrast, DYNAMIC adjectives denote attributes which are, to some extent at least, under the control of the one who possesses them. For instance, *brave* denotes an attribute which may not always be in evidence (unlike *red*, for example), but which may be called upon as it is required. For this reason, it is appropriate to use it in an imperative:

Be *brave*!

Dynamic adjectives include:

calm
careful
cruel
disruptive
foolish
friendly
good
impatient
mannerly
patient
rude
shy
suspicious
tidy
vacuous
vain

All dynamic adjectives can be used in imperatives (*Be careful!*, *Don't be cruel!*), and they can also be used predicatively in progressive constructions:

Your son is being *disruptive* in class
My parents are being *foolish* again
We're being very *patient* with you

The majority of adjectives are stative. The stative/dynamic contrast, as it relates to adjectives, is largely a semantic one, though as we have seen it also has syntactic implications.

5.5 Nominal Adjectives

Certain adjectives are used to denote a class by describing one of the attributes of the class. For example, *the poor* denotes a class of people who share a similar financial status. Other nominal adjectives are:

the *old*
the *sick*
the *wealthy*
the *blind*
the *innocent*

A major subclass of nominal adjectives refers to nationalities:

the *French*
the *British*
the *Japanese*

However, not all nationalities have corresponding nominal adjectives. Many of them are denoted by plural, proper nouns:

the *Germans*
the *Russians*
the *Americans*
the *Poles*

Nominal adjectives do not refer exclusively to classes of people. Indeed some of them do not denote classes at all:

the *opposite*
the *contrary*
the *good*

Comparative and superlative forms can also be nominal adjectives:

the *best* is yet to come
the *elder* of the two
the *greatest* of these
the most *important* among them

We refer to all of these types as nominal adjectives because they share some of the characteristics of nouns (hence `*nominal*') and some of the characteristics of adjectives. They have the following nominal characteristics:

- they are preceded by a determiner (usually the definite article *the*)
- they can be modified by adjectives (the gallant *French*, the unfortunate *poor*)

They have the following adjectival features:

- they are gradable (the very *old*, the extremely *wealthy*)
- many can take comparative and superlative forms (the *poorer*, the *poorest*)

5.6 Adjectives and Nouns

We have seen that attributive adjectives occur before a noun which they modify, for example, *red* in *red car*. We need to distinguish these clearly from nouns which occur in the same position, and fulfil the same syntactic function. Consider the following:

rally car
saloon car
family car

Here, the first word modifies the second, that is, it tells us something further about the car. For example, a rally car is a car which is driven in rallies. These modifiers occur in the same position as *red* in the example above, but they are not adjectives. We can show this by applying our criteria for the adjective class.

Firstly, they do not take *very*:

*a very *rally* car
*a very *saloon* car
*a very *family* car

Secondly, they do not have comparative or superlative forms:

*rallier *ralliest / *more rally / *most rally
*salooner *saloonest / *more saloon / *most saloon
*familier *familiest / *more family / *most family

And finally, they cannot occur in predicative position:

*the car is *rally*
*the car is *saloon*
*the car is *family*

So although these words occupy the typical adjective position, they are not adjectives. They are nouns.

However, certain adjectives are derived from nouns, and are known as DENOMINAL adjectives. Examples include:

a *mathematical* puzzle [`a puzzle based on mathematics']
a *biological* experiment [`an experiment in biology']
a *wooden* boat [`a boat made of wood']

Denominals include adjectives which refer to nationality:

a *Russian* lady [`a lady who comes from Russia']
German goods [`goods produced in Germany']

Denominal adjectives of this type should be carefully distinguished from nominal adjectives denoting nationalities. Compare:

Nominal Adjective: The *French* are noted for their wines
Denominal Adjective: The *French* people are noted for their wines

5.7 Participial Adjectives

We saw in an earlier section that many adjectives can be identified by their endings. Another major subclass of adjectives can also be formally distinguished by endings, this time by *-ed* or *-ing* endings:

***-ed* form**	*computerized, determined, excited, misunderstood, renowned, self-centred, talented, unknown*
***-ing* form**	*annoying, exasperating, frightening, gratifying, misleading, thrilling, time-consuming, worrying*

Remember that some *-ed* forms, such as misunderstood and unknown, do not end in *-ed* at all. This is simply a cover term for this form. Adjectives with *-ed* or *-ing* endings are known as PARTICIPIAL ADJECTIVES, because they have the same endings as verb participles (he was train*ing* for the Olympics, he had train*ed* for the Olympics). In some cases there is a verb which corresponds to these adjectives (*to annoy, to computerize, to excite*, etc), while in others there is no corresponding verb (**to renown*, **to self-centre*, **to talent*). Like other adjectives, participial adjectives can usually be modified by *very*, *extremely*, or *less* (*very determined*, *extremely self-centred*, *less frightening*, etc). They can also take *more* and *most* to form comparatives and superlatives (*annoying, more annoying, most annoying*). Finally, most participial adjectives can be used both attributively and predicatively:

Attributive	Predicative
That's an *irritating* noise	That noise is *irritating*
This is an *exciting* film	This film is *exciting*
He's a *talented* footballer	That footballer is *talented*

Many participial adjectives, which have no corresponding verb, are formed by combining a noun with a participle:

alcohol-based chemicals
battle-hardened soldiers
drug-induced coma
energy-saving devices
fact-finding mission
purpose-built accommodation

These, too, can be used predicatively (*the chemicals are alcohol-based*, *the soldiers were battle-hardened*, etc).

When participial adjectives are used predicatively, it may sometimes be difficult to distinguish between adjectival and verbal uses:

[1] the workers are *striking*

In the absence of any further context, the grammatical status of *striking* is indeterminate here. The following expansions illustrate possible adjectival [1a] and verbal [1b] readings of [1]:

[1a] the workers are very *striking* in their new uniforms (=`impressive', `conspicuous')

[1b] the workers are *striking* outside the factory gates (=`on strike')

Consider the following pair:

[2] the noise is *annoying*
[3] the noise is *annoying* the neighbours

In [2], we can modify *annoying* using *very*:

[2a] the noise is (very) *annoying*

But we cannot modify it in the same way in [3]:

[3a] *the noise is (very) *annoying* the neighbours

The acceptability of [2a] indicates that *annoying* is an adjective in this construction. In [3], the verbal nature of *annoying* is indicated by the fact that we cannot add *very* , as in [3a]. It is further indicated by the presence of *the neighbours* (the direct object) after *annoying*. Notice also that we can turn [3] into a passive sentence (*the neighbours were annoyed by the noise*). In this case, *annoying* is the main verb of the sentence, and it is preceded by the progressive auxiliary verb *is*. In [2], there is only one verb, the main verb *is*.

We can distinguish between the following pairs using the same criteria:

Adjectival	**Verbal**
This film is *terrifying*	This film is *terrifying* the children
Your comments are *alarming*	Your comments are *alarming* the people
The defendant's answers were *misleading*	The defendant's answers were *misleading* the jury

We can also identify *-ing* forms as verbal if it is possible to change the *-ing* form into a non-progressive verb:

Progressive	Non-progressive
The children are *dancing*	The children *dance*
My eyes are *stinging*	My eyes *sting*
The wood is *drying*	The wood *dries*

Compare these changes from progressive to non-progressive with the following:

the work is *rewarding*	~*the work *rewards*
the job was *exacting*	~*the job *exacted*
your paper was *interesting*	~*your paper *interested*

In these instances, the inability to produce fully acceptable non-progressive sentences indicates adjectival use.

Similar indeterminacy occurs with *-ed* forms. Again, we can generally use *very* to determine whether the *-ed* word is adjectival or verbal:

The bomb was *detonated*	~*The bomb was very *detonated*
This document is *hand-written*	~*This document is very *hand-written*
My house was *built* in only twelve weeks	~*My house was very *built* in only twelve weeks
Ten people were *killed*	~*Ten people were very *killed*

The inability to supply *very* in these cases indicates a verbal rather than an adjectival construction. However, this test is less reliable with *-ed* forms than it is with *-ing* forms, since *very* can sometimes be supplied in both the adjectival and the verbal constructions:

Adjectival	Verbal
I was *embarrassed* I was very *embarrassed*	I was *embarrassed* by your behaviour I was very *embarrassed* by your behaviour
She was *surprised* She was very *surprised*	She was *surprised* by my reaction She was very *surprised* by my reaction

The presence of a *by*-agent phrase (*by your behaviour*, *by my reaction*) indicates that the *-ed* form is verbal. Conversely, the presence of a complement, such as a *that*-clause, indicates that it is adjectival. Compare the following two constructions:

Adjectival: The jury was *convinced* that the defendant was innocent

Verbal: The jury was *convinced* by the lawyer's argument

Here are some further examples of adjectival constructions (with complements) and verbal constructions (with *by*-agent phrases):

Adjectival	Verbal
I was *delighted* to meet you again	I was *delighted* by his compliments
John is *terrified* of losing his job	John is *terrified* by his boss
I was *frightened* that I'd be late	I was *frightened* by your expression
I was *disappointed* to hear your decision	I was *disappointed* by your decision

If the *-ed* form is verbal, we can change the passive construction in which it occurs into an active one:

Passive:	I was *delighted* by his compliments
Active:	His compliments *delighted* me

For more on active and passive constructions, see...

As we have seen, discriminating between adjectival and verbal constructions is sometimes facilitated by the presence of additional context, such as *by*-agent phrases or adjective complements. However, when none of these indicators is present, grammatical indeterminacy remains. Consider the following examples from conversational English:

> And you know if you don't know the simple command how to get out of something you're *sunk* [S1A-005-172]
>
> But that's convenient because it's *edged* with wood isn't it [S1A-007-97]

With *-ed* and *-ing* participial forms, there is no grammatical indeterminacy if there is no corresponding verb. For example, in *the job was time-consuming*, and *the allegations were unfounded*, the participial forms are adjectives.

Similarly, the problem does not arise if the main verb is not *be*. For example, the participial forms in *this book seems boring*, and *he remained offended* are all adjectives. Compare the following:

> John was *depressed*
> John felt *depressed*

5.8 The Ordering of Adjectives

When two or more adjectives come before a noun, their relative order is fixed to a certain degree. This means, for instance, that while *complex mathematical studies* is grammatically acceptable, *mathematical complex studies* is less so. Similarly:

a *huge red* bomber	~*a *red huge* bomber
a *long narrow* road	~*a *narrow long* road
the *lovely little black Japanese* box	~*the *Japanese black little lovely* box

Here we will discuss some of the most common sequences which occur, though these should not be seen as ordering rules. Counter examples can often be found quite easily.

Central adjectives, as we saw earlier, are adjectives which fulfil all the criteria for the adjective class. In this sense, they are more "adjectival" than, say, denominal adjectives, which also have some of the properties of nouns.

This distinction has some significance in the ordering of adjectives. In general, the more adjectival a word is, the farther from the noun it will be. Conversely, the less adjectival it is (the more nominal), the nearer to the noun it will be. The relative order of these adjective types, then, is:

Sequence (1): CENTRAL -- DENOMINAL -- NOUN

This is the ordering found in *complex mathematical studies*, for instance, and also in the following examples:

expensive Russian dolls
heavy woollen clothes
huge polar bears

Colour adjectives are also central adjectives, but if they co-occur with another central adjective, they come after it:

Sequence (2): CENTRAL -- COLOUR -- NOUN

expensive green dolls
heavy black clothes
huge white bears

and before denominal adjectives:

Sequence (3): COLOUR -- DENOMINAL -- NOUN

green Russian dolls
black woollen clothes
white polar bears

Participial adjectives also follow central adjectives:

Sequence (4): CENTRAL -- PARTICIPIAL -- DENOMINAL -- NOUN

expensive carved Russian dolls
heavy knitted woollen clothes
huge dancing polar bears

(1) - (4) account for many sequences of up to three adjectives, in which each adjective is a different type. In practice it is rare to find more than three attributive adjectives together, especially if they are all different types. However, such a sequence *may* occur:

certain expensive green Russian dolls

Here the sequence is:

Sequence (5): NON-GRADABLE -- CENTRAL -- COLOUR -- DENOMINAL -- NOUN

Non-gradable adjectives, in fact, are always first in an adjective sequence. Here are some more examples:

Sequence (5a): NON-GRADABLE -- CENTRAL -- NOUN

certain difficult problems

Sequence (5b): NON-GRADABLE -- PARTICIPIAL -- NOUN

sheer unadulterated nonsense

Sequence (5c): NON-GRADABLE -- DENOMINAL -- NOUN

major medical advances

So far we have looked at sequences in which each adjective is a different type. However, we very often find adjectives of the same type occurring together:

big old buildings
beautiful little flowers
rich young people

Here all the adjectives are central adjectives, and in sequences like these it is much more difficult to determine the general principles governing their order. Several schemes have been proposed, though none is completely satisfactory or comprehensive.

The ordering of adjectives is influenced to some degree by the presence of premodification. If one or more of the adjectives in a sequence is premodified, say, by *very*, then it generally comes at the start of the sequence.

The laryngograph provides us with a very *accurate non-invasive physical* measure of voice [S2A-056-95]

It would be unusual, perhaps, to find *very accurate* elsewhere in this sequence:

?The laryngograph provides us with a non-invasive very accurate physical measure of voice

?The laryngograph provides us with a non-invasive physical very accurate measure of voice

Conversely, adjective order restricts the degree to which attributive adjectives may be premodified. Consider the following:

a *wealthy young* businessman
a very *wealthy young* businessman

We cannot modify *young* in this example, while keeping *wealthy* and *young* in the same relative order:

*a *wealthy* very *young* businessman

Nor can we move *young* to the first position and modify it there, while retaining the same degree of acceptability:

?a very *young wealthy* businessman

6 Adverbs

Adverbs are used to modify a verb, an adjective, or another adverb:

[1] Mary sings *beautifully*
[2] David is *extremely* clever
[3] This car goes *incredibly* fast

In [1], the adverb *beautifully* tells us how Mary sings. In [2], *extremely* tells us the degree to which David is clever. Finally, in [3], the adverb *incredibly* tells us how fast the car goes.

Before discussing the meaning of adverbs, however, we will identify some of their formal characteristics.

6.1 Formal Characteristics of Adverbs

From our examples above, you can see that many adverbs end in *-ly*. More precisely, they are formed by adding *-ly* to an adjective:

Adjective	*slow*	*quick*	*soft*	*sudden*	*gradual*
Adverb	*slowly*	*quickly*	*softly*	*suddenly*	*gradually*

Because of their distinctive endings, these adverbs are known as *-LY* ADVERBS. However, by no means all adverbs end in *-ly*. Note also that some adjectives also end in *-ly*, including *costly, deadly, friendly, kindly, likely, lively, manly*, and *timely*.

Like adjectives, many adverbs are GRADABLE, that is, we can modify them using *very* or *extremely*:

softly	very *softly*
suddenly	very *suddenly*
slowly	extremely *slowly*

The modifying words *very* and *extremely* are themselves adverbs. They are called DEGREE ADVERBS because they specify the degree to which an adjective or another adverb applies. Degree adverbs include *almost*, *barely*, *entirely*, *highly*, *quite*, *slightly*, *totally*, and *utterly*. Degree adverbs are *not* gradable (**extremely very*).

Like adjectives, too, some adverbs can take COMPARATIVE and SUPERLATIVE forms, with *-er* and *-est*:

John works *hard* -- Mary works *harder* -- I work *hardest*

However, the majority of adverbs do not take these endings. Instead, they form the comparative using *more* and the superlative using *most*:

Adverb	**Comparative**	**Superlative**
recently	*more recently*	*most recently*
effectively	*more effectively*	*most effectively*
frequently	*more frequently*	*most frequently*

In the formation of comparatives and superlatives, some adverbs are irregular:

Adverb	Comparative	Superlative
well	*better*	*best*
badly	*worse*	*worst*
little	*less*	*least*
much	*more*	*most*

6.2 Adverbs and Adjectives

Adverbs and adjectives have important characteristics in common -- in particular their gradability, and the fact that they have comparative and superlative forms. However, an important distinguishing feature is that adverbs do not modify nouns, either attributively or predicatively:

Adjective	Adverb
David is a *happy* child	*David is a *happily* child
David is *happy*	*David is *happily*

The following words, together with their comparative and superlative forms, can be both adverbs and adjectives:

early, far, fast, hard, late

The following sentences illustrate the two uses of *early*:

Adjective	Adverb

I'll catch the *early* train	I awoke *early* this morning

The comparative *better* and the superlative *best*, as well as some words denoting time intervals (*daily*, *weekly*, *monthly*), can also be adverbs or adjectives, depending on how they are used.

We have incorporated some of these words into the following exercise. See if you can distinguish between the adverbs and the adjectives.

Although endings, gradability and comparison allow us to identify many adverbs, there still remains a very large number of them which cannot be identified in this way. In fact, taken as a whole, the adverb class is the most diverse of all the word classes, and its members exhibit a very wide range of forms and functions. Many semantic classifications of adverbs have been made, but here we will concentrate on just three of the most distinctive classes, known collectively as circumstantial adverbs.

6.3 Circumstantial Adverbs

Many adverbs convey information about the manner, time, or place of an event or action. MANNER adverbs tell us *how* an action is or should be performed:

She sang *loudly* in the bath
The sky *quickly* grew dark
They whispered *softly*
I had to run *fast* to catch the bus

TIME adverbs denote not only specific times but also frequency:

I'll be checking out *tomorrow*
Give it back, *now!*
John *rarely* rings any more
I watch television *sometimes*

And finally, PLACE adverbs indicate *where*:

Put the box *there,* on the table
I've left my gloves *somewhere*

These three adverb types -- manner, time, and place -- are collectively known as CIRCUMSTANTIAL ADVERBS. They express one of the circumstances relating to an event or action - *how* it happened (manner), *when* it happened (time), or *where* it happened (place).

6.4 Additives, Exclusives, and Particularizers

Additives "add" two or more items together, emphasizing that they are all to be considered equal:

> [1] Lynn's prewar success had been as a light historical novelist; he employed similar fanciful ideas in his war novels [...] Joseph Hocking's war novels are *also* dominated by romance and adventure [W2A-009-40ff]
>
> [2] German firms have an existing advantage as a greater number of their managers have technical or engineering degrees. Japanese managers, *too,* have technical qualifications of a high order. [W2A-011-51ff]

In [1], the adverb *also* points to the similarities between the war novels of Lynn and those of Hocking. In [2], the adverb *too* functions in a similar way, emphasizing the fact that the qualifications of Japanese managers are similar to those of German managers.

In contrast with additives, EXCLUSIVE adverbs focus attention on what follows them, to the exclusion of all other possibilities:

> [3] It's *just* a question of how we organise it [S1B-075-68]
>
> [4] The federal convention [...] comes together *solely* for the purpose of electing the president [S2B-021-99]

In [3], *just* excludes all other potential questions from consideration, while in [4], *solely* points out the fact that the federal convention has no other function apart from electing the president. Other exclusives include *alone, exactly, merely*, and *simply*.

PARTICULARIZERS also focus attention on what follows them, but they do not exclude other possibilities:

> [5] The pastoralists are *particularly* found in Africa [S2A-047-3]
>
> [6] Now this book is *mostly* about what they call modulation [S1A-045-167]

In [5], it is implied that Africa is not the only place where pastoralists live. While most of them live there, some of them live elsewhere. Sentence [6] implies that most of the book is about modulation, though it deals with other, unspecified topics as well.

Other particularizers include *largely, mainly, primarily*, and *predominantly*.

6.5 *Wh-* Adverbs

A special subclass of adverbs includes a set of words beginning with *wh-*. The most common are *when, where*, and *why*, though the set also includes *whence, whereby, wherein*, and *whereupon*. To

this set we add the word *how*, and we refer to the whole set as *WH-* ADVERBS. Some members of the set can introduce an interrogative sentence:

When are you going to New York?
Where did you leave the car?
Why did he resign?
How did you become interested in theatre?

They can also introduce various types of clause:

This is the town *where* Shakespeare was born
I've no idea *how* it works

6.6 Sentence Adverbs

We conclude by looking at a set of adverbs which qualify a whole sentence, and not just a part of it. Consider the following:

Honestly, it doesn't matter

Here the sentence adverb *honestly* modifies the whole sentence, and it expresses the speaker's opinion about what is being said (*When I say it doesn't matter, I am speaking honestly*). Here are some more examples:

Clearly, he has no excuse for such behaviour
Frankly, I don't care about your problems
Unfortunately, no refunds can be given

Some sentence adverbs link a sentence with a preceding one:

England played well in the first half. *However*, in the second half their weaknesses were revealed.

Other sentence adverbs of this type are *accordingly, consequently, hence, moreover, similarly*, and *therefore*.

7 Prepositions

Prepositions cannot be distinguished by any formal features. A list of prepositions will illustrate this point:

across, after, at, before, by, during, from, in, into, of, on, to, under, with, without

We can, say, however, that prepositions typically come before a noun:

across town	*for* lunch
after class	*in* London
at home	*on* fire
before Tuesday	*to* school
by Shakespeare	*with* pleasure

The noun does not necessarily come immediately after the preposition, however, since determiners and adjectives can intervene:

after the storm
on white horses
under the old regime

Whether or not there are any intervening determiners or adjectives, prepositions are almost always followed by a noun. In fact, this is so typical of prepositions that if they are not followed by a noun, we call them "stranded" prepositions:

Preposition	Stranded Preposition
John talked *about* the new film	This is the film John talked *about*

Prepositions are invariable in their form, that is, they do not take any inflections.

7.1 Complex Prepositions

The prepositions which we have looked at so far have all consisted of a single word, such as *in*, *of*, *at*, and *to*. We refer to these as SIMPLE PREPOSITIONS.

COMPLEX PREPOSITIONS consist of two- or three-word combinations acting as a single unit. Here are some examples:

according to	*due to*
along with	*except for*
	instead of

apart from	*prior to*
because of	*regardless*
contrary to	*of*

Like simple prepositions, these two-word combinations come before a noun:

according to Shakespeare
contrary to my advice
due to illness

Three-word combinations often have the following pattern:

Simple Preposition + Noun + Simple Preposition

We can see this pattern in the following examples:

in aid of	*in line with*
on behalf of	*in relation to*
in front of	*with reference to*
in accordance with	*with respect to*
in line with	*by means of*

Again, these combinations come before a noun:

in aid of charity
in front of the window
in line with inflation

7.2 Marginal Prepositions

A number of prepositions have affinities with other word classes. In particular, some prepositions are verbal in form:

Following his resignation, the minister moved to the country
I am writing to you *regarding* your overdraft
The whole team was there, *including* John

We refer to these as MARGINAL PREPOSITIONS. Other marginal prepositions include:

concerning, considering, excluding, given, granted, pending

Non-verbal marginal prepositions include *worth* (it's *worth* ten pounds) and *minus* (ten *minus* two is eight).

8 Conjunctions

Conjunctions are used to express a connection between words. The most familiar conjunctions are *and*, *but*, and *or*:

Paul *and* David
cold *and* wet
tired *but* happy
slowly *but* surely
tea *or* coffee
hot *or* cold

They can also connect longer units:

Paul plays football *and* David plays chess
I play tennis *but* I don't play well
We can eat now *or* we can wait till later

There are two types of conjunctions. COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS (or simply COORDINATORS) connect elements of `equal' syntactic status:

Paul *and* David
I play tennis *but* I don't play well
meat *or* fish

Items which are connected by a coordinator are known as CONJOINS. So in *I play tennis but I don't play well*, the conjoins are [*I play tennis*] and [*I don't play well*].

On the other hand, SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS (or SUBORDINATORS) connect elements of `unequal' syntactic status:

I left early *because* I had an interview the next day
We visited Madame Tussaud's *while* we were in London
I'll be home at nine *if* I can get a taxi

Other subordinating conjunctions include *although, because, before, since, till, unless, whereas, whether*

Coordination and subordination are quite distinct concepts in grammar. Notice, for example, that coordinators must appear *between* the conjoins:

[Paul plays football] *and* [David plays chess]

~**And* [David plays chess] [Paul plays football]

However, we can reverse the order of the conjoins, provided we keep the coordinator between them:

[David plays chess] *and* [Paul plays football]

In contrast with this, subordinators do not have to occur between the items they connect::

I left early *because* I had an interview the next day

~*Because* I had an interview the next day, I left early

But if we reverse the order of the items, we either change the meaning completely:

I left early *because* I had an interview the next day

~I had an interview the next day *because* I left early

or we produce a very dubious sentence:

I'll be home at nine *if* I can get a taxi

~?I can get a taxi *if* I'll be home at nine

This shows that items linked by a subordinator have a very specific relationship to each other -- it is a relationship of syntactic dependency. There is no syntactic dependency in the relationship between conjoins. We will further explore this topic when we look at the grammar of clauses.

8.1 Coordination Types

Conjoins are usually coordinated using one of the coordinators *and*, *but*, or *or*. In [1], the bracketed conjoins are coordinated using *and*:

[1] [Quickly] *and* [resolutely], he strode into the bank

This type of coordination, with a coordinator present, is called SYNDETIC COORDINATION.

Coordination can also occur without the presence of a coordinator, as in [2]:

[2] [Quickly], [resolutely], he strode into the bank

No coordinator is present here, but the conjoins are still coordinated. This is known as ASYNDETIC COORDINATION.

When three or more conjoins are coordinated, a coordinator will usually appear between the final two conjoins only:

[3] I need [bread], [cheese], [eggs], *and* [milk]

This is syndetic coordination, since a coordinating conjunction is present. It would be unusual to find a coordinator between each conjoin:

[3a] I need [bread] *and* [cheese] *and* [eggs] *and* [milk]

This is called POLYSYNDETIC COORDINATION. It is sometimes used for effect, for instance to express continuation:

[4] This play will [run] *and* [run] *and* [run]

[5] He just [talks] *and* [talks] *and* [talks]

8.2 False Coordination

Coordinators are sometimes used without performing any strictly coordinating role:

I'll come when I'm good *and* ready

Here, the adjectives *good* and *ready* are not really being coordinated with each other. If they were, the sentence would mean something like:

I'll come [when I'm good] *and* [when I'm ready]

Clearly, this is not the meaning which *good and ready* conveys. Instead, *good and* intensifies the meaning of *ready*. We might rephrase the sentence as

I'll come when I'm *completely* ready.

Good and ready is an example of FALSE COORDINATION -- using a coordinator without any coordinating role. It is sometimes called PSEUDO-COORDINATION.

False coordination can also be found in informal expressions using *try and*:

Please *try and* come early

I'll *try and* ring you from the office

Here, too, no real coordination is taking place. The first sentence, for instance, does not mean *Please try, and please come early*. Instead, it is semantically equivalent to *Please try to come early*.

In informal spoken English, *and* and *but* are often used as false coordinators, without any real coordinating role. The following extract from a conversation illustrates this:

Speaker A: Well he told me it's this super high-flying computer software stuff. I'm sure it's the old job he used to have cleaning them

Speaker B: *But* it went off okay last night then did it? Did you have a good turnout? [S1A-005-95ff]

Here, the word *but* used by Speaker B does not coordinate any conjoins. Instead, it initiates her utterance, and introduces a completely new topic.

9 Minor word classes

We have now looked at the seven major word classes in English. Most words can be assigned to at least one of these classes. However, there are some words which will not fit the criteria for any of them. Consider, for example, the word *hello.* It is clearly not a noun, or an adjective, or a verb, or indeed any of the classes we have looked at. It belongs to a minor word class, which we call *formulaic expressions*.

9.1 Formulaic Expressions

To express greetings, farewell, thanks, or apologies, we use a wide range of FORMULAIC EXPRESSIONS. These may consist of a single word or of several words acting as a unit. Here are some examples:

bye	*excuse me*
goodbye	*thanks*
	thank you
hello	*thanks a lot*
farewell	
hi	*sorry*
so long	*pardon*

Some formulaic expressions express agreement or disagreement with a previous speaker:

yes, yeah, no, okay, right, sure

INTERJECTIONS generally occur only in spoken English, or in the representation of speech in novels. They include the following:

ah, eh, hmm, oh, ouch, phew, shit, tsk, uhm, yuk

Interjections express a wide range of emotions, including surprise (*oh!*), exasperation (*shit!*), and disgust (*yuk!*).

Formulaic expressions, including interjections, are unvarying in their form, that is, they do not take any inflections.

9.2 Existential *there*

We have seen that the word *there* is an adverb, in sentences such as:

You can't park *there*

I went *there* last year

Specifically, it is an adverb of place in these examples.

However, the word *there* has another use. As EXISTENTIAL *THERE*, it often comes at the start of a sentence:

There is a fly in my soup

There were six errors in your essay

Existential *there* is most commonly followed by a form of the verb *be*. When it is used in a question, it follows the verb:

Is *there* a problem with your car?

Was *there* a storm last night?

The two uses of *there* can occur in the same sentence:

There is a parking space *there*

In this example, the first *there* is existential *there*, and the second is an adverb.

9.3 Uses of *It*

In the section on pronouns, we saw that the word *it* is a third person singular pronoun. However, this word also has other roles which are not related to its pronominal use. We look at some of these other uses here.

When we talk about time or the weather, we use sentences such as:

> What time is *it*?
> *It* is four o'clock
> *It* is snowing
> *It*'s going to rain

Here, we cannot identify precisely what *it* refers to. It has a rather vague reference, and we call this DUMMY *IT* or PROP *IT*. Dummy *it* is also used, equally vaguely, in other expressions:

> Hold *it*!
> Take *it* easy!
> Can you make *it* to my party?

It is sometimes used to "anticipate" something which appears later in the same sentence:

> *It*'s great to see you
> *It*'s a pity you can't come to my party

In the first example, *it* "anticipates" *to see you*. We can remove *it* from the sentence and replace it with *to see you*:

> *To see you* is great

Because of its role in this type of sentence, we call this ANTICIPATORY *IT*.

See also: Cleft Sentences

10 Introduces phrases

We have now completed the first level of grammatical analysis, in which we looked at words individually and classified them according to certain criteria. This classification is important because, as we'll see, it forms the basis of the next level of analysis, in which we consider units which may be larger than individual words, but are smaller than sentences. In this section we will be looking at PHRASES.

10.1 Defining a Phrase

When we looked at nouns and pronouns, we said that a pronoun can sometimes replace a noun in a sentence. One of the examples we used was this:

[*Children*] should watch less television

~[*They*] should watch less television

Here it is certainly true that the pronoun *they* replaces the noun *children*. But consider:

[*The children*] should watch less television

~[*They*] should watch less television

In this example, *they* does not replace *children*. Instead, it replaces *the children*, which is a unit consisting of a determiner and a noun. We refer to this unit as a NOUN PHRASE (NP), and we define it as any unit in which the central element is a noun. Here is another example:

I like [*the title of your book*]

~I like [*it*]

In this case, the pronoun *it* replaces not just a noun but a five-word noun phrase, *the title of your book*. So instead of saying that pronouns can replace nouns, it is more accurate to say that they can replace *noun phrases*.

We refer to the central element in a phrase as the HEAD of the phrase. In the noun phrase *the children*, the Head is *children*. In the noun phrase *the title of your book*, the Head is *title*.

Noun phrases do not have to contain strings of words. In fact, they can contain just one word, such as the word *children* in *children should watch less television*. This is also a phrase, though it contains only a Head. At the level of word class, of course, we would call *children* a plural, common noun. But in a phrase-level analysis, we call *children* on its own a noun phrase. This is not simply a matter of terminology -- we call it a noun phrase because it can be expanded to form longer strings which are more clearly noun phrases.

From now on in the Internet Grammar, we will be using this phrase-level terminology. Furthermore, we will delimit phrases by bracketing them, as we have done in the examples above.

10.2 The Basic Structure of a Phrase

Phrases consist minimally of a Head. This means that in a one-word phrase like [children], the Head is *children*. In longer phrases, a string of elements may appear before the Head:

[*the small* children]

For now, we will refer to this string simply as the *pre-Head* string.

A string of elements may also appear after the Head, and we will call this the *post-Head* string:

[the small children *in class 5*]

So we have a basic three-part structure:

pre-Head string	Head	post-Head string
[*the small*	***children***	*in class 5*]

Of these three parts, only the Head is obligatory. It is the only part which cannot be omitted from the phrase. To illustrate this, let's omit each part in turn:

pre-Head string	Head	post-Head string
[--	***children***	*in class 5*]
*[*the small*	--	*in class 5*]
[*the small*	***children***	--]

Pre-Head and post-Head strings can be omitted, while leaving a complete noun phrase. We can even omit the pre- and post-Head strings at the same time, leaving only the Head:

pre-Head string	Head	post-Head string
[--	***children***	--]

This is still a complete noun phrase.

However, when the Head is omitted, we're left with an incomplete phrase (**the small in class five*). This provides a useful method of identifying the Head of a phrase. In general, the Head is the only obligatory part of a phrase.

10.3 More Phrase Types

Just as a noun functions as the Head of a noun phrase, a verb functions as the Head of a verb phrase, and an adjective functions as the Head of an adjective phrase, and so on. We recognise five phrase types in all:

Phrase Type	Head	Example
Noun Phrase	Noun	[the **children** in class 5]
Verb Phrase	Verb	[**play** the piano]
Adjective Phrase	Adjective	[**delighted** to meet you]
Adverb Phrase	Adverb	[very **quickly**]
Prepositional Phrase	Preposition	[**in** the garden]

For convenience, we will use the following abbreviations for the phrase types:

Phrase Type	Abbreviation
Noun Phrase	NP
Verb Phrase	VP
Adjective Phrase	AP
Adverb Phrase	AdvP

Prepositional Phrase	PP

Using these abbreviations, we can now label phrases as well as bracket them. We do this by putting the appropriate label inside the opening bracket:

[NP the small **children** in class 5]

Now we will say a little more about each of the five phrase types.

10.4 Noun Phrase (NP)

As we've seen, a noun phrase has a noun as its Head. Determiners and adjective phrases usually constitute the pre-Head string:

[NP *the* **children**]
[NP *happy* **children**]
[NP *the happy* **children**]

In theory at least, the post-Head string in an NP can be indefinitely long:

[NP the **dog** *that chased the cat that killed the mouse that ate the cheese that was made from the milk that came from the cow that...*]

Fortunately, they are rarely as long as this in real use.

The Head of an NP does not have to be a common or a proper noun. Recall that pronouns are a subclass of nouns. This means that pronouns, too, can function as the Head of an NP:

[NP **I**] like coffee
The waitress gave [NP **me**] the wrong dessert
[NP **This**] is my car

If the Head is a pronoun, the NP will generally consist of the Head only. This is because pronouns do not take determiners or adjectives, so there will be no pre-Head string. However, with some pronouns, there may be a post-Head string:

[NP **Those** *who arrive late*] cannot be admitted until the interval

Similarly, numerals, as a subclass of nouns, can be the Head of an NP:

[NP **Two** of my guests] have arrived
[NP The **first** to arrive] was John

10.5 Verb Phrase (VP)

In a VERB PHRASE (VP), the Head is always a verb. The pre-Head string, if any, will be a `negative' word such as *not* [1] or *never* [2], or an adverb phrase [3]:

[1] [VP not **compose** an aria]
[2] [VP never **compose** an aria]
[3] Paul [VP deliberately **broke** the window]

Many verb Heads *must* be followed by a post-Head string:

My son [VP **made** a cake] -- (compare: **My son made*)
We [VP **keep** pigeons] -- (compare: **We keep*)
I [VP **recommend** the fish] -- (compare: **I recommend*)

Verbs which require a post-Head string are called TRANSITIVE verbs. The post-Head string, in these examples, is called the DIRECT OBJECT.

In contrast, some verbs are *never* followed by a direct object:

Susan [VP **smiled**]
The professor [VP **yawned**]

These are known as INTRANSITIVE VERBS.

However, most verbs in English can be both transitive and intransitive, so it is perhaps more accurate to refer to transitive and intransitive *uses* of a verb. The following examples show the two uses of the same verb:

Intransitive: David *smokes*
Transitive: David *smokes* cigars

We will return to the structure of verb phrases in a later section.

10.6 Adjective Phrase (AP)

In an ADJECTIVE PHRASE (AP), the Head word is an adjective. Here are some examples:

Susan is [AP **clever**]
The doctor is [AP very **late**]
My sister is [AP **fond** of animals]

The pre-Head string in an AP is most commonly an adverb phrase such as *very* or *extremely.*
Adjective Heads may be followed by a post-Head string:

[AP **happy** *to meet you*]
[AP **ready** *to go*]
[AP **afraid** *of the dark*]

A small number of adjective Heads *must* be followed by a post-Head string. The adjective Head *fond* is one of these. Compare:

My sister is [AP **fond** of animals]
*My sister is [**fond**]

10.7 Adverb Phrase (AdvP)

In an ADVERB PHRASE, the Head word is an adverb. Most commonly, the pre-Head string is another adverb phrase:

He graduated [AdvP *very* **recently**]
She left [AdvP *quite* **suddenly**]

In AdvPs, there is usually no post-Head string, but here's a rare example:

[AdvP **Unfortunately** *for him*], his wife came home early

10.8 Prepositional Phrase (PP)

PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES usually consist of a Head -- a preposition -- and a post-Head string only. Here are some examples:

[PP **through** the window]
[PP **over** the bar]
[PP **across** the line]
[PP **after** midnight]

This makes PPs easy to recognise -- they nearly always begin with a preposition (the Head). A pre-Head string is rarely present, but here are some examples:

[PP *straight* **through** the window]
[PP *right* **over** the bar]
[PP *just* **after** midnight]

10.9 Phrases within Phrases

We will conclude this introduction to phrases by looking briefly at phrases within phrases. Consider the NP:

[NP small **children**]

It consists of a Head *children* and a pre-Head string *small*. Now *small* is an adjective, so it is the Head of its own adjective phrase. We know this because it could be expanded to form a longer string:

very small children

Here, the adjective Head *small* has its own pre-Head string *very*:

[AP very **small**]

So in *small children*, we have an AP *small* embedded with the NP *small children*. We represent this as follows:

[NP [AP small] children]

All but the simplest phrases will contain smaller phrases within them. Here's another example:

[PP across the road]

Here, the Head is *across*, and the post-Head string is *the road*. Now we know that *the road* is itself an NP -- its Head is *road*, and it has a pre-Head string *the*. So we have an NP within the PP:

[PP across [NP the road]]

When you examine phrases, remember to look out for other phrases within them.

11 Clauses and sentences

So far we have been looking at phrases more or less in isolation. In real use, of course, they occur in isolation only in very restricted circumstances. For example, we find isolated NPs in public signs

and notices:

[Exit]
[Sale]
[Restricted Area]
[Hyde Park]

We sometimes use isolated phrases in spoken English, especially in responses to questions:

Q: What would you like to drink?
A: [NP Coffee]

Q: How are you today?
A: [AP Fine]

Q: Where did you park the car?
A: [PP Behind the house]

In more general use, however, phrases are integrated into longer units, which we call CLAUSES:

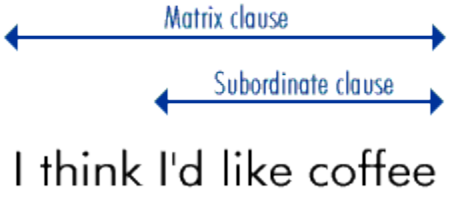
Q: What would you like to drink?
A: [I'd like coffee]

Q: How are you today?
A: [I'm fine]

Q: Where did you park the car?
A: [I parked the car behind the house]

11.1 The Clause Hierarchy

The clause *I'd like coffee* is a SUBORDINATE CLAUSE within the sentence *I think I'd like coffee*. We refer to this larger clause as the MATRIX CLAUSE:



The matrix clause is not subordinate to any other, so it is, in fact, co-extensive with the sentence.

We say that the matrix clause is SUPERORDINATE to the subordinate clause.

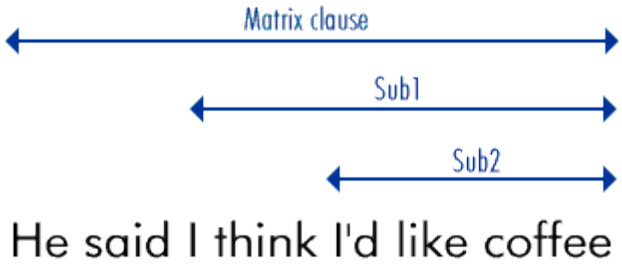
The terms *subordinate* and *superordinate* are *relative* terms. They describe the relationship between clauses in what is called the CLAUSE HIERARCHY. We can illustrate what this means by looking at a slightly more complicated example:

He said I think I'd like coffee

Here the matrix clause is:

He said I think I'd like coffee

This matrix clause contains two subordinate clauses, which we'll refer to as Sub1 and Sub2:



Sub1 is both subordinate and superordinate. It is subordinate in relation to the matrix clause, and it is superordinate in relation to Sub2.

Subordinate and *superordinate*, then, are not absolute terms. They describe how clauses are arranged hierarchically relative to each other.

We can bracket and label clauses in the same way as phrases. We will use the following abbreviations:

Matrix Clause: **MC**
Subordinate Clause: **SubC**

Applying these labels and brackets to our first example, we get:

[**MC** I think [**SubC** I'd like coffee]]

Just as we've seen with phrases, we can have embedding in clauses too. Here, the subordinate clause is embedded within the matrix clause.

There is a greater degree of embedding in our second example, where there are two subordinate clauses, one within the other:

[**MC** He said [**SubC** I think [**SubC** I'd like coffee]]]

11.2 Finite and Nonfinite Clauses

As a working definition, let us say that clauses contain at least a verb phrase:

[**MC** [**VP** Stop]]
[**MC** David [**VP** composed an aria] when he was twelve]
[**MC** My solicitor [**VP** sent me a letter] yesterday]

As these examples show, clauses can also contain many other elements, but for now we will concentrate on the VP. We have already seen that verbs (and therefore the VPs that contain them) are either FINITE or NONFINITE, so we can use this distinction to classify clauses. Clauses are either finite or nonfinite.

Finite verb phrases carry tense, and the clauses containing them are FINITE CLAUSES:

[1] She *writes* home every day (finite clause -- present tense verb)
[2] She *wrote* home yesterday (finite clause -- past tense verb)

On the other hand, nonfinite verb phrases do not carry tense. Their main verb is either a *to-* infinitive [3], a bare infinitive [4], an *-ed* form [5], or an *-ing* form [6]:

[3] David loves [to *play* the piano]
[4] We made [David *play* the piano]
[5] [*Written* in 1864], it soon became a classic
[6] [*Leaving* home] can be very traumatic

These are NONFINITE CLAUSES.

Matrix clauses are always finite, as in [1] and [2]. However, they may contain nonfinite subordinate clauses within them. For example:

[**MC** David loves [**SubC** to play the piano]]

Here we have a finite matrix clause -- its main verb *loves* has the present tense form. Within it, there is a nonfinite subordinate clause *to play the piano* -- its main verb *play* has the *to*-infinitive form.

On the other hand, subordinate clauses can be either finite or nonfinite:

Finite: He said [**SubC** that they *stayed* at a lovely hotel] -- past tense

Nonfinite: I was advised [**SubC** to *sell* my old car] -- *to*-infinitive

11.3 Subordinate Clause Types

Subordinate clauses may be finite or nonfinite. Within this broad classification, we can make many further distinctions. We will begin by looking at subordinate clauses which are distinguished by their *formal* characteristics.

Many subordinate clauses are named after the form of the verb which they contain:

TO-INFINITIVE CLAUSE:

You must book early [*to secure* a seat]

BARE INFINITIVE CLAUSE:

They made [the professor *forget* his notes]

-*ING* PARTICIPLE CLAUSE:

His hobby is [*collecting* old photographs]

-*ED* PARTICIPLE CLAUSE:

[*Rejected* by his parents], the boy turned to a life of crime

For convenience, we sometimes name a clause after its first element:

IF-CLAUSE:

I'll be there at nine [*if* I catch the early train]

As we'll see on the next page, *if*-clauses are sometimes called *conditional* clauses.

THAT-CLAUSE:

David thinks [*that* we should have a meeting]

The *that* element is sometimes ellipted:

David thinks [we should have a meeting]

11.3.1 Relative Clauses

An important type of subordinate clause is the RELATIVE CLAUSE. Here are some examples:

The man [who lives beside us] is ill
The video [which you recommended] was terrific

Relative clauses are generally introduced by a relative pronoun, such as *who*, or *which*. However, the relative pronoun may be ellipted:

The video [you recommended] was terrific

Another variant, the REDUCED RELATIVE CLAUSE, has no relative pronoun, and the verb is nonfinite:

The man [living beside us] is ill
(Compare: *The man [who lives beside us]...*)

11.3.2 Nominal Relative Clauses

NOMINAL RELATIVE CLAUSES (or independent relatives) function in some respects like noun phrases:

[What I like best] is football
(cf. *the sport I like best*...)

The prize will go to [whoever submits the best design]
(cf. *the person who submits*...)

My son is teaching me [how to use email]
(cf. *the way to use email*)

This is [where Shakespeare was born]
(cf. *the place where*...)

The similarity with NPs can be further seen in the fact that certain nominal relatives exhibit number contrast:

Singular: [What we need] *is* a plan
Plural: [What we need] *are* new ideas
Notice the agreement here with *is* (singular) and *are* (plural).

11.3.3 Small Clauses

Finally, we will mention briefly an unusual type of clause, the verbless or SMALL CLAUSE. While clauses usually contain a verb, which is finite or nonfinite, small clauses lack an overt verb:

Susan found [the job very difficult]

We analyse this as a unit because clearly its parts cannot be separated. What Susan found was not *the job*, but *the job very difficult*. And we analyse this unit specifically as a clause because we can posit an implicit verb, namely, a form of the verb *be*:

Susan found [the job (*to be*) very difficult]

Here are some more examples of small clauses:

Susan considers [David an idiot]
The jury found [the defendant guilty]
[Lunch over], the guests departed quickly

All of the clause types discussed here are distinguished by formal characteristics. On the next page, we will distinguish some more types, this time on the basis of their meaning.

11.4 Subordinate Clauses: Semantic Types

Here we will look at subordinate clauses from the point of view of their meaning. The main semantic types are exemplified in the following table:

Subordinate Clause Type	**Example**
Temporal	I'll ring you again [*before I leave*] David joined the army [*after he graduated*] [*When you leave*], please close the door

	I read the newspaper [*while I was waiting*]
Conditional	I'll be there at nine [*if I can catch the early train*] [*Provided he works hard*], he'll do very well at school Don't call me [*unless its an emergency*]
Concessive	He bought me a lovely gift, [*although he can't really afford it*] [*Even though he worked hard*], he failed the final exam [*While I don't agree with her*], I can understand her viewpoint
Reason	Paul was an hour late [*because he missed the train*] I borrowed your lawn mower, [*since you weren't using it*] [*As I don't know the way*], I'll take a taxi
Result	The kitchen was flooded, [*so we had to go to a restaurant*] I've forgotten my password, [*so I can't read my email*]
Comparative	This is a lot more difficult [*than I expected*] She earns as much money [*as I do*] I think London is less crowded [*than it used to be*]

The table does not cover all the possible types, but it does illustrate many of the various meanings which can be expressed by subordinate clauses.

Notice that the same word can introduce different semantic types. For instance, the word *while* can introduce a temporal clause:

I read the newspaper [*while* I was waiting]

or a concessive clause:

[*While* I don't agree with her], I can understand her viewpoint.

Similarly, the word *since* can express time:

I've known him [*since* he was a child]

as well as reason:

I borrowed your lawn mower, [*since* you weren't using it]

In the following exercise, be aware of words like these, which can introduce more than one type of subordinate clause.

11.5 Sentences

Most people recognise a sentence as a unit which begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop (period), a question mark, or an exclamation mark. Of course, this applies only to written sentences. Sentences have also been defined notionally as units which express a "complete thought", though it is not at all clear what a "complete thought" is.

It is more useful to define a sentence syntactically, as a unit which consists of one or more clauses. According to this definition, the following examples are all sentences:

[1] Paul likes football

[2] You can borrow my pen if you need one

[3] Paul likes football and David likes chess

Sentence [1] is a SIMPLE SENTENCE -- it contains only one clause.

Sentence [2] consists of a matrix clause *You can borrow my pen if you need one*, and a subordinate clause *if you need one*. This is called a COMPLEX SENTENCE. A complex sentence is defined as a sentence which contains at least one subordinate clause.

Finally, sentence [3] consists of two clauses which are coordinated with each other. This is a COMPOUND sentence.

By using subordination and coordination, sentences can potentially be infinitely long, but in all cases we can analyse them as one or more clauses.

11.6 The Discourse Functions of Sentences

Sentences may be classified according to their use in discourse. We recognise four main sentence types:

- declarative
- interrogative
- imperative
- exclamative

11.6.1 Declarative

Declarative sentences are used to convey information or to make statements:

David plays the piano
I hope you can come tomorrow
We've forgotten the milk

Declarative sentences are by far the most common type.

11.6.2 Interrogative

Interrogative sentences are used in asking questions:

Is this your book?
Did you receive my message?
Have you found a new job yet?

The examples above are specifically YES/NO INTERROGATIVES, because they elicit a response which is either *yes* or *no*.

ALTERNATIVE INTERROGATIVES offer two or more alternative responses:

Should I telephone you or send an email?
Do you want tea, coffee, or espresso?

Yes/no interrogatives and alternative interrogatives are introduced by an auxiliary verb.

WH- INTERROGATIVES, on the other hand, are introduced by a *wh-* word, and they elicit an open-ended response:

What happened?
Where do you work?
Who won the Cup Final in 1997?

Questions are sometimes tagged onto the end of a declarative sentence:

David plays the piano, *doesn't he?*
We've forgotten the milk, *haven't we?*
There's a big match tonight, *isn't there?*

These are known as TAG QUESTIONS. They consist of a main or auxiliary verb followed by a pronoun or existential *there*

11.6.3 Imperative

Imperative sentences are used in issuing orders or directives:

Leave your coat in the hall
Give me your phone number
Don't shut the door
Stop!

Tag questions are sometimes added to the end of imperatives:

Leave your coat in the hall, *will you*?
Write soon, *won't you?*

In an imperative sentence, the main verb is in the base form. This is an exception to the general rule that matrix clauses are always finite.

11.6.4 Exclamative

Exclamative sentences are used to make exclamations:

What a stupid man he is!
How wonderful you look!

The four sentence types exhibit different syntactic forms, which we will be looking at in a later section. For now, it is worth pointing out that there is not necessarily a one-to-one relationship between the form of a sentence and its discourse function. For instance, the following sentence has declarative form:

You need some help

But when this is spoken with a rising intonation, it becomes a question:

You need some help?

Conversely, rhetorical questions have the form of an interrogative, but they are really statements:

Who cares? (= I don't care)

11.7 The Grammatical Hierarchy: Words, Phrases, Clauses, and Sentences

Words, phrases, clauses, and sentences constitute what is called the GRAMMATICAL HIERARCHY. We can represent this schematically as follows:

sentences
consist of one or more...

clauses
consist of one or more...

phrases
consist of one or more...

words

Sentences are at the top of the hierarchy, so they are the largest unit which we will be considering (though some grammars do look beyond the sentence). At the other end of the hierarchy, words are at the lowest level, though again, some grammars go below the word to consider morphology, the study of how words are constructed.

At the clause level and at the phrase level, two points should be noted:

1. Although clauses are higher than phrases in the hierarchy, clauses can occur within phrases, as we've already seen:

The man who lives beside us is ill

Here we have a relative clause *who lives beside us* within the NP *the man who lives beside us*.

2. We've also seen that clauses can occur within clauses, and phrases can occur within phrases.

Bearing these two points in mind, we can now illustrate the grammatical hierarchy using the following sentence:

My brother won the lottery

As a means of illustrating the grammatical hierarchy, the labelled brackets we have used here have at least one major drawback. You've probably noticed it already -- they are very difficult to interpret. And the problem becomes more acute as the sentence becomes more complex. For this reason, linguists prefer to employ a more visual method, the TREE DIAGRAM.

12 Form and Function

We have used the word "form" quite often in the Internet Grammar. It was one of the criteria we used to distinguish between word classes -- we saw that the form or "shape" of a word is often a good clue to its word class.

When we looked at phrases, too, we were concerned with their form. We said that phrases may have the basic form *(Pre-Head string) - Head - (Post-Head string)*.

And finally, we classified clauses according to the form (finite or nonfinite) of their main verb.

In all of these cases, we were conducting a FORMAL analysis. *Form* denotes how something looks -- its shape or appearance, and what its structure is. When we say that *the old man* is an NP, or that *the old man bought a newspaper* is a finite clause, we are carrying out a formal analysis.

We can also look at constituents -- phrases and clauses -- from another angle. We can examine the FUNCTIONs which they perform in the larger structures which contain them.

12.1 Subject and Predicat

The most familiar grammatical function is the SUBJECT. In notional terms, we can think of the Subject as the element which performs the "action" denoted by the verb:

[1] *David* plays the piano

[2] *The police* interviewed all the witnesses

In [1], the Subject *David* performs the action of playing the piano. In [2], the Subject *the police* performs the action of interviewing all the witnesses. In these terms, this means that we can identify the Subject by asking a *wh*-question:

[1] David plays the piano

Q. Who plays the piano?
A. *David* (= Subject)

[2] The police interviewed all the witnesses

Q. Who interviewed all the witnesses?
A. *The police* (= Subject)

Having identified the Subject, we can see that the remainder of the sentence tells us what the Subject does or did. In [1], for example, *plays the piano* tells us what David does. We refer to this string as the PREDICATE of the sentence. In [2], the Predicate is *interviewed all the witnesses*.

Here are some more examples of sentences labelled for Subject and Predicate.

Subject	Predicate
The lion	*roared*
He	*writes well*
She	*enjoys going to the cinema*
The girl in the blue dress	*arrived late*

In each of these examples, the Subject performs the action described in the Predicate. We've seen, however, that there are problems in defining verbs as "action" words, and for the same reasons, there are problems in defining the Subject as the "performer" of the action. The Subject in *John seems unhappy* is *John*, but we would hardly say he is performing an action. For this reason, we need to define the Subject more precisely than this. We will look at the characteristics of the Subject on the next page.

12.2 Characteristics of the Subject

The grammatical Subject has a number of characteristics which we will examine here.

1. Subject-Verb Inversion

In a declarative sentence, the Subject comes before the verb:

Declarative: *David is unwell*

When we change this into a *yes/no* interrogative, the Subject and the verb change places with each other:

If an auxiliary verb is present, however, the Subject changes places with the auxiliary:

Declarative: *Jim has* left already
Interrogative: *Has Jim* left already?

In this interrogative, the Subject still comes before the main verb, but after the auxiliary. This is true also of interrogatives with a *do*-auxiliary:

Declarative: Jim left early
Interrogative: Did Jim leave early?

Subject-verb inversion is probably the most reliable method of identifying the Subject of a sentence.

2. Position of the Subject

In a declarative sentence, the Subject is usually the *first* constituent:

Jim was in bed
Paul arrived too late for the party
The Mayor of New York attended the banquet
We made a donation to charity

However, there are exceptions to this. For instance:

Yesterday the theatre was closed

Here, the first constituent is the adverb phrase *yesterday*, but this is not the Subject of the sentence. Notice that *the theatre*, and not *yesterday*, inverts with the verb in the interrogative:

Declarative: Yesterday the theatre was closed
Interrogative: Yesterday was the theatre closed?

So the Subject here is *the theatre*, even though it is not the first constituent in the sentence.

3. Subject-verb Agreement

Subject-verb AGREEMENT or CONCORD relates to number agreement (singular or plural) between the Subject and the verb which follows it:

Singular Subject: *The dog* howl*s* all night
Plural Subject: *The dogs* howl all night

There are two important limitations to Subject-verb agreement. Firstly, agreement only applies when the verb is in the present tense. In the past tense, there is no overt agreement between the Subject and the verb:

The dog howl*ed* all night
The dogs howl*ed* all night

And secondly, agreement applies only to third person Subjects. There is no distinction, for example, between a first person singular Subject and a first person plural Subject:

I howl all night
We howl all night

The concept of NOTIONAL AGREEMENT sometimes comes into play:

The government *is* considering the proposal
The government *are* considering the proposal

Here, the form of the verb is not determined by the form of the Subject. Instead, it is determined by how we interpret the Subject. In *the government is...*, the Subject is interpreted as a unit, requiring a singular form of the verb. In *the government are...*, the Subject is interpreted as having a plural meaning, since it relates to a collection of individual people. Accordingly, the verb has the plural form *are*.

4. Subjective Pronouns

The pronouns *I, he/she/it, we, they*, always function as Subjects, in contrast with *me, him/her, us, them*:

I left early
**Me* left early

He left early
**Him* left early

We left early
**Us* left early

They left early
**Them* left early

The pronoun *you* can also be a Subject:

You left early

but it does not always perform this function. In the following example, the Subject is *Tom*, not *you*:

Tom likes you

12.3 Realisations of the Subject

In the sentence, *Jim was in bed*, the Subject is the NP *Jim*. More precisely, we say that the Subject is *realised* by the NP *Jim*. Conversely, the NP *Jim* is the *realisation* of the Subject in this sentence. Remember that *NP* is a *formal* term, while *Subject* is a *functional* term:

FORM	FUNCTION
Noun Phrase	Subject

Subjects are typically realised by NPs. This includes NPs which have pronouns [1], cardinal numerals [2], and ordinal numerals [3] as their Head word:

[1] [We] decided to have a party
[2] [One of my contacts lenses] fell on the floor
[3] [The first car to reach Brighton] is the winner

However, other constituents can also function as Subjects, and we will examine these in the following sections.

Clauses functioning as Subject

Clauses can also function as Subjects. When they perform this function, we refer to them generally as *Subject clauses*. The table below shows examples of the major types of Subject clauses:

CLAUSES functioning as SUBJECTS	*EXAMPLE*
Finite	
That-clause	**[1]** *That his theory was flawed* soon became obvious
Nominal Relative clause	**[2]** *What I need* is a long holiday
Nonfinite	
To-infinitive clause	**[3]** *To become an opera singer* takes years of training
-ing clause	**[4]** *Being the chairman* is a huge responsibility

Notice that some of these Subject clauses have Subjects of their own. In [1], the Subject clause *that his theory was flawed*, has its own Subject, *his theory*. Similarly, in [2], the Subject of *what I need* is *I*.

Among nonfinite clauses, only *to*-infinitive clauses and *-ing* participle clauses can function as Subject. Bare infinitive clauses and *-ed* participle clauses cannot perform this function. In the examples above -- [3] and [4] -- the nonfinite Subject clauses do not have Subjects of their own, although they can do:

[3a] *For Mary to become an opera singer* would take years of training

[4a] *David being the chairman* has meant more work for all of us

Prepositional Phrases functioning as Subject

Less commonly, the Subject may be realised by a prepositional phrase:

After nine is a good time to ring

Prepositional phrases as Subject typically refer to time or to space.

12.4 Some Unusual Subjects

Before leaving this topic, we will point out some grammatical Subjects which may at first glance be difficult to recognise as such. For example, can you work out the Subject of the following sentence?

There is a fly in my soup

As we've seen, the most reliable test for identifying the Subject is Subject-verb inversion, so let's try it here:

Declarative: There is a fly in my soup
Interrogative: Is there a fly in my soup?

The inversion test shows that the subject is *there*. You will recall that this is an example of existential *there*, and the sentence in which it is the Subject is an *existential sentence*.

Now try the same test on the following:

It is raining

The inversion test shows that the Subject is *it*:

Declarative: It is raining
Interrogative: Is it raining?

These two examples illustrate how limited the notional definition of the Subject really is. In no sense can we say that *there* and *it* are performing an "action" in their respective sentences, and yet they are grammatically functioning as Subjects.

On this page, we've seen that the function of Subject can be realised by several different forms. Conversely, the various forms (NP, clause, PP, etc) can perform several other functions, and we will look at these in the following pages.

12.5 Inside the Predicate

Now we will look inside the Predicate, and assign functions to its constituents. Recall that the Predicate is everything apart from the Subject. So in *David plays the piano*, the Predicate is *plays the piano*. This Predicate consists of a verb phrase, and we can divide this into two further elements:

[plays] [the piano]

In formal terms, we refer to the verb as the PREDICATOR, because its function is to *predicate* or state something about the subject. Notice that *Predicator* is a functional term, while *verb* is a formal term:

FORM	FUNCTION
Verb	Predicator

However, since the Predicator is *always* realised by a verb, we will continue to use the more familiar term *verb*, even when we are discussing functions.

12.6 The Direct Object

In the sentence *David plays the piano*, the NP *the piano* is the constituent which undergoes the "action" of being played (by David, the Subject). We refer to this constituent as the DIRECT OBJECT.

Here are some more examples of Direct Objects:

We bought *a new computer*
I used to ride *a motorbike*
The police interviewed *all the witnesses*

We can usually identify the Direct Object by asking *who* or *what* was affected by the Subject. For example:

We bought a new computer

Q. What did we buy?
A. *A new computer* (= the Direct Object)

The Direct Object generally comes after the verb, just as the Subject generally comes before it. So in a declarative sentence, the usual pattern is:

Subject -- Verb -- Direct Object

The following table shows more examples of this pattern:

Subject	Verb	Direct Object
The tourists	visited	the old cathedral
She	sent	a postcard
The detectives	examined	the scene of the crime

12.7 Realisations of the Direct Object

The Direct Object is most often realised by an NP, as in the examples above. However, this function can also be realised by a clause. The following table shows examples of clauses functioning as Direct Objects:

CLAUSES functioning as DIRECT OBJECTS	***EXAMPLES***
Finite	
That-clause	**[1]** He thought *that he had a perfect alibi*
Nominal relative clause	**[2]** The officer described *what he saw through the keyhole*
Nonfinite	
To-infinitive clause	**[3]** The dog wants *to play in the garden*
Bare infinitive clause	**[4]** She made *the lecturer laugh*
-ing clause	**[5]** Paul loves *playing football*
-ed clause	**[6]** I'm having *my house painted*

12.8 Subjects and Objects, Active and Passive

A useful way to compare Subjects and Direct Objects is to observe how they behave in active and passive sentences. Consider the following active sentence:

Active: *Fire* destroyed *the palace*

Here we have a Subject *fire* and a Direct Object *the palace*.

Now let's convert this into a passive sentence:

The change from active to passive has the following results:

1. The active Direct Object *the palace* becomes the passive Subject

2. The active Subject *fire* becomes part of the PP *by fire* (the *by*-agent phrase).

12.9 The Indirect Object

Some verbs occur with two Objects:

We gave [John] [a present]

Here, the NP *a present* undergoes the "action" (a present is what is given). So *a present* is the Direct Object. We refer to the NP *John* as the INDIRECT OBJECT.

Indirect Objects usually occur with a Direct Object, and they always come *before* the Direct Object. The typical pattern is:

Subject -- Verb -- Indirect Object -- Direct Object

Here are some more examples of sentences containing two objects:

	Indirect Object	**Direct Object**
Tell	*me*	*a story*
He showed	*us*	*his war medals*
We bought	*David*	*a birthday cake*
Can you lend	*your colleague*	*a pen*?

Verbs which take an Indirect Object and a Direct Object are known as DITRANSITIVE verbs. Verbs which take only a Direct Object are called MONOTRANSITIVE verbs. The verb *tell* is a typical ditransitive verb, but it can also be monotransitive:

		Indirect Object	**Direct Object**
Ditransitive	David told	*the children*	*a story*
Monotransitive	David told		*a story*

As we've seen, an Indirect Object usually co-occurs with a Direct Object. However, with some verbs an Indirect Object may occur alone:

David told *the children*

although we can usually posit an implicit Direct Object in such cases:

David told the children *the news*

12.10 Realisations of the Indirect Object

NPs are the most common realisations of the Indirect Object. It is a typical function of pronouns in the objective case, such as *me*, *him*, *us*, and *them*.

Less commonly, a clause will function as Indirect Object:

David told *whoever saw her* to report to the police

12.11 Adjuncts

Certain parts of a sentence may convey information about *how*, *when*, or *where* something happened:

He ate his meal *quickly* (how)
David gave blood *last week* (when)
Susan went to school *in New York* (where)

The highlighted constituents here are ADJUNCTS. From a syntactic point of view, Adjuncts are optional elements, since their omission still leaves a complete sentence:

He ate his meal *quickly* ~He ate his meal

David gave blood *last week* ~David gave blood

Susan went to school *in New York* ~Susan went to school

Many types of constituents can function as Adjuncts, and we exemplify these below.

12.12 Realisations of Adjuncts

Noun Phrases functioning as Adjuncts

David gave blood *last week*
Next summer, we're going to Spain
We've agreed to meet *the day after tomorrow*

NPs as Adjuncts generally refer to time, as in these examples.

Adverb Phrases functioning as Adjuncts

They ate their meal *too quickly*
She walked *very gracefully* down the steps
Suddenly, the door opened

Prepositional Phrases functioning as Adjuncts

Susan went to school *in New York*
I work late *on Mondays*
After work, I go to a local restaurant

PPs as Adjuncts generally refer to time or to place -- they tell us *when* or *where* something happens.

Clauses functioning as Adjuncts

Subordinate clauses can function as Adjuncts. We'll begin with some examples of finite subordinate clauses:

Clauses functioning as Adjuncts	***EXAMPLES***
Finite	*While we were crossing the park*, we heard a loud explosion I was late for the interview *because the train broke down* *If you want tickets for the concert*, you have to apply early My car broke down, *so I had to walk*
Nonfinite *To*-infinitive clause Bare infinitive clause *-ing* clause *-ed* clause Small clause	 *To open the window*, you have to climb a ladder *Rather than leave the child alone*, I brought him to work with me *Being a qualified plumber*, Paul had no difficulty in finding the leak *Left to himself*, he usually gets the job done quickly *His face red with rage*, John stormed out of the room

You will notice that these clauses express the range of meanings that we looked at earlier (in Subordinate Clauses: Semantic Types). In all cases, notice also that the Adjuncts express additional and optional information. If they are omitted, the remaining clause is still *syntactically* complete.

12.13 Sentence Patterns from a Functional Perspective

In order to summarise what we have learned, we will now look at some typical sentence patterns from a functional perspective. We will then conclude this section by looking at some untypical patterns, on the next page.

As we've seen, the Subject is usually (but not always) the first element in a sentence, and it is followed by the verb:

Pattern 1

Subject	Verb
David	*sings*
The dog	*barked*
Susan	*yawned*

In this pattern, the verb is not followed by any Object, and we refer to this as an intransitive verb. If the verb is monotransitive, it takes a Direct Object, which follows the verb:

Pattern 2

Subject	Verb	Direct Object
David	*sings*	*ballads*
The professor	*wants*	*to retire*
The jury	*found*	*the defendant guilty*

In the ditransitive pattern, the verb is followed by an Indirect Object and a Direct Object, in that order:

Pattern 3

Subject	Verb	Indirect Object	Direct Object
The old man	*gave*	*the children*	*some money*
My uncle	*sent*	*me*	*a present*
The detectives	*asked*	*Amy*	*lots of questions*

Adjuncts are syntactically peripheral to the rest of the sentence. They may occur at the beginning and at the end of a sentence, and they may occur in all three of the patterns above:

Pattern 4

	(Adjunct)	Subject	Verb	Indirect Object	Direct Object	(Adjunct)
[1]	*Usually*	*David*	*sings*			*in the bath*
[2]	*Unfortunately*	*the professor*	*wants*		*to retire*	*this year*
[3]	*At the start of the trial*	*the judge*	*showed*	*the jury*	*the photographs*	*in a private chamber*

Pattern 4 is essentially a conflation of the other three, with Adjuncts added. We have bracketed the Adjuncts to show that they are optional. Strictly speaking, Objects are also optional, since they are only required by monotransitive and ditransitive verbs, as in the examples [2] and [3] above.

12.14 Some Untypical Sentence Patterns

The sentence patterns we looked at on the previous page represent typical or canonical patterns But you will often come across sentences which do not conform to these patterns. We will look at some of these here.

Extraposition

The Subject is sometimes postponed until the end of the sentence. Here are some examples:

In first place is *Red Rum*
Inside the house were *two detectives*
More important is *the question of compensation*

Here, the typical declarative order has been disrupted for stylistic effect. In these examples, the Subject comes *after* the verb, and is said to be EXTRAPOSED. Compare them with the more usual pattern:

In first place is *Red Rum*	*~Red Rum* is in first place
Inside the house were *two detectives*	*~Two detectives* were inside the house
More important is *the question of compensation*	*~The question of compensation* is more

important

The Subject is also extraposed when the sentence is introduced by anticipatory *it*:

It is a good idea *to book early*
It is not surprising *that he failed his exams*

In the more typical pattern, these constructions may sound stylistically awkward:

To book early is a good idea
That he failed his exams is not surprising

Extraposition is not always just a matter of style. In the following examples, it is obligatory:

It seems *that he'll be late again*	*~*That he'll be late again* seems
It turned out *that his secretary had stolen the money*	*~*That his secretary had stolen the money* turned out

Direct Objects, too, can be extraposed. Recall that their typical position is after the verb (Pattern 2). However, when anticipatory *it* is used, the Direct Object is extraposed:

He made it very clear *that he would not be coming back*

Again, the canonical pattern is stylistically very awkward:

*He made *that he would not be coming back* very clear

Cleft Sentences

A declarative sentence, such as *David studied English at Oxford* can be reformulated as:

It was David who studied English at Oxford

This is called a CLEFT SENTENCE because the original sentence has been divided (or "cleft") into two clauses: *It was David* and *who studied English at Oxford*. Cleft sentences focus on one constituent of the original sentence, placing it after *it was* (or *it is*). Here we have focussed on the Subject *David*, but we could also focus on the Direct Object *English*:

It was *English* that David studied at Oxford

or on the Adjunct *at Oxford*

It was *at Oxford* that David studied English

Cleft constructions, then, exhibit the pattern:

***It* + *be* + focus + clause**

13 Functions and Phrases

The syntactic functions which we looked at in the last section -- Subject, Object, Predicate, Adjunct, etc -- are all functions within sentences or clauses. We saw, for instance, that most sentences can be divided into two main functional constituents, the Subject and the Predicate:

Subject	Predicate
[1] The lion	Roared
[2] He	writes well
[3] She	enjoys going to the cinema
[4] The girl in the blue dress	arrived late

Within the Predicate, too, constituents perform various functions -- in [3], for example, *going to the cinema* performs the function of Direct Object, while in [4], *late* performs the function of Adjunct. In each of these cases, we are referring to the roles which these constituents perform in the sentence or clause.

We can also assign functions to the constituents of a phrase. Recall that we have said that all phrases have the following generalised structure:

(pre-Head string) --- Head --- (post-Head string)

where the parentheses denote optional elements.

In this section, we will consider the functions of these parts of a phrase -- what roles do they perform in the phrase as a whole?

We will begin by looking at functions within verb phrases.

13.1 Complements

Consider the bracketed verb phrase in the following sentence:

David [VP plays the piano]

In formal terms, we can analyse this VP using the familiar three-part structure:

pre-Head string	Head	post-Head string
--	plays	the piano

Let us now consider the functions of each of these three parts.

Actually, we already know the function of one of the parts -- the word *plays* functions as the Head of this VP. The term "Head" is a functional label, indicated by the capital (upper case) letter. Remember that we also capitalize the other functions -- Subject, Object, Predicate, etc.

Turning now to the post-Head string *the piano*, we can see that it completes the meaning of the Head *plays*. In functional terms, we refer to this string as the COMPLEMENT of the Head. Here are some more examples of Complements in verb phrases:

pre-Head string	Head	Complement
never	needs	*money*
--	eat	*vegetables*
not	say	*what he is doing*

In each case, the Complement completes the meaning of the Head, so there is a strong syntactic link between these two strings.

At this point you may be wondering why we do not simply say that these post-Head strings are Direct Objects. Why do we need the further term Complement?

The string which completes the meaning of the Head is not always a Direct Object. Consider the following:

She [VP told me]

Here the post-Head string (the Complement) is an Indirect Object. With ditransitive verbs, two Objects appear:

We [VP gave James a present]

Here, the meaning of the Head *gave* is completed by two strings -- *James* and *a present*. Each string is a Complement of the Head *gave*.

Finally, consider verb phrases in which the Head is a form of the verb *be*:

David [VP is a musician]
Amy [VP is clever]
Our car [VP is in the carpark]

The post-Head strings here are neither Direct Objects nor Indirect Objects. The verb *be* is known as a COPULAR verb. It takes a special type of Complement which we will refer to generally as a COPULAR COMPLEMENT. There is a small number of other copular verbs. In the following examples, we have highlighted the Head, and italicised the Complement:

Our teacher [VP **became** *angry*]
Your sister [VP **seems** *upset*]
All the players [VP **felt** *very tired*] after the game
That [VP **sounds** *great*]

It is clear from this that we require the general term *Complement* to encompass all post-Head strings, regardless of their type. In verb phrases, a wide range of Complements can appear, but in all cases there is a strong syntactic link between the Complement and the Head. The Complement is that part of the VP which is required to complete the meaning of the Head.

13.2 Complements in other Phrase Types

Complements also occur in all of the other phrase types. We exemplify each type in the following table:

Phrase Type	Head	Typical Complements	Examples
Noun Phrase (NP)	noun	PP clause	respect *for human rights* the realisation *that nothing has changed*
Verb Phrase (VP)	verb	NP clause PP	David plays *the piano* They realised *that nothing has changed* She looked *at the moon*
Adjective Phrase (AP)	adjective	clause PP	easy *to read* fond *of biscuits*
Adverb Phrase (AdvP)	adverb	PP	luckily *for me*
Prepositional Phrase (PP)	preposition	NP PP	in *the room* from *behind the wall*

Adverb phrases are very limited in the Complements they can take. In fact, they generally occur without any Complement.

Noun phrases which take Complements generally have an abstract noun as their Head, and they often have a verbal counterpart:

the pursuit of happiness	~we pursue happiness
their belief in ghosts	~they believe in ghosts
the realisation that nothing has changed	~they realise that nothing has changed

13.3 Adjuncts in Phrases

The term "Complement" is not simply another word for the "post-Head string" -- post-Head strings are not always Complements. This is because the post-Head string is not always required to complete the meaning of the Head. Consider:

[NP My sister, who will be twenty next week,] has got a new job.

Here the relative clause *who will be twenty next week* is certainly a post-Head string, but it is not a Complement. Notice that it contributes additional but optional information about the Head *sister*. In this example, the post-Head string is an ADJUNCT. Like the other Adjuncts we looked at earlier, it contributes additional, optional information.

Adjuncts can occur in all the phrase types, and they may occur both before and after the Head. The following table shows examples of each type:

Phrase Type	Head	Typical Adjuncts	Examples
Noun Phrase (NP)	noun	PP AP clause	the books *on the shelf* the *old* lady cocoa, *which is made from cacao beans*
Verb Phrase (VP)	verb	AdvP PP	she *rapidly* lost interest he stood *on the patio*
Adjective Phrase (AP)	adjective	AdvP	it was *terribly* difficult
Prepositional Phrase (PP)	preposition	AdvP	*completely* out of control

13.4 Complements and Adjuncts Compared

Complements differ from Adjuncts in two important respects:

1. Complements immediately follow the Head

In most phrases, the Complement must immediately follow the Head:

David [VP plays [Complement the piano] [Adjunct beautifully]]

In contrast, the reverse order is not possible:

*David [VP plays [Adjunct beautifully] [Complement the piano]]

Similarly:

fond [Complement of biscuits] [Adjunct with coffee]

~*fond [Adjunct with coffee] [Complement of biscuits]

Complements, then, bear a much closer relationship to the Head than Adjuncts do.

2. Adjuncts are "stackable"

In theory at least, we can "stack" an indefinite number of Adjuncts, one after another, within a phrase. For example, consider the NP:

	Adjunct	Adjunct	Adjunct	Adjunct
the book	on the shelf	by Dickens	with the red cover	that you gave me...

In contrast with this, phrases are limited in the number of Complements that they can take. In fact, they usually have only one Complement. Ditransitive verb phrases are an exception to this. Recall that they take two Complements:

We [VP gave [Complement James] [Complement a present]]

13.5 Specifiers

Adjuncts can appear before the Head of a phrase, as well as after the Head. For example, in the following NP, the Adjunct *sudden* is part of what we have been calling the pre-Head string:

?	Adjunct	Head	Complement
the	sudden	realisation	that nothing has changed

In this section we will look at the function of the remaining part of the pre-Head string. In this example, what is the function of *the* in the phrase as a whole?

We refer to this part of the phrase as the SPECIFIER of the phrase. Again, Specifiers may occur in all the major phrase types, and we exemplify them in the following table:

Phrase Type	Head	Typical Specifiers	Examples
Noun Phrase (NP)	noun	Determiners	*the* vehicle *an* objection *some* people
Verb Phrase (VP)	verb	`negative' elements	*not* arrive *never* plays the piano
Adjective Phrase (AP)	adjective	AdvP	*quite* remarkable *very* fond of animals
Prepositional Phrase (PP)	preposition	AdvP	*just* across the street

An important point about Specifiers is that they relate to the Head + Complement sequence, and not to the Head alone. For example, in the AP *very fond of animals* , the Specifier *very* relates to *fond of animals*, not just to *fond*:

Amy is very fond of animals

Q. Amy is very *what*?

A. *Fond

A. Fond of animals

In functional terms, then, the three-part structure of a phrase can be summarised as:

(Specifier) -- [Head -- (Complement)]

You have now completed the Internet Grammar of English.

The Internet Grammar does not, of course, cover every aspect of English grammar, and many of the topics we have looked at could be discussed in much greater detail.

In the Further Reading section, we have listed some other works on grammar, and on the English language generally, which you may find useful.