

Grammar Glossary

(this glossary is adapted from www.theschoolrun.com, which contain examples of all the terminology below.



An **abstract noun** is a feeling or concept that you cannot touch, such as happiness or education.

A phrase is a small group of words that does not contain a verb. An **adverbial phrase** is built around an adverb and the words that surround it, for example: very slowly, as fast as possible.

A sentence is written in **active voice** when the subject of the sentence is performing the action (for example, "The cat chased the mouse.")

An **adjective** is a word used to describe and give more information about a noun, which could be a person, place or object.

An **adverb** is a word which modifies a verb, which means that it tells you how, when, where or why something is being done.

Apostrophes are punctuation marks used to show possession and to show contraction (also known as omission).

Articles are words which tell us whether a noun is general (any noun) or specific. There are three articles: 'the' is a **definite article** and 'a' and 'an' are **indefinite articles**.

Clauses are the building blocks of sentences, groups of words that contain a subject and a verb. Clauses can be main or subordinate.

A **colon** is a punctuation mark that can be used to introduce a list or to separate two independent but linked clauses.

A **comma** is a punctuation mark that separates items in a list and marks the divisions within sentences.

A **common noun** describes a class of objects (car, friend, dog); unlike proper nouns it does not have a capital letter (Honda, Jenny, Smudge).

The **comparative** form of an adjective or adverb is used to compare one person, thing, action or state to another. Examples of comparatives: sadder, lighter, more famous, worse, more angrily. The comparative is usually formed by adding the **suffix** -er.

A **complex sentence** is formed when you join a main clause and a subordinate clause with a connective.

A **compound sentence** is formed by joining two main clauses with a connective.

A **concrete noun** is something you can touch, such as a person, an animal, a place or a thing. Concrete nouns can be common nouns (man, city, film) or proper nouns (Mr Edwards, London, Gone with the Wind).

A **conjunction** is a type of **connective** ('connective' is an umbrella term for any word that connects bits of text). Co-ordinating connectives include the words and, but and so; subordinating connectives include the words because, if and until.

A **connective** is a word that joins one part of a text to another. Connectives can be **conjunctions**, **prepositions** or **adverbs**.

Contracted words are short words made by putting two words together. Letters are missed out in the contraction and replaced by an apostrophe, for example I'm (I am) or it's (it is).

A **dash** is a versatile punctuation mark that can be used within a sentence (instead of brackets or a colon) to show **parenthesis**.

A **determiner** is a word that introduces a **noun** and identifies it in detail. Determiners can be **articles** (a, an, the), demonstratives (this, that), possessives (your, his), quantifiers (some, many), numbers (six, sixty).

Direct speech is a sentence in which the exact words spoken are reproduced in speech marks (quotation marks or inverted commas). **Indirect speech** or reported speech is when the general points of what someone has said are reported, without actually writing the speech out in full.

An **ellipsis** is a punctuation mark, a series of three consecutive dots that can be used to show a pause for effect to increase tension, an unfinished thought, a trail off into silence or that the writer has deliberately missed out a word, sentence, or whole section from a text, without altering its original meaning.

An **embedded clause** is a **clause** used in the middle of another clause. It is usually marked by commas.

An **exclamation mark** is a punctuation mark which looks like a straight line with a dot underneath it. It is used to show that an **exclamation**, an interjection or a **statement** sentence has finished.

An **exclamation** is forceful statement which expresses high levels of emotion or excitement.

A **full stop** is a punctuation mark used to separate sentences.

Fronted adverbials are words or phrases at the beginning of a sentence, used like **adverbs** to describe the action that follows.

Homophones are words that sound the same but have different meanings. Some homophones are pronounced the same way and spelled the same way but have different meanings; others are pronounced the same way but are spelled differently and have different meanings.

An **imperative verb** is one that tells someone to do something, so that the sentence it is in becomes an order or command.

While most verbs form their different tenses according to an established "formula", some verbs do not form their tenses in a regular way and are called **irregular verbs**.

A **modal verb** is a special type of verb which changes or affects other verbs in a sentence. Modal verbs are used to show the level of possibility, indicate ability, show obligation or give permission.

A **multi-clause sentence** is another term for a complex sentence.

Non-Standard English is the vocabulary and sentence structure used in informal English; Standard English is the "correct" form of the language used in schools and in written communication.

A **noun** is a naming word. It is a thing, a person, an animal or a place. Nouns can be common, proper, abstract or collective.

A phrase is a small group of words that does not contain a verb. A **noun phrase** includes one noun as well as words that describe it, for example: the red shoe.

The **object** of a sentence is the thing or person that is involved in an action, but does not carry it out ("The cat chased **the mouse**").

Parenthesis is a word, phrase, or clause inserted into a sentence to add extra, subordinate or clarifying information. Brackets are also known as parentheses and usually used to show parenthesis.

A sentence is written in **passive voice** when the **subject** of the sentence has something done to it by someone or something. For example: "The mouse was being chased by the cat.

The **past continuous** is the **verb tense** we use to describe actions that continued for a period of time in the past (I was walking / I was singing).

The **past perfect** is the **verb tense** we use to describe actions that were completed by a particular time in the past.

A **personal pronoun** is a word which can be used instead of a person, place or thing: I, you, he, she, it, we, they, me, him, her, us and them.

A **phrase** is a small group of words that does not contain a **verb**.

A **plural** word indicates there is more than one noun.

Possessive pronouns are used to show ownership. Some can be used on their own (mine, yours, his, hers, ours, theirs, whose); others must be used with a noun (my, your, his, her, its, our, their, whose).

A **prefix** is a string of letters that are added to the beginning of a root word, changing its meaning.

Prepositions are linking words in a sentence. We use prepositions to explain where things are in time or space.

A phrase is a small group of words that does not contain a verb. **Prepositional phrases** contain a preposition, for example: on the mat, in the morning, under the chair, during the film.

The **present continuous** is the verb tense we use to describe actions that continue for a period of time (I am walking / I am singing).

The **present perfect** is the verb tense we use to describe actions that are completed by the present.

A **pronoun** is a word used to replace a noun. Examples of pronouns are: he, she, it, they. Pronouns can be personal and possessive.

A **proper noun** identifies a particular person, place, or thing (for example, James or Brazil or Monday or Glasgow). Proper nouns always start with a capital letter.

A **question** is a type of sentence that we ask or write to gain further information from a person or people responding.

A **question mark** is a punctuation mark, or a symbol, that shows that a question has ended.

A **relative clause** is a type of **subordinate clause** that adapts, describes or modifies a noun by using a **relative pronoun** (who, that or which).

A **root word** is a basic word with no prefix or suffix added to it. By adding prefixes and suffixes to a root word we can change its meaning.

A **sentence** is one word or a group of words that makes sense by itself (a grammatical unit). Sentences begin with a capital letter and end with a full stop, a question mark or an exclamation point.

There are four types of sentence: statements, commands, questions and exclamations.

A **semi-colon** is a punctuation mark that is used to separate two independent (main) clauses that are closely related.

A **simple sentence** has a subject and one verb. A **compound sentence** is formed when you join two main clauses with a connective. A **complex sentence** is formed when you join a main clause and a subordinate clause with a connective.

When a noun is **singular**, it means there is only one person, place or object.

Inverted commas (also known as **speech marks** and quotation marks) are punctuation marks that show us where **direct speech** starts and ends.

Standard English is the usual "correct" form of English, taught in schools and used in formal written communication.

A **statement** is the most common type of sentence. Statements are sentences that express a fact, idea or opinion.

The **subject** of a sentence is the thing or person who is carrying out the action described by the verb ("The **cat** chased the mouse.").

The **subjunctive** is a verb form used to express things that could or should happen, for example: If I *were* to go... / I demand that he *answer*!

A **subordinate clause** needs to be attached to a main clause because it cannot make sense on its own, although it contains a subject and a verb.

A **suffix** is a string of letters that go at the end of a word, changing or adding to its meaning. Suffixes can show if a word is a noun, an adjective, an adverb or a verb.

The **superlative** form of an adjective or adverb is used to compare one person, thing, action or state to all the others in its class. Examples of superlatives: saddest, lightest, most famous, worst, most angrily. The superlative is usually formed by adding the **suffix** -est.

Time connectives are words or phrases which tell the reader when something is happening. They can also be called temporal connectives.

A **verb** expresses a physical action, a mental action or a state of being. Powerful verbs are descriptive, rich words.

Verb tenses tell us the time when an action took place, in the past, the present or the future.

Have we missed any grammar terms that you'd like to see explained? Email requests for new