

# Glossary of grammatical terminology

to accompany the KS3 Grammar site at  
<http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/dick/tta/KS3.htm>

## Introduction

This glossary includes:

- the terms and definitions in the glossary of the Framework for the [National Literacy Strategy](#) which are relevant to grammar; some terms that are embedded within definitions in the NLS glossary are also given separate entries to make them easier to find, but otherwise the NLS glossary entries are unchanged.
- some additional terms from the glossary in the Framework for [Modern Foreign Languages at KS3](#); where NLS entries have been expanded in the MFL glossary, these expansions are included here,
- 26 extra terms needed for the KS3 grammar material; these extra terms are all marked '[new]' in the list in the bottom window.

All the individual terms and definitions are linked, where possible, to units in the KS3 material; just click the head-word if it is underlined, and you will go straight to the relevant part of the material.

**To move round** the glossary, click on any underlined term in either window. You can drag the border between the windows up or down with your mouse.

Like the rest of this KS3 material, primary **responsibility** lies with [Richard Hudson](#) but a number of colleagues from linguistics and the world of education have helped.

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## abbreviation

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

*Co. (Company)*  
*approx. (approximately)*  
*PR (public relations)*  
*PTO (Please turn over)*

Some common abbreviations are of Latin terms:

*etc (et cetera = and so on)*  
*eg (exempli gratia = for example)*  
*NB (nota bene = note especially)*  
*ie (id est = that is)*

Names of organisations are often abbreviated using the initial letters of each word. For example:

*the EU (European Union)*  
*the NHS (National Health Service)*  
*IBM (International Business Machines)*

Some such abbreviations (for example, *NATO*, *FIFA* and *UNESCO*) are **acronyms**.

Some words are abbreviated so that only a part of the original word is used. Examples are:

*phone (telephone)*  
*fridge (refrigerator)*  
*bus (omnibus)*  
*exam (examination).*

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### **abstract noun**

Abstract nouns refer to ideas and other kinds of abstractions, e.g.

*hour, name, end, hope, success.*

In academic writing abstract nouns are common and are often used instead of verbs - for example, *their arrival* is a useful alternative to *they arrived*.

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### **accent**

Features of pronunciation which vary according to the speaker's regional and social origin. All oral language, including standard English, is spoken with an accent. The term **accent** refers to pronunciation only.

In MFL an accent can also be a diacritic mark used above some vowels to denote sound or spelling changes. Technically 'accent' refers only to the three marks known as grave, acute and circumflex, as with è, é and ê.

See also **dialect**

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### **acronym**

An acronym is an **abbreviation** which is made up of the initial letters of a group of words, and is pronounced as a single word. For example:

*laser (light amplification by the stimulated  
emission of radiation)*  
*Aids (Aacquired iimmune deficiency sndrome)*  
*NATO (Nnorth Aatlantic Ttreaty Oorganization)*  
*RAM (Rrandom Aaccess Mmemory)*

Acronyms are to be contrasted with abbreviations in which the separate letters are pronounced:

*USA* (pronounced as U-S-A)

*POW* (P-O-W)

*EMI* (E-M-I)

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active and **passive** (see also [here](#))

Many verbs can be active or passive. For example, *bite*:

*The dog bit Ben.* (active)

*Ben was bitten by the dog.* (passive)

In the active sentence, the subject (*the dog*) performs the action. In the passive sentence, the subject (*Ben*) is on the receiving end of the action. The two sentences give similar information, but there is a difference in focus. The first is about what the dog did; the second is about what happened to Ben.

All passive forms are made up of the verb *be* + past **participle**:

active	<i>Somebody <u>saw</u> you.</i>
	<i>We must <u>find</u> them.</i>
	<i>I <u>have repaired</u> it.</i>

passive	<i>You <u>were seen</u>.</i>
	<i>They must <u>be found</u>.</i>
	<i>It <u>has been repaired</u>.</i>

In a passive sentence, the 'doer' (or agent) may be identified using *by ...*:

*Ben was bitten by the dog.*

But very often, in passive sentences, the agent is unknown or insignificant, and therefore not identified:

*The computer has been repaired.*

Passive forms are common in impersonal, formal styles. For example:

*It was agreed that ... (compare *We agreed that ...*).*

*Application forms may be obtained from the address below.*

In other European languages the passive is used less often than in English, at least in spoken and/or informal language. The indefinite pronouns *on* and *man* are used in French and German respectively much more often than the English *one* (much as English uses 'they've moved the sign' rather than 'the sign has been moved').

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## adjectival

See [phrase](#).

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## adjective

An adjective is a word that describes somebody or something. *Old, white, busy, careful* and *horrible* are all adjectives. Adjectives either come before a noun, or after verbs such as *be, get, seem, look* (linking verbs):

*a busy day*      *I'm busy*  
*nice shoes*      *those shoes look nice*

Adjectives (and adverbs) can have comparative and superlative forms. The comparative form is adjective + *-er* (for one-syllable adjectives, and some two-syllable) or *more* + adjective (for adjectives of two or more syllables):

*old - older*  
*hot - hotter*  
*easy - easier*  
*dangerous - more dangerous*

The corresponding superlative forms are *-est* or *most ...*:

*small - smallest*  
*big - biggest*  
*funny - funniest*  
*important - most important*

In other languages adjectives are commonly inflected to agree with nouns. This may apply wherever the adjective is placed, but in German an adjective used predicatively (following verbs such as *sein, werden, aussehen*) is not inflected.

The position of adjectives in other languages may differ from the pattern in English: they may precede or follow the noun. As a rule, however, the English principle exemplified in the phrase *a little green car* (as opposed to *a green little car*) applies in other languages too.

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## adverb

Adverbs give extra meaning to a verb, an adjective, another adverb or a whole sentence:

*I really enjoyed the party.*      (adverb + verb)  
*She's really nice.*      (adverb + adjective)  
*He works really slowly.*      (adverb + adverb)

Really, he should do better. (adverb + sentence)

Many adverbs are formed by adding *-ly* to an adjective, for example *quickly, dangerously, nicely*, but there are many adverbs which do not end in *-ly*. Note too that some *-ly* words are adjectives, not adverbs (eg *lovely, silly, friendly*).

In many cases, adverbs tell us:

how (manner)  
where (place)  
when (time)  
how often (frequency)

Other adverbs show

degree of intensity:  
*very slow(ly) fairly dangerous(ly) really good/well*

the attitude of the speaker to what he or she is saying:  
*perhaps obviously fortunately*

connections in meaning between sentences (see **connective**):  
*however furthermore finally*

An **adverbial phrase** is a group of words that functions in the same way as a single adverb. For example: *by car, to school, last week, three times a day, first of all, of course*:

*They left yesterday.* (adverb)                      *She looked at me strangely.* (adverb)

*They left a few days ago.* (adverbial phrase)    *She looked at me in a strange way.* (adverbial phrase)

Similarly, an **adverbial clause** functions in the same way as an adverb. For example:

*It was raining yesterday.* (adverb)  
*It was raining when we went out.* (adverbial clause).

Other languages form adverbs in different ways. In French the suffix *-ment* is added to the feminine adjective form (though there are numerous exceptions); in German the adjective is used in its basic form with no suffix.

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## **adverbial**

An adverbial is a **clause element** that functions like an adverb, so it is an adverbial phrase or an adverbial clause. For example, these underlined elements are all adverbials:

At first, I really enjoyed it because it was my kind of music.

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## adverbial clause/phrase

See [subordinate clause](#), [phrase](#).

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## [affix](#)

A **morpheme** which is not in itself a word, but is attached to a word. An affix can be a **prefix** (*intolerant, dislike*) or a **suffix** (*kindness, playing*).

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## [agreement](#) (or **concord**)

In some cases the form of a verb changes according to its subject (so the verb and subject 'agree'). This happens with the verb *be*:

*I am/he is/they are*  
*I was/you were*

and the third person singular (*he/she/it*) of the present tense:

*I like/she likes*  
*I don't/he doesn't*

Note that singular collective **nouns** (eg *team, family, government*) can take a singular or plural verb form. For example:

*The team (= it) is playing well.*  
*The team (= they) are playing well.*

There are a few cases where a **determiner** must agree with a noun according to whether it is singular or plural. For example:

*this house these houses*  
*much traffic many cars*

Agreement in some other languages is a much more significant feature than in English, applying not only to verbs – and with a wider range of endings – but also to adjectives and articles as a function of gender and case.

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## **ambiguity**

a phrase or statement which has more than one possible interpretation. This sometimes arises from unclear grammatical relationships. For example, in the phrase: '*police shot man with knife*', it is not specified whether the man had the knife or the police used the knife to shoot the man. Both interpretations are possible, although only one is logical. In poetry, ambiguity may extend meanings beyond the literal.

The sentence: '*Walking dogs can be fun*' has two possible interpretations: '*it is fun to take dogs for walks*' or '*dogs which go walking are fun*'.

Ambiguity is often a source of humour. Ambiguity may be accidental or deliberate.

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## analogy

Perception of similarity between two things; relating something known to something new; in spelling, using known spellings to spell unknown words: *night-knight-right-sight-light-fright*; in reading, using knowledge of words to attempt previously unseen words.

Emphasis on analogy encourages learners to generalise existing knowledge to new situations.

In their learning of grammar, pupils often apply **affixes** incorrectly by analogy: *goed, comed, mouses*. Analogy may also be used in literature to draw a parallel between two situations, for example using animal behaviour to draw attention to human behaviour.

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## anaphora, anaphoric

Anaphora (Greek: 'referring back') is the relationship between one word (such as a pronoun) and another word or phrase, normally before it, to which it refers back. E.g. in

The children went to bed early because they were tired,

the relationship between *they* and *the children* is anaphora - *they* refers anaphorically to *the children*.

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## **antonym**

A word with a meaning opposite to another: *hot - cold, light - dark, light - heavy*. A word may have more than one word as an antonym: *cold - hot/warm; big - small/tiny/little/titchy*.

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## apostrophe (')

An apostrophe is a punctuation mark used to indicate either omitted letters or possession.

### **omitted letters**

We use an apostrophe for the omitted letter(s) when a verb is contracted (= shortened).  
For example:

<i>I'm (I am)</i>	<i>who's (who is/has)</i>
<i>they've (they have)</i>	<i>he'd (he had/would)</i>
<i>we're (we are)</i>	<i>it's (it is/has)</i>
<i>would've (would have)</i>	<i>she'll (she will)</i>

In contracted negative forms, *not* is contracted to *n't* and joined to the verb: *isn't, didn't,*

*couldn't* etc.

In formal written style, it is more usual to use the full form.

There are a few other cases where an apostrophe is used to indicate letters that are in some sense 'omitted' in words other than verbs, eg *let's* (= *let us*), *o'clock* (= *of the clock*).

Note the difference between *its* (= 'belonging to it') and *it's* (= 'it is' or 'it has'):

*The company is to close one of its factories.* (no apostrophe)

*The factory employs 800 people. It's (= *it is*) the largest factory in the town.*  
(apostrophe necessary)

### **possession**

We use an apostrophe + *s* for the possessive form :

*my mother's car*

*Joe and Fiona's house*

*the cat's tail*

*James's ambition*

*a week's holiday*

With a plural 'possessor' already ending in *s* (eg *parents*), an apostrophe is added to the end of the word:

*my parents' car*

*the girls' toilets*

But irregular plurals (eg *men*, *children*) take an apostrophe + *s*:

*children's clothes*

The regular plural form (-*s*) is often confused with possessive -'*s*:

*I bought some apples.* (not *apple's*)

Note that the possessive words *yours*, *his*, *hers*, *ours*, *theirs*, and *its* are not written with an apostrophe.

Apostrophe use in other languages mainly indicates omitted letters though the details of application may vary.

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### **apposition**

In

my brother John,

the expressions *my brother* and *John* are 'in apposition' because they are combined to form a single phrase, and they both refer to the same person but supply different information about him: that he is my brother and that he is John. Similarly, in



the fact that it works,

the clause *that it works* is in apposition to the noun phrase *the fact* because both refer to the same idea.

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### article

*A, an* and *the* are articles. *A* (*an* before a vowel sound) is the indefinite article; *the* is the definite article. Articles are a type of **determiner**.

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### audience

the people addressed by a text. The term refers to listeners, readers of books, film/TV audiences and users of information technology.

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### auxiliary verbs

These are verbs that are used together with other verbs. For example:

*we are going*  
*Lucy has arrived*  
*can you play*

In these sentences, *going*, *arrived* and *play* are the main verbs. *Are*, *has* and *can* are auxiliary verbs, and add extra meaning to the main verb.

The most common auxiliary verbs are *be*, *have* and *do* (all of which can also be main verbs).

*Be* is used in continuous forms (*be* + *-ing*) and in passive forms:  
*We are going away. Was the car damaged?*

*Have* is used in perfect verb forms:  
*Lucy has arrived. I haven't finished.*

*Do* is used to make questions and negatives in the simple present and past tenses:  
*Do you know the answer? I didn't see anybody.*

More than one auxiliary verb can be used together. For example:

*I have been waiting for ages. (have and been are auxiliary verbs)*

The remaining auxiliary verbs are **modal verbs**, eg *can*, *will*.

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### backshift

If a past-tense verb such as *said* or *thought* is used with a noun clause whose verb would otherwise be present tense, this tense may be 'backshifted' into the past:

I thought today was Tuesday,

reporting the thought 'Today is Tuesday'.

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### bridging

Bridging is an indirect type of [anaphora](#) which allows us to use one person or thing as a 'bridge' to another; for example, having started to talk about a book we can refer to its author simply as 'the author', as though the author had already been introduced directly.

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### case

a That aspect of a noun or pronoun which relates to its function in a sentence. The standard relationship is:

- subject = nominative
- direct object = accusative
- indirect object = dative
- possessive case = genitive.

In most European languages nouns no longer have many different forms to reflect cases. In German (which has four cases) the various determiners (articles, etc.) have a number of endings which indicate case, and endings are in some instances applied to the noun itself (e.g. the dative plural always ends in *-en*). In English the genitive persists in the [possessive](#) form marked with the *-s* or *'s* (John's coat; my sisters' books).

In many languages, pronouns still have forms that reflect a case aspect: *he/him/him; il/le/lui; er/ihn/ihm* all indicate nominative/accusative/dative respectively.

b In relation to single letters or characters in written language: upper case = capital letters, lower case = non-capital letters.

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### clause

A clause is a group of words that expresses an event (*she drank some water*) or a situation (*she was thirsty/she wanted a drink*). It usually contains a **subject** (*she* in the examples) and **verb** (*drank/was/wanted*).

Note how a clause differs from a [phrase](#):

*a big dog*

(a phrase - this refers to 'a big dog' but doesn't say what the dog did or what happened to it)

*a big dog chased me* (a clause - the dog did something)

A sentence is made up of one or more clauses:

*It was raining.* (one clause)

*It was raining and we were cold.* (two main clauses joined by *and*)

*It was raining when we went out.* (main clause containing a subordinate clause - the subordinate clause is underlined)

A **main clause** is complete on its own and can form a complete sentence (eg *It was raining when we went out.*). A **subordinate clause** (*when we went out*) is part of the main clause and cannot exist on its own. In the following examples, the subordinate clauses are underlined:

*You'll hurt yourself if you're not careful.*

*Although it was cold, the weather was pleasant enough.*

*Where are the biscuits (that) I bought this morning?*

*John, who was very angry, began shouting.*

*What you said was not true.*

Although most clauses require a subject and verb, some subordinate clauses do not. In many such cases, the verb *be* can be understood. For example:

*The weather, although rather cold, was pleasant enough.*

(= *although it was rather cold*)

*When in Rome, do as the Romans do.*

(= *when you are in Rome*)

*Glad to be home, George sat down in his favourite armchair.*

(= *he was glad to be home*)

Clause use in other languages, notably German, may involve issues of word order and punctuation.

See also **subordinate clause**.

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## **clause element**

The parts of a clause are often called its 'elements'. The main clause elements are the verb chain, the subject, object and complement, and adverbials.

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## **cognate**

Technically means 'from the same root or origin'. In MFL, the term is commonly used to denote words which are identical with or very close to their English equivalent in spelling and meaning: *important* in English and French; *house* and *Haus* in English and German. Words may be technically cognates but their use or meaning may have diverged from English over time (e.g. English and German *so*).

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## coherence and cohesion

An effective text needs to be coherent and cohesive.

The term **coherence** refers to the underlying logic and consistency of a text. The ideas expressed should be relevant to one another so that the reader can follow the meaning.

The term **cohesion** refers to the grammatical features in a text which enable the parts to fit together. One way of creating cohesion is the use of connectives:

*I sat down and turned on the television. Just then, I heard a strange noise.*

The phrase '*just then*' relates these events in time.

Cohesion is also achieved by the use of words (such as **pronouns**) that refer back to other parts of the text. In these examples, such words are underlined:

*There was a man waiting at the door. I had never seen him before.*

*We haven't got a car. We used to have one, but we sold it.*

*I wonder whether Sarah will pass her driving test. I hope she does. (= I hope Sarah passes her driving test)*

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## **colloquial**

Belonging to conversation/language used in familiar, informal contexts. Contrasted with formal or literary language.

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## colon (:)

A colon is a punctuation mark used to introduce a list or a following example (as in this glossary). It may also be used before a second clause that expands or illustrates the first:

*He was very cold: the temperature was below zero.*

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## comma (,)

A comma is a punctuation mark used to help the reader by separating parts of a sentence. It sometimes corresponds to a pause in speech.

In particular we use commas:

to separate items in a list (but not usually before *and*):

*My favourite sports are football, tennis, swimming and gymnastics.*

*I got home, had a bath and went to bed.*

to mark off extra information:

*Jill, my boss, is 28 years old.*

after a subordinate **clause** which begins a sentence:

*Although it was cold, we didn't wear our coats.*

with many connecting **adverbs** (eg *however, on the other hand, anyway, for example*):

*Anyway, in the end I decided not to go.*

In some languages the comma plays a grammatical role, for example in clause demarcation in German.

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### comma splice

A comma splice is a combination of two (or more) clauses that are linked solely by a comma - e.g. *This sentence is quite short, it only contains ten words.* A comma splice can generally be improved either by adding *and* (or a subordinating conjunction), or by changing the comma into a semi-colon or full stop.

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### complement

In the sentences *Lisa is a fast runner* or *Lisa is very fit*, 'Lisa' is the **subject** and 'is' is the **verb**. Neither sentence has an **object**. The rest of the sentence (*a fast runner/very fit*) is called a complement. A complement usually tells you something about the subject of the sentence (especially after the verb *be* but also after other linking verbs such as *seem, look, get, become*). In the examples the complement is underlined:

*These apples are delicious.*      *Why did you become a teacher?*

*You don't look very well.*      *This is John. He's a friend of mine.*

A complement can also refer to the **object** of a sentence. For example:

*I found the book very interesting.* (*very interesting* refers to *the book*, which is the object of *found*)

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### **complex** sentence

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### **compound** sentence

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### compound word

a word made up of two other words: *football, headrest, broomstick*.

Compound words in other languages may be formed with hyphens (as in French) or based on some variant of the English pattern (as in German).

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## concord

Same as [agreement](#).

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## conditional

A conditional sentence is one in which one thing depends upon another. Conditional sentences often contain the **conjunction** *if*:

*I'll help you if I can.  
If the weather's bad, we might not go out.*

Other conjunctions used in conditionals are *unless*, *providing*, *provided* and *as long as*.

A conditional sentence can refer to an imaginary situation. For example:

*I would help you if I could. (but in fact I can't)  
What would you do if you were in my position?  
If the weather had been better, we could have gone to the beach.*

The term 'conditional' is sometimes used to refer to the form *would* + verb: *would go*, *would help* etc.

See also **auxiliary verb**

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## conjunction

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

*It was raining but it wasn't cold.  
We won't go out if the weather's bad.*

There are two kinds of conjunction:

a. Co-ordinating conjunctions (*and*, *but*, *or* and *so*). These join (and are placed between) two clauses of equal weight.

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

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

b. Subordinating conjunctions (eg *when*, *while*, *before*, *after*, *since*, *until*, *if*, *because*, *although*, *that*). These go at the beginning of a subordinate **clause**:

*We were hungry because we hadn't eaten all day.  
Although we'd had plenty to eat, we were still hungry.  
We were hungry when we got home.*

See also **clause**, **connective**

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## connective

A connective is a word or phrase that links clauses or sentences. Connectives can be conjunctions (eg *but, when, because*) or connecting adverbs (eg *however, then, therefore*).

Connecting adverbs (and adverbial phrases and clauses) maintain the **cohesion** of a text in several basic ways, including:

addition	<i>also, furthermore, moreover</i>
opposition	<i>however, nevertheless, on the other hand</i>
reinforcing	<i>besides, anyway, after all</i>
explaining	<i>for example, in other words, that is to say</i>
listing	<i>first(ly), first of all, finally</i>
indicating result	<i>therefore, consequently, as a result</i>
indicating time	<i>just then, meanwhile, later</i>

**Commas** are often used to mark off connecting adverbs or adverbial phrases or clauses:

*First of all, I want to say ...*  
*I didn't think much of the film. Helen, on the other hand, enjoyed it.*

Connecting adverbs and conjunctions function differently. Conjunctions (like *but* and *although*) join clauses within a sentence. Connecting adverbs (like *however*) connect ideas but the clauses remain separate sentences:

*I was angry but I didn't say anything. (but is a conjunction - one sentence)*  
*Although I was angry, I didn't say anything. (although is a conjunction - one sentence)*  
*I was angry. However, I didn't say anything. (however is an adverb - two sentences)*

Connectives help foreign language learners to follow the flow of a text they read or hear and to link sentences together when assembling text themselves. Other words such as relative pronouns can also act in the same way as other connectives.

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## **contraction**

See apostrophe

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## co-ordinating conjunction

See co-ordination, conjunction

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## co-ordination

Co-ordination is a grammatical pattern in which two or more elements are combined on equal terms - e.g.

*Mary and John;*

*before five o'clock or after eight o'clock;*

*The sun was shining and the birds were singing.*

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## dash (—)

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

*It was a great day out — everybody enjoyed it.*

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## declarative

Most sentences or clauses are declarative, in contrast with [interrogative](#), [imperative](#) and [exclamative](#) sentences. Declarative clauses have a subject followed by a past-tense or present-tense verb.

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## derivational morphology

Derivational morphology turns a simpler word into a more complex one by adding prefixes or suffixes; e.g. it turns *tidy* into *untidy* or *untidy* into *untidiness*. (Contrast [inflectional morphology](#), which distinguishes different forms of the same word; e.g. *dog* and *dogs*.)

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## determiner

Determiners include many of the most frequent English words, eg *the, a, my, this*. Determiners are used with nouns (*this book, my best friend, a new car*) and they limit (ie determine) the reference of the noun in some way.

Determiners include:

articles	<i>a/an, the</i>
demonstratives	<i>this/that, these/those</i>
possessives	<i>my/your/his/her/its/our/their</i>
quantifiers	<i>some, any, no, many, much, few, little, both, all, either, neither,</i>



	<i>each, every, enough</i>
numbers	<i>three, fifty, three thousand etc</i>
some question words	<i>which (which car?), what (what size?), whose (whose coat?)</i>

When these words are used as determiners, they are followed by a noun (though not necessarily immediately):

*this book is yours*  
*some new houses*  
*which colour do you prefer?*

Many determiners can also be used as **pronouns**. These include the demonstratives, question words, numbers and most of the quantifiers. When used as pronouns, these words are not followed by a noun - their reference includes the noun:

*this is yours* (= this book, this money, etc)  
*I've got some*  
*which do you prefer?*

### diacritic

A diacritic mark is a point, sign or mark above, below or attached to a letter to show a change of sound or (sometimes) a change in spelling that has taken place over time: à â é ç ü ñ å ë.

### dialect

A dialect is a variety of a language used in a particular area and which is distinguished by certain features of grammar or vocabulary. Examples of such features in some English dialects are:

non-standard subject + verb patterns, eg *I knows, you was, he like*  
 past tense forms, eg *I done, I seen*  
 various individual words and expressions, eg *owt/nowt* for *anything/nothing*

See also [double negative](#), [standard English](#)

### [direct speech](#) and **indirect speech**

There are two ways of reporting what somebody says, direct speech and indirect speech.

In direct speech, we use the speaker's original words (as in a speech bubble). In text, speech marks ('...' or "... " – also called inverted commas or quotes) mark the beginning and end of direct speech:

*Helen said, 'I'm going home'.*  
*'What do you want?' I asked.*

In indirect (or reported) speech, we report what was said but do not use the exact words of the original speaker. Typically we change pronouns and verb tenses, and speech marks are not used:

*Helen said (that) she was going home.*  
*I asked them what they wanted.*

---

### **double negative**

In non-standard English, a double negative may be used. For example:

*We didn't see nobody.*  
*I never took nothing.*

Such double negatives are not acceptable in [standard English](#). The equivalent standard forms would be:

*We didn't see anybody.*  
*I didn't take anything.*

---

### **elision**

The omission of a syllable or vowel at the beginning or end of a word, especially when a word ending with a vowel is followed by one beginning with a vowel. For example: *J'ai*; *l'animal* (French); *hab'ich* (German) Elision may be carried over into formal written language, as in the French examples above.

---

### **[ellipsis](#)**

Ellipsis is the omission of words in order to avoid repetition. For example:

*I don't think it will rain but it might. (= it might rain)*  
*'Where were you born?' 'Bradford.'* (= I was born in Bradford)

An ellipsis is also the term used for three dots (...) which show that something has been omitted or is incomplete.

---

### **exclamation**

An exclamation is an utterance expressing emotion (joy, wonder, anger, surprise, etc) and is usually followed in writing by an **exclamation mark (!)**. Exclamations can be [interjections](#):

*Oh dear!*  
*Good grief!*  
*Ow!*

Some exclamations begin with *what* or *how*:

*What a beautiful day!*  
*How stupid (he is)!*  
*What a quiet little girl.*

Exclamations like these are a special type of **sentence** ('[exclamative](#)') and may have no verb.

---

### **exclamation mark (!)**

An exclamation mark is used at the end of a sentence (which may be [exclamative](#), [imperative](#) or [declarative](#)) or an [interjection](#) to indicate strong emotion:

*What a pity!*  
*Get out!*  
*It's a goal!*  
*Oh dear!*

---

### **exclamative**

See [sentence](#)

---

### **finite verb**

If a verb has a tense (past or present), it is finite ('limited' in terms of time). This allows it to be used as the only verb in a sentence, unlike non-finite verbs. For example, *walks* is finite, e.g.

He walks to school.)

but *walking* is non-finite, so it cannot be the only verb, e.g.

He walking to school.

Imperative verbs are also finite, e.g.

Walk to school!.

Whether a verb is finite or non-finite depends on a combination of its inflection and the surrounding words, so *walk* may be either finite e.g.

I walk to school.

or non-finite e.g.

I will walk to school.

---

### front-shifting

Front-shifting shifts a phrase out of its normal position so that it stands instead at the front of the clause that contains it. For example, starting with the basic sentence

I only know the other pupils by sight.

front-shifting could move *the other pupils* to give

The other pupils I only know by sight.

Front-shifting has a subtle but important effect on the balance of the sentence.

---

### **function**

In MFL terms, the nature of a sentence or utterance in relation to its purpose: question, statement, request, invitation, description, etc. In the Framework, the term also refers to the role fulfilled by a noun, etc. in a sentence (e.g. subject, direct object).

---

### **gender**

In the grammatical sense, gender is an aspect of nouns. It features to different extents and in different ways in different languages. In English gender normally applies only in the case of those nouns which refer literally to a masculine or feminine person or animal. There may be separate words (*man/woman, boy/girl, uncle/aunt*) or one of a number of mainly feminine **suffixes** may be used (*actor/actress, hero/heroine; widow/widower*). Some nouns referring to inanimate objects or concepts are traditionally feminine, for example ships, nations and countries.

In the other main European languages gender is a central feature of nouns. Every noun, not only those referring to living things, has a gender which must be known if the noun is to be used accurately. Most languages have two genders – masculine and feminine; German additionally has neuter.

A noun may be of a certain gender for a number of reasons. It may indicate the actual gender, as in English, though this is not an absolute. Usually the reason is etymological and relates to the noun's origins in Latin, Greek, Anglo-Saxon or other defunct language. This link gives rise to common patterns of spelling, so that the gender of a noun can in many cases be identified by its ending. For example, in French:

- feminine endings
  - *-ité cité vérité*

- *-eur pudeur rigueur*
- *-tion section régulation*
- masculine endings
  - *-eau chapeau*
  - *-ment arrondissement*

Such patterns are useful short-cuts to learning genders but as a rule the gender must simply be learned with the noun, usually by learning an article with it.

Many **determiners** have different forms for each gender (French *le/la*; German *der/die/das*). The determiner both indicates and reflects the gender of the noun. Other words must also agree with or match the noun gender: depending on the language, these may include **pronouns**, **adjectives**, **participles**, **relative pronouns**. There may also be article/preposition contractions: French *du*, German *zum*. The situations in which agreement is necessary vary from language to language. Gender is a fundamental aspect of most languages and is one of the earliest concepts which pupils need to identify and understand if later points of language are to make sense and be rapidly mastered.

## genre

This term refers to different types of writing, each with its own specific characteristics which relate to origin (legend/folk tale) or reader interest area - the types of books individuals particularly choose to read: adventure, romance, science fiction.

Texts with these specific features - often related to story elements, patterns of language, structure, vocabulary - may be described as belonging to a particular genre. These attributes are useful in discussing text and in supporting development of writing skills.

Texts may operate at different levels, and so represent more than one genre; some will be combinations, for example historical romance.

## gerund

A gerund is a verb which ends in -ing and which is used like a noun; e.g.

Eating sweets is not allowed.

Gerunds are also called 'verbal nouns'.

## **gist**

The main substance of a written or spoken text or argument; the main point of information in a written or spoken statement.

---

## **glossary**

Part of a text, often an appendix, which defines terms the writer/editor considers may be unfamiliar to the intended audience. In MFL a glossary is a word list specific to a single text or unit of work – technically with definitions given in the target language.

---

## **grammar**

The conventions which govern the relationships between words in any language. Includes the study of word order and changes in words: use of inflections, etc. Study of grammar is important, as it enhances both reading and writing skills; it supports effective communication.

---

## **grammatical boundary**

A grammatical boundary is the edge of a grammatical unit (a sentence, clause or phrase) which, in writing, may be indicated by a punctuation mark such as a **comma**, full stop, **colon**, **semi-colon** or **dash**.

---

## **grapheme**

Written representation of a sound; may consist of one or more letters; for example the phoneme *s* can be represented by the graphemes *s*, *se*, *c*, *sc* and *ce* as in *sun*, *mouse*, *city*, *science*.

---

## **head**

The head of a phrase is the word around which the whole phrase is built and which decides the phrase's general meaning and grammatical characteristics. For example, in

young geography teacher

the head is *teacher* because the phrase means a kind of teacher and is used like a noun.

---

## **historic present**

A historic present is a present-tense verb used to refer to an event in the past, usually to make the narrative more vivid. (*So I say to him, ...*)

---

### homograph

Words which have the same spelling as another, but different meaning: *the calf was eating/my calf was aching; the North Pole/totem pole; he is a Pole*. Pronunciation may be different: *a lead pencil/the dog's lead; furniture polish/Polish people*. A homonym.

---

### homonym

Words which have the same spelling or pronunciation as another, but different meaning or origin. May be a **homograph** or **homophone**.

---

### homophone

Words which have the same sound as another but different meaning or different spelling: *read/reed; pair/pear; right/write/rite*. A homonym.

---

### hyphen (-)

A hyphen is sometimes used to join the two parts of a compound noun, as in *golf-ball* and *proof-read*. But it is much more usual for such compounds to be written as single words (eg *football*, *headache*, *bedroom*) or as separate words without a hyphen (*golf ball*, *stomach ache*, *dining room*, *city centre*).

However, hyphens are used in the following cases:

a. in compound adjectives and longer phrases used as modifiers before nouns:

*a foul-smelling substance*  
*a well-known painter*  
*a German-English dictionary*  
*a one-in-a-million chance*  
*a state-of-the-art computer*  
*a ten-year-old girl*

b. in many compound nouns where the second part is a short word like *in*, *off*, *up* or *by*:

*a break-in*  
*a write-off*  
*a mix-up*  
*a passer-by*

c. in many words beginning with the prefixes *co-*, *non-* and *ex-*:

*co-operate*  
*non-existent*

*ex-husband*

Hyphens are also used to divide words at the end of a line of print.

---

### **idiom**

An idiom is an expression which is not meant literally and whose meaning cannot be deduced from knowledge of the individual words. For example:

*You look a bit under the weather this morning. Are you all right?*

*Try and keep to the point of the discussion. You're always introducing red herrings.*

*You and I have the same problems - we're in the same boat.*

*That name rings a bell. I've heard it before somewhere.*

---

### **imperative**

An imperative sentence or clause has an imperative verb form (i.e. just the bare verb, e.g. *come*, *be*) and usually has a hidden subject *you*: e.g.

*Come here!*

*Please be my friend!*

---

### **indirect speech**

See [direct speech](#)

---

### **infinitive**

The infinitive is the base form of the verb without any additional endings. For example, *play* is an infinitive form (as opposed to *playing*, *played* or *plays*). The infinitive is used with many [auxiliary verbs](#):

*I will play*

*he should play*

*do you play?*

The infinitive is often used with *to* (*to play*, *to eat* etc):

*I ought to play*

*I want to play*

*I'm going to play*

*it would be nice to play*

The [simple present tense](#) (*I play*, *they play* etc) has the same form as the infinitive, except for the third **person** singular (*he/she/it plays*).



---

## inflection

Inflection is a change to the ending of a word to indicate tense, number or other grammatical features. For example:

*walk* - *walks/walked/walking*  
*shoe* - *shoes*  
*old* - *older/oldest*

The extent to which inflection features in different languages varies considerably. English has relatively few inflected forms compared with other European languages.

See also [suffix](#).

---

## **interjection**

An interjection is a word like *Ouch!*, *Oh!* or *Damn!* expressing an emotion such as pain, surprise, anger, etc. An interjection is followed by an [exclamation mark](#) (!).

See also [exclamation](#)

---

## interrogative

An interrogative sentence or clause is one that would normally be used to ask a question - e.g.

*Have you finished?*

*What happened?*

Interrogative clauses are usually signalled by a [subject](#) which follows an [auxiliary verb](#) and/or by an [interrogative pronoun](#).

---

## **intonation**

Intonation is the way in which changes in the musical pitch of the voice are used to structure speech and to contribute to meaning. Among other functions, intonation may distinguish questions from statements (as in 'Sure?' 'Sure!'), or indicate contrastive and emotive stress (as in 'I said *two*, not three', or 'I just *hate* that advertisement!').

---

## intransitive

An intransitive verb is one that has no [object](#).

---

## lexical pattern

A lexical pattern is a regular relationship between words which is found in a large number of word families - e.g. the relationship between an adjective and a noun which consists of the adjective followed by *-ness*:

*good - goodness,*

*childish - childishness,*

---

## lexical relationship

A lexical relationship is a connection between the meanings of two words in a text which helps the text to hold together. Relevant connections include (rough) synonymy (e.g. *woman - person, win - victory*) and connections in a field of meaning (e.g. *plane - pilot*).

---

## **logogram**

A symbol or character which represents a [morpheme](#) or word. A logographic system contrasts with an alphabetic-phonetic system, such as English, in which symbols relate to sounds rather than meaning. There are a number of logograms which would be instantly recognisable to those using alphabetic systems, for example £, &, %.

---

## main clause

A main [clause](#) is one which is a complete sentence (except for any other clauses with which it may be [co-ordinated](#)). For example, the following example contains two main clauses separated by the co-ordinating conjunction *but*:

He said that he had missed the bus, but I knew that he was lying.

A main clause may contain any number of [subordinate clauses](#) (such as the noun clauses in the examples above).

---

## main verb

Any verb which is not an [auxiliary verb](#) is a main verb.

---

## **metalinguage**

The language we use when talking about language itself. It includes words like *sentence, noun, paragraph, preposition*. Those who understand these concepts are able to talk about language quite precisely; thus, acquisition of metalinguage is seen as a crucial step in developing awareness of and proficiency in communication, particularly written language.

---

## modal verb

The modal verbs are:

*can/could*  
*will/would*  
*shall/should*  
*may/might*  
*must/ought*

These **auxiliary verbs** are used to express such ideas as possibility, willingness, prediction, speculation, deduction and necessity. They are all followed by the **infinitive**, and *ought* is followed by *to* + infinitive:

*I can help you.*  
*We might go out tonight.*  
*You ought to eat something.*  
*Stephanie will be here soon.*  
*I wouldn't do that if I were you.*  
*I must go now.*

These verbs can occur with other auxiliary verbs (*be* and *have*):

*I'll be leaving at 11.30.*  
*You should have asked me.*  
*They must have been working.*

In this context *have* is unstressed and therefore identical in speech to unstressed *of*; this is why the misspelling *of* for standard *have* or *'ve* is not uncommon.

---

## modify, modifier

In the phrase

big books about grammar,

*big* **modifies** *books* by changing its meaning from 'books' to 'big books'; and similarly *about grammar* modifies *books* by changing its meaning to 'books about grammar'. Inside a phrase, the word which acts as the phrase's **head** is modified by the other parts of the phrase. These other parts are called its modifiers because they modify its meaning by making it more precise.

---

## morpheme

The smallest unit of meaning. A word may consist of one morpheme (*house*), two morphemes (*house/s*; *hous/ing*) or three or more morphemes (*house/keep/ing*; *un/happi/ness*). **Affixes** are morphemes.

---

## morphology

Morphology is the part of grammar which focuses on the patterns found **within** words (e.g. the

fact that *books* contains the suffix *-s*), in contrast with [syntax](#), which focuses on the patterns that we make by **combining** words.

---

### [non-finite](#).

Any verb in English is classified as either [finite](#) or non-finite. In English there are three kinds of non-finite verb: the [infinitive](#) (*be, see, walk*), the [present participle](#) (*being, seeing, walking*) and the [past participle](#) (*been, seen, walked*).

---

### [noun](#)

A noun is a word that denotes somebody or something. In the sentence *My younger sister won some money in a competition*, '*sister*', '*money*' and '*competition*' are nouns.

Many nouns (countable nouns) can be [singular](#) (only one) or [plural](#) (more than one). For example *sister/sisters, problem/problems, party/parties*. Other nouns ([mass](#) nouns) do not normally occur in the plural. For example: *butter, cotton, electricity, money, happiness*.

A [collective noun](#) is a word that refers to a group. For example, *crowd, flock, team*. Although these are singular in form, we often think of them as plural in meaning and use them with a plural verb. For example, if we say *The team have won all their games so far*, we think of '*the team*' as '*they*' (rather than '*it*').

[Proper nouns](#) are the names of people, places, organisations, etc. These normally begin with a capital letter: *Amanda, Birmingham, Microsoft, Islam, November*.

[Noun phrase](#) is a wider term than 'noun'. It can refer to a single noun (*money*), a pronoun (*it*) or a group of words that functions in the same way as a noun in a sentence, for example:

*a lot of money*  
*my younger sister*  
*a new car*  
*the best team in the world*

Similarly, a [noun clause](#) functions in the same way as a noun. For example:

*The story was not true.* (noun)  
*What you said was not true.* (noun clause)

See also [phrase](#).

---

### [Noun phrase, noun clause](#)

See [noun](#), [phrase](#), [clause](#)

---

## object

see subject and object

---

## **onomatopoeia**

Words which echo sounds associated with their meaning: *clang, hiss, crash, cuckoo*.

---

## **paragraph**

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

A new paragraph begins on a new line, usually with a one-line gap separating it from the previous paragraph. Some writers also indent the first line of a new paragraph.

Paragraphing helps writers to organise their thoughts, and helps readers to follow the story line, argument or dialogue.

---

## **parenthesis**

A parenthesis is a word or phrase inserted into a sentence to explain or elaborate. It may be placed in brackets or between dashes or commas:

*Sam and Emma (his oldest children) are coming to visit him next weekend.*

*Margaret is generally happy – she sings in the mornings! – but responsibility weighs her down.*

*Sarah is, I believe, our best student.*

The term parentheses can also refer to the brackets themselves.

---

## part of speech

An unsatisfactory traditional name for word classes.

---

## participle

Verbs have a present participle and a past participle.

## present participle

The present participle ends in *-ing* (*working, reading, going* etc). Although it is called 'present', it is used in all continuous forms: *she is going, she was going, she will be going, she would have been going*, etc.

The *-ing* ending is also used for a verb functioning as a noun. For example: *I enjoy reading, Reading is important*. ('*Reading*' is used as a noun in these examples.) This *-ing* form is sometimes called a verbal noun or a gerund.

In most other European languages the present participle is not used nearly as much as in English because there is usually no continuous form of tenses.

## past participle

The past participle often ends in *-ed* (*worked, played*) but many common verbs are irregular and have other endings, eg *-t* (*kept*), *-n* (*flown*), and *-en* (*stolen*).

Past participles are used:

- a. after *have* to make perfect forms: *I've worked, he has fallen, we should have gone*
- b. after *be* (*is/was* etc) to make passive forms: *I was asked, they are kept, it has been stolen*

Here too, the name is misleading, because passive forms need not refer to the past: *A toast will be drunk*.

Participles (present and past) are sometimes used as adjectives: *the falling leaves, stolen goods*. They can also be used to introduce [subordinate clauses](#), for example:

*Being a student, Tom doesn't have much money.*

*Written in 1923, the book has been translated into twenty-five languages.*

Participles in other languages may be used less frequently than in English and may be subject to specific rules: agreement in French, word order in German.

See also [active and passive](#), [tense](#).

---

**passive.**

See [active and passive](#).

---

**past participle.**

See [participle](#).

---

## person

In grammar, a distinction is made between first, second and third person.

One uses the first person when referring to oneself (*I/we*); the second person when referring to one's listener or reader (*you*); and the third person when referring to somebody or something else (*he/she/it/they/my friend/the books* etc).

In some cases the form of the verb changes according to person:

*I/we/you/they know*

*I/we/you/they have*

*we/you/they were*

*he/she knows*

*he/she/it has*

*I/he/she/it was*

See also agreement.

---

## **phoneme**

A phoneme is the smallest contrastive unit of sound in a word. There are approximately 44 phonemes in English (the number varies depending on the accent). A phoneme may have variant pronunciations in different positions; for example, the first and last sounds in the word 'little' are variants of the phoneme /l/. A phoneme may be represented by one, two, three or four letters. The following words end in the same phoneme (with the corresponding letters underlined):

*too*

*shoe*

*through*

---

## phrase

A phrase is a group of words that act as one unit. So *dog* is a word, but *the dog, a big dog* or *that dog over there* are all phrases. Strictly speaking, a phrase can also consist of just one word. For example, in the sentence *Dogs are nice*, '*dogs*' and '*nice*' are both one-word phrases.

A phrase can function as a noun, an adjective or an adverb:

a noun phrase

*a big dog*

*my last holiday*

an **adjectival phrase**

*(she's not) as old as you*

*(I'm) really hungry*

an **adverbial phrase**

*(they left) five minutes ago*

*(she walks) very slowly*

If a phrase begins with a **preposition** (like *in a hurry, along the lane*), it can be called a prepositional phrase. A prepositional phrase can be adjectival or adverbial in meaning:

<b>adjectival</b>	<i>(I'm) in a hurry, (the man) with long hair</i>
<b>adverbial</b>	<i>(they left) on Tuesday, (she lives) along the lane</i>

---

## plural

See [singular and plural](#).

---

## predicate

The predicate is that part of a sentence which is not the subject but which gives information about the subject. So, in the sentence *Clare went to school*, 'Clare' is the subject and 'went to school' is the predicate.

---

## prefix

A prefix is a **morpheme** which can be added to the beginning of a word to change its meaning. For example:

*inedible*  
*disappear*  
*supermarket*  
*unintentional*

---

## preposition

A preposition is a word like *at*, *over*, *by* and *with*. It is usually followed by a [noun phrase](#). In the examples, the preposition and the following noun phrase are underlined:

*We got home at midnight.*  
*Did you come here by car?*  
*Are you coming with me?*  
*They jumped over a fence.*  
*What's the name of this street?*  
*I fell asleep during the film.*

Prepositions often indicate time (*at midnight/during the film/on Friday*), position (*at the station/in a field*) or direction (*to the station/over a fence*). There are many other meanings, including possession (*of this street*), means (*by car*) and accompaniment (*with me*).

In questions and a few other structures, prepositions often occur at the end of the clause:



*Who did you go out with?*  
*We haven't got enough money to live on.*  
*I found the book I was looking for.*

In formal style, the preposition can go before *whom* or *which* (*with whom, about which* etc):

*With whom do you wish to speak?*

Many prepositions (eg *on, over, up*) can also be used as **adverbs** (without a following noun or pronoun):

*We got on the bus.* (preposition - followed by a noun phrase)  
*The bus stopped and we got on.* (adverb - no following noun or pronoun)

In other languages preposition use may be linked to gender aspects (French *du, de la*) and/or case (German *mit dem/mit der; zum/zur*).

---

### prepositional phrase

A prepositional phrase is a phrase built round a preposition, e.g.

with a short tail,  
after midnight.

---

### preposition stranding

In English (though not in most other languages) we often 'strand' a preposition by shifting its object to an earlier position. This is common in passives:

Active: They walked on this carpet.

Passive: This carpet was walked on.

It is also common in interrogative and relative clauses:

Declarative: They mended it with glue.

Interrogative: What did they mend it with?

Relative: The glue which they mended it with was very strong.

---

### pronoun

There are several kinds of pronoun, including:

personal pronouns

*I/me, you, he/him, she/her, we/us, they/them, it*  
*I like him. They don't want it.*

possessive pronouns

*mine, yours, his, hers, ours, theirs, its*  
*Is this book yours or mine?*

reflexive pronouns

*myself, herself, themselves etc*  
*I hurt myself. Enjoy yourselves!*

indefinite pronouns

*someone, anything, nobody, everything etc*  
*Someone wants to see you about something.*

**interrogative** pronouns

*who/whom, whose, which, what*  
*Who did that? What happened?*

**relative** pronouns

*who/whom, whose, which, that*  
*The person who did that ... The thing that annoyed me was ...*

Many **determiners** can also be used as pronouns, including *this/that/these/those* and the quantifiers (*some, much* etc). For example:

*These are mine.*  
*Would you like some?*

Pronouns often 'replace' a noun or noun phrase and enable us to avoid repetition:

*I saw your father but I didn't speak to him. (= your father)*  
*'We're going away for the weekend.' 'Oh, are you? That's nice.' (= the fact you're going away)*

---

## **punctuation**

Punctuation is a way of marking text to help readers' understanding. The most commonly used marks in English are: **apostrophe**, **colon**, **comma**, **dash**, **ellipsis**, **exclamation mark**, full stop, **hyphen**, **semi-colon** and **speech marks** (inverted commas).

---

## **question mark (?)**

A question mark is used at the end of an **interrogative sentence** (eg *Who was that?*) or one whose **function** is a question (eg *You're leaving already?*)

---

## refer

We can use the verb *to refer* in two ways.

1. We can say that a noun or pronoun refers to the **person or thing** that it 'picks out'; for example, the noun *Shakespeare* refers to the person William Shakespeare, and *my teacher* refers to the speaker's teacher. This is a link between a word and something outside language. Technically this kind of referring is called 'reference'.

2. We can say that a pronoun refers, or **refers back**, to an earlier **noun**, meaning that it refers (in the first sense) to the same person or thing as that noun - in traditional terminology, it 'stands for' that noun. For example, we may say that *he* refers back to *John* in *John said he was tired*. Technically this kind of referring is called 'anaphora'.

---

## reference

A word's reference is the person or thing to which it refers. For example, the reference of *Shakespeare* is the writer Shakespeare.

---

## reference chain

A reference chain is a sequence of words scattered through a text which all have the same reference - i.e. they refer to the same person or thing - e.g.

*a little boy ... he ... he ... the boy ...*

---

## **relative adverb**

The words *when* and *where* can be used, like relative pronouns, to introduce a relative clause, e.g.

*the time when dinosaurs ruled the Earth,*

*the town where I live*

But they are also like the adverbs *then* and *there*.

---

## relative clause

A relative clause is one that defines or gives information about somebody or something. Relative clauses typically begin with relative pronouns (*who/whom/whose/which/that*):

*Do you know the people who live in the house on the corner?* (defines 'the people')

*The biscuits (that) Tom bought this morning have all gone.* (defines 'the biscuits')

*Our hotel, which was only two minutes from the beach, was very nice.* (gives more information about the hotel)

In other languages the form of the relative pronoun may be defined by agreement with the noun to which it refers, as well as by its function in the relative clause.

---

### relative pronoun

A pronoun that is used to introduce a relative clause. The most common relative pronoun is *that* (*a pronoun that is used ...*), but the remainder all derive from question words: *who*, *which* and *whose*.

See also [relative adverb](#).

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### root word

A word to which [prefixes](#) and [suffixes](#) may be added to make other words; for example in *unclear*, *clearly*, *cleared*, the root word is *clear*.

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### semantic, semantics

Semantic facts are facts about meaning, and semantics is the study of meaning.

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### semi-colon (;)

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

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

This could also be written as two separate sentences:

*I liked the book. It was a pleasure to read.*

However, where the two clauses are closely related in meaning (as in the above example), a writer may prefer to use a semi-colon rather than two separate sentences.

Semi-colons can also be used to separate items in a list if these items consist of longer phrases. For example:

*I need large, juicy tomatoes; half a pound of unsalted butter; a kilo of fresh pasta, preferably tagliatelle; and a jar of black olives.*

In a simple list, [commas](#) are used.

---

### sentence

A sentence can be **simple**, **compound** or **complex**.

A **simple** sentence consists of one [clause](#):

*It was late.*

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

*It was late but I wasn't tired.*

A **complex** sentence consists of a main clause which itself includes one or more [subordinate clauses](#):

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

Simple sentences can also be grouped as follows according to their structure:

[declarative](#) (for statements, suggestions, etc):

*The class yelled in triumph.*  
*Maybe we could eat afterwards.*

[interrogative](#) (for questions, requests, etc):

*Is your sister here?*  
*Could you show me how?*

[imperative](#) (for commands, instructions, etc):

*Hold this!*  
*Take the second left.*

**exclamative** (for [exclamations](#)):

*How peaceful she looks.*  
*What a pity!*

In writing, we mark sentences by using a capital letter at the beginning, and a full stop (or question mark or exclamation mark) at the end.

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**sequence of tense rule.**

See [backshift](#).

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[singular and plural](#)

Singular forms are used to refer to one thing, person etc. For example: *tree*, *student*, *party*.

Many nouns ([countable](#) nouns) can be **singular** (only one) or **plural** (more than one). The plural is usually marked by the ending *-s*: *trees*, *students*, *parties*.

Some plural forms are irregular. For example: *children*, *teeth*, *mice*.

Other nouns ([mass](#) nouns) do not normally occur in the plural. For example: *butter*, *cotton*,

*electricity, money, happiness.*

**Verbs, pronouns, and determiners** sometimes have different singular and plural forms:

*He was late.*

*They were late.*

*Where is the key? Have you seen it?*

*Where are the keys? Have you seen them?*

*Do you like this hat?*

*Do you like these shoes?*

Note that *they/them/their* (plural words) are sometimes used to refer back to singular words that don't designate a specific person, such as *anyone* or *somebody*. In such cases, *they* usually means 'he or she':

*If anyone wants to ask a question, they can ask me later. (= he or she can ask me)*

*Did everybody do their homework?*

*Work with a partner. Ask them their name.*

See also [agreement](#), [pronoun](#)

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## [speech, speech marks](#)

See [direct speech and indirect speech](#).

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## spelling log

A personal, ongoing record of words which are being learnt. Pupils would decide, with the teacher's guidance, words to be learnt. These words would be kept in a folder so the pupil can work on them during the week with a partner or teacher, or at home. Once learnt, the words can be added to the pupil's record.

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## standard English

Standard English is the variety of English used in public communication, particularly in writing. It is the form taught in schools and used by educated speakers. It is not limited to a particular region and can be spoken with any accent.

There are differences in vocabulary and grammar between standard English and other varieties. For example, *we were robbed* and *look at those trees* are standard English; *we was robbed* and *look at them trees* are non-standard.

To communicate effectively in a range of situations - written and oral - it is necessary to be able to use standard English, and to recognise when it is appropriate to use it in preference to any other variety.

Note that standard British English is not the only standard variety; other English-speaking

countries, such as the United States and Australia, have their own standard forms.

See also [agreement](#), [dialect](#), [double negative](#)

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### [subject](#) and [object](#)

In the sentence *John kicked the ball*, the subject is 'John', and the object is 'the ball'.

The subject is the person or thing about which something is said. In sentences with a subject and an object, the subject typically carries out an action, while the object is the person or thing affected by the action. In [declarative](#) sentences (statements), the subject normally goes before the verb; the object goes after the verb.

Some verbs (eg *give*, *show*, *buy*) can have two objects, **indirect** and **direct**. For example:

*She gave the man some money.*

Here, 'some money' is the **direct** object (= what she gave). 'The man' is the **indirect** object (= the person who receives the direct object).

When a verb has an object, it is **transitive**, eg *find a job*, *like chocolate*, *lay the table*. If it has no object, it is **intransitive** (eg *go*, *talk*, *lie*).

In different languages, objects may be indicated by word order, the use of a preposition, or a case indicator.

See also [active and passive](#), [complement](#)

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### [subordination](#)

Subordination is the relation between a [subordinate clause](#) and the [main clause](#) containing it.

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### [subordinate clause](#)

A subordinate clause is one that is part of a larger clause - e.g. the underlined below, which illustrate the three main kinds of subordinate clause:

adverbial clause	I stayed inside <u>because it was raining</u> .
noun clause	I saw <u>that it was raining</u> .
relative clause	At the time <u>that it was raining</u> I was indoors.

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**subordinating conjunction** In the subordinate clause

*if it rains,*

the word *if* is a subordinating conjunction. This means that it is a special word whose only **function** is to signal the start of the subordinate clause and the way in which it relates to the rest of the sentence.

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### **suffix**

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

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

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

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### **synonym**

Words which have the same meaning as another word, or very similar: *wet/damp*. Avoids overuse of any word; adds variety.

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### **syntax**

Syntax is the study of **sentence** structure, ie how words are used together in a sentence.

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### **tag question**

A tag question is a very small question such as *isn't it?* or *did he?* which is attached to the end of a sentence. It consists of nothing but an auxiliary verb followed by its subject which is copied from the main sentence, and it asks for confirmation - e.g. *didn't they?* in



The teachers won the match, didn't they?

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## tense

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

### **present**

*I play* (simple)

*I am playing* (continuous)

### **past**

*I played* (simple)

*I was playing* (continuous)

Additionally, all these forms can be perfect (with *have*):

### **present perfect**

*I have played* (perfect)

*I have been playing* (perfect continuous)

### **past perfect**

*I had played* (perfect)

*I had been playing* (perfect continuous)

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

*John will arrive tomorrow.*

*John will be arriving tomorrow.*

*John is going to arrive tomorrow.*

*John is arriving tomorrow.*

*John arrives tomorrow.*

In other languages the future and other tenses may be indicated by auxiliary verbs (German) or by inflection (French).

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## **text**

Language organised to communicate. Includes written, spoken and electronic forms.

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## **transitive**

A transitive verb is one that has an [object](#).

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## [verb](#)

A verb is a word that expresses an action, a happening, a process or a state. It can be thought of as a 'doing' or 'being' word. In the sentence *Mark is tired and wants to go to bed*, 'is', 'wants' and 'go' are verbs. Sometimes two or more words make up a [verb chain](#), such as *are going*, *didn't want*, *has been waiting*.

Most verbs (except [modal verbs](#), such as *can* or *will*) have four or five different **forms**. For example:

<b>base form or infinitive</b>	<b>+ -s</b>	<b>+ -ing (present participle)</b>	<b>simple past</b>	<b>past participle</b>
<i>drive</i>	<i>drives</i>	<i>driving</i>	<i>drove</i>	<i>driven</i>
<i>wait</i>	<i>waits</i>	<i>waiting</i>	<i>waited</i>	
<i>make</i>	<i>makes</i>	<i>making</i>	<i>made</i>	

A verb can be **present** or **past**:

*I wait/she waits* (present)  
*I waited/she waited* (past)

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

*I make* (simple present)/*I'm making* (present continuous)  
*she drove* (simple past)/*she was driving* (past continuous)

A verb can also be [perfect](#) (with *have*):

*I have made/I have been making* (present perfect)  
*he had driven/he had been driving* (past perfect)

If a verb is regular, the simple past and the past participle are the same, and end in *-ed*. For example:

*wanted*  
*played*  
*answered*

Verbs that do not follow this pattern are irregular. For example:

*make/made*  
*catch/caught*  
*see/saw/seen*  
*come/came/come*

See also [active and passive](#), [auxiliary verbs](#), [infinitive](#), [modal verbs](#), [participle](#), [person](#), [tense](#)

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### **verbal noun**

Same as [gerund](#).

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### **[verb chain](#)**

A verb chain consists of one or more [auxiliary](#) verb closely followed by a [main verb](#):

*has gone*

*is reading*

*will have come*

A verb chain may be up to five verbs long, e.g.

*must have been being interviewed*

and modifies the meaning of the full verb by supplying information about tense and voice and the kind of meaning that is expressed by modal verbs.

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### **[voice](#)**

Voice is the contrast between [active and passive](#).

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### **[word class](#)**

The main word classes are [verb](#), [noun](#), [adjective](#), [adverb](#), [pronoun](#), [determiner](#), [preposition](#) and [conjunction](#). These are all dealt with separately in this glossary.

Note that a word can belong to more than one class. For example:

*play*      verb (*I play*)  
              or noun (*a play*)

<i>fit</i>	noun ( <i>a fit</i> ), verb ( <i>they fit</i> ) or adjective ( <i>I'm fit</i> )
<i>until</i>	preposition ( <i>until Monday</i> ) or conjunction ( <i>until I come back</i> )
<i>like</i>	verb ( <i>I like</i> ) or preposition ( <i>do it like this</i> )
<i>hard</i>	adjective ( <i>it's hard work</i> ) or adverb ( <i>I work hard</i> )
<i>that</i>	determiner ( <i>that book</i> ) pronoun ( <i>who did that?</i> ) or conjunction ( <i>he said that he ...</i> )

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## Further reading

The Linguistics Association maintains a page of [suggestions for further reading](#).