This is a concise and user-friendly guide to the grammar of modern English, written specifically for native speakers.

You do not need to have studied English grammar before: all the essentials are explained here clearly and without the use of jargon. Beginning with the basics, the author then introduces more advanced topics.

Based on genuine samples of contemporary spoken and written English, the Grammar focuses on both British and American usage, and explores the differences – and similarities – between the two.

Features include:

- discussion of points which often cause problems
- guidance on sentence building and composition
- practical spelling rules
- explanation of grammatical terms
- appendix of irregular verbs.

*English: An Essential Grammar* will help you read, speak and write English with greater confidence. It is ideal for everyone who would like to improve their knowledge of English grammar.

**Gerald Nelson** is Research Assistant Professor in the English Department at The University of Hong Kong, and formerly Senior Research Fellow at the Survey of English Usage, University College London.
Contents

Introduction 1

Chapter 1 The elements of a simple sentence 9

1.1 Simple, compound, and complex sentences 9
1.2 Subject and predicate 10
1.3 Identifying the subject 11
1.4 Verb types 12
  1.4.1 Intransitive verbs 12
  1.4.2 Linking verbs 13
  1.4.3 Transitive verbs 14
1.5 Subject complement 15
1.6 Direct object 16
1.7 Indirect object 17
1.8 Object complement 18
1.9 The five sentence patterns 19
1.10 Active and passive sentences 21
1.11 Adjuncts 22
1.12 The meanings of adjuncts 23
1.13 Vocatives 24
1.14 Sentence types 25
  1.14.1 Declarative sentences 25
  1.14.2 Interrogative sentences 25
  1.14.3 Imperative sentences 26
  1.14.4 Exclamative sentences 27
1.15 Fragments and non-sentences 27
## Chapter 2  Words and word classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Open and closed word classes</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Nouns</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1</td>
<td>Singular and plural nouns</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2</td>
<td>Common and proper nouns</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.3</td>
<td>Countable and uncountable nouns</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.4</td>
<td>Genitive nouns</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.5</td>
<td>Dependent and independent genitives</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.6</td>
<td>The gender of nouns</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Main verbs</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1</td>
<td>The five verb forms</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2</td>
<td>The base form</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.3</td>
<td>The -s form</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.4</td>
<td>The past form</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.5</td>
<td>The -ed form</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.6</td>
<td>The -ing form</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.7</td>
<td>Irregular verbs</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.8</td>
<td>Regular and irregular variants</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.9</td>
<td>The verb be</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.10</td>
<td>Multi-word verbs</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.1</td>
<td>Gradable adjectives</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.2</td>
<td>Comparative and superlative adjectives</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.3</td>
<td>Participial adjectives</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Adverbs</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.1</td>
<td>Gradable adverbs</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.2</td>
<td>Comparative and superlative adverbs</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.3</td>
<td>Intensifiers</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.4</td>
<td>The meanings of adverbs</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Pronouns</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.1</td>
<td>Personal pronouns</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.2</td>
<td>Possessive pronouns</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.3</td>
<td>Reflexive pronouns</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.4</td>
<td>Gender-neutral pronouns</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.5</td>
<td>Demonstrative pronouns</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.6</td>
<td>Relative pronouns</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.7</td>
<td>Pronoun <em>it</em></td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.8</td>
<td>Pronoun <em>one</em></td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.7 Auxiliary verbs
  2.7.1 Modal auxiliaries 68
  2.7.2 The meanings of modal auxiliaries 69
  2.7.3 The passive auxiliary be 70
  2.7.4 The progressive auxiliary be 70
  2.7.5 The perfective auxiliary have 70
  2.7.6 Auxiliary do 71
  2.7.7 Semi-auxiliaries 72

2.8 Prepositions 72
2.9 Conjunctions 73
2.10 Articles 75
2.11 Numerals 76

Chapter 3 Phrases 78

3.1 The five phrase types 78
3.2 Noun phrases 79
  3.2.1 Determiners 80
  3.2.2 Premodifiers 82
  3.2.3 Postmodifiers 83
  3.2.4 Restrictive and non-restrictive postmodifiers 84
  3.2.5 Postmodifiers and complements 84
  3.2.6 Apposition 85
  3.2.7 The functions of noun phrases 86

3.3 Verb phrases 88
  3.3.1 The ordering of auxiliary verbs 88
  3.3.2 Tense 89
  3.3.3 Expressing future time 90
  3.3.4 Finite and non-finite verb phrases 91
  3.3.5 Aspect 92
  3.3.6 Mood 93

3.4 Adjective phrases 95
  3.4.1 The functions of adjective phrases 96

3.5 Adverb phrases 97
  3.5.1 The functions of adverb phrases 97

3.6 Prepositional phrases 98
  3.6.1 The functions of prepositional phrases 99
Grammar is the study of how words combine to form sentences. The following is a well-formed, ‘grammatical’ sentence:

[1] John has been ill.

Speakers of English can produce and understand a sentence like this without ever thinking about its grammar. Conversely, no speaker of English would ever produce a sentence like this:

[2] *ill John been has.

This is an ill-formed, ‘ungrammatical’ sentence. But can you say why?

The study of grammar provides us with the terminology we need to talk about language in an informed way. It enables us to analyse and to describe our own use of language, as well as that of other people. In writing, a knowledge of grammar enables us to evaluate the choices that are available to us during composition.

Grammar rules

Many people think of English grammar in terms of traditional rules, such as Never split an infinitive; Never end a sentence with a preposition. Specifically, these are prescriptive rules. They tell us nothing about how English is really used in everyday life. In fact, native speakers of English regularly split infinitives (to actually consider) and sentences often end with a preposition (Dr Brown is the man I’ll vote for.).

\[1\] An asterisk is used throughout this book to indicate ungrammatical or incorrect examples, which are used to illustrate a point.
Prescriptive grammar reached its peak in the nineteenth century. In the twenty-first century, grammarians adopt a more descriptive approach. In the descriptive approach, the rules of grammar – the ones that concern us in this book – are the rules that we obey every time we speak, even if we are completely unaware of what they are. For instance, when we say *John has been ill*, we obey many grammar rules, including rules about:

1. Where to place the subject *John* – before the verb (see 1.2)
2. Subject-verb agreement – *John has*, not *John have* (see 1.3)
3. Verb forms – *been*, not *being* (see 2.3.1)

These are descriptive rules. The task of the modern grammarian is to discover and then to describe the rules by which a language actually works. In order to do this, grammarians now use computer technology to help them analyse very large collections of naturally occurring language, taken from a wide variety of sources, including conversations, lectures, broadcasts, newspapers, magazines, letters and books.

**Standard English**

Standard English is the variety of English which carries the greatest social prestige in a speech community. In Britain, there is a standard British English, in the United States, there is a standard American English, in Australia, a standard Australian English, and so on. In each country, the national standard is that variety which is used in public institutions, including government, education, the judiciary and the media. It is used on national television and radio, and in newspapers, books and magazines. The standard variety is the only variety which has a standardized spelling. As a result, the national standard has the widest currency as a means of communication, in contrast with regional varieties, which have a more limited currency.

The following sentence is an example of standard English:

* I was ill last week.

The following sentence is non-standard:
I were ill last week.

The non-standard past-tense construction *I were* is commonly used in several regional varieties, especially in parts of England. Regional varieties are associated with particular regions. The standard variety is not geographically bound in the same way.

Using standard English involves making choices of grammar, vocabulary and spelling. It has nothing to do with accent. The sentence *I was ill last week* is standard English whether it is spoken with a Birmingham accent, a Glasgow accent, a Cockney accent, a Newcastle accent, or any other of the many accents in Britain today. Similarly, standard American English (sometimes called ‘General American’) is used throughout the United States, from San Francisco to New York, from New Orleans to the Great Lakes. In both countries, the standard variety co-exists with a very large number of regional varieties. In fact, most educated people use both their own regional variety and the standard variety, and they can switch effortlessly between the two. They speak both varieties with the same accent.

No variety of English – including standard English – is inherently better or worse than any other. However, the standard variety is the one that has the greatest value in social terms as a means of communication, especially for public and professional communication. The notion of standard English is especially important to learners of the language. Because of its high social value, learners are justifiably anxious to ensure that the English they learn is standard English.

### English as a world language

Conservative estimates put the total number of English speakers throughout the world at around 800 million. English is the mother tongue of an estimated 350 million people in the countries listed overleaf.

In addition to these countries, English is an official language, or has special status, in over sixty countries worldwide, including Cameroon, Ghana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, Pakistan, the Philippines and Singapore. This means that English is used in these countries in many public functions, including government, the judiciary, the press and broadcasting. Even in countries where it has no official status, such as China
and Japan, English has a central place in school curricula, because its value in international communication and trade is unquestioned.

The spread of English around the world was one of the most significant linguistic developments of the twentieth century. That century also witnessed another important development: the decline of British English and the rise of American English as the dominant variety.

### British English and American English

Linguistic influence follows closely on political and economic influence. For several centuries, British English was the dominant variety throughout the world, because Britain was the centre of a vast empire that straddled the globe. In the twentieth century, political power shifted dramatically away from Britain, and the United States is now both politically and economically the most powerful country in the world. It is not surprising then that American English has become the dominant variety, although the traditional influence of British English remains strong. In recent years, the worldwide influence of American English has been greatly strength-
ened by the mass media and the entertainment industry. American news channels such as CNN and NBC are transmitted around the world by satellite, and American films and television shows are seen on every continent. The language of the Internet is overwhelmingly American English.

The differences between American English and British English are for the most part fairly superficial. Perhaps the most familiar differences are in vocabulary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>British English</th>
<th>American English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>autumn</td>
<td>fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>film</td>
<td>movie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flat</td>
<td>apartment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>holiday</td>
<td>vacation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lift</td>
<td>elevator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nappy</td>
<td>diaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number plate</td>
<td>license plate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>petrol</td>
<td>gas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post code</td>
<td>zip code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rubbish</td>
<td>trash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shop</td>
<td>store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tap</td>
<td>faucet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taxi</td>
<td>cab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trainers</td>
<td>sneakers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some of the American English words on this list – particularly *apartment, cab* and *store* – are slowly being assimilated into British English. No doubt this trend will continue. International communication and travel tend to smooth the differences between national varieties, in favour of the dominant variety.

In the spoken language, there are very noticeable differences in stress between American English and British English. For instance, American speakers generally stress the final syllable in *adult*, while British speakers stress the first syllable: *adult*. Other stress differences include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>British English</th>
<th>American English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>address</td>
<td>address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ballet</td>
<td>ballet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cigarette</td>
<td>cigarette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>debris</td>
<td>debris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>garage</td>
<td>garage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laboratory</td>
<td>laboratory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>magazine</td>
<td>magazine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, spelling differences include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>British English</th>
<th>American English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cheque</td>
<td>check</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>humour</td>
<td>humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pyjamas</td>
<td>pajamas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theatre</td>
<td>theater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tyre</td>
<td>tire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For more on spelling differences, see 5.13.

The grammatical differences between American English and British English are far less obvious. They tend to be localised in very specific areas of grammar. Some differences may be observed in the use of prepositions (see 2.8). Americans say ten after twelve, while Britons say ten past twelve. Americans say in back of the house, Britons say behind the house. In the choice of verb forms, too, we can see some systematic differences. American English tends to prefer the regular form of a verb when a choice is available, for example, burned in favour of burnt, learned in favour of learnt (see 2.3.8).

Despite their differences, American English and British English, as well as all the other national varieties – Australian, Canadian, New Zealand, Indian, and so on – share a very extensive common core of vocabulary, spelling and grammar. It is this common core that makes them mutually intelligible. In this book, we are concerned with the core grammatical features of English, and especially with the core features of the two major varieties, American English and British English.

Grammatical variation across national varieties of English is currently the subject of a major research project, the International Corpus of English (ICE), which is being coordinated by the Survey of English Usage, University College London. For more information, see http://www.ucl.ac.uk/english-usage/.

Many of the citations in this grammar are taken from the British component of ICE (ICE-GB), and from parts of the American component (ICE-USA). In some cases, the originals have been shortened for illustrative purposes. Omissions are indicated by [. . .].

The grammatical hierarchy

The building blocks of grammar are sentences, clauses, phrases and words. These four units constitute what is called the grammatical hierarchy. We can represent the hierarchy schematically as shown overleaf.
In Chapter 1, we look at sentences in terms of their sentence ‘elements’ – subject, verb, object, etc. In Chapter 2 we turn our attention to the lower end of the hierarchy, and consider how words are classified into word classes. The following two chapters look at phrases and clauses respectively.

Sentences are at the top of the grammatical hierarchy, so they are often the largest units to be considered in a grammar book. However, in this book we also look briefly at some of the devices that are available for joining sentences to other sentences, and for organising them in continuous discourse. These topics are discussed later in the book see 4.11.

Words are at the bottom of the hierarchy, and for that reason some grammar books treat them as the smallest units in a language. However, the internal structure of a word can often play an important role. For instance, when we add the inflection -er to the adjective old, we create the comparative adjective older. In Chapter 5, we look at the internal structure of words, and especially at prefixes and suffixes. We also look at some of the methods that are available for creating new words, including ‘blending’ – combining parts of words, such as ‘cam’ (from camera) and ‘corder’ (from recorder), to create the new word camcorder. Chapter 5 concludes by looking at English spelling. It offers general rules for spelling, and discusses some common spelling problems – words like affect and effect which are easily and regularly confused with each other in writing.
1.1 Simple, compound, and complex sentences

In writing, a sentence is any sequence of words which begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop (period), a question mark or an exclamation mark:

- Paul plays football.
- Amy prefers tennis.
- Who lives in the house next door?
- Where did you buy your car?
- What a silly thing to say!
- How big you've grown!

These are all simple sentences. We can combine two simple sentences using but or and:


A combination of two or more simple sentences is called a compound sentence.
A **complex sentence** contains another ‘sentence-like’ construction within it:

When the plane landed, the ground crew removed the cargo.

Here, the sentence as a whole contains the sentence-like construction *When the plane landed*. We refer to this construction as a **clause**:

\[ \text{Sentence} \]

\[ \text{Clause} \]

\[ \text{When the plane landed} \quad \text{the ground crew removed the cargo.} \]

We will discuss clauses, as well as complex sentences, in Chapter 4.

In this chapter we concentrate on simple sentences. A simple sentence is a sentence which contains no clause within it.

### 1.2 Subject and predicate

Typically, a simple sentence consists of a **subject** and a **predicate**. The subject is usually the first element in the sentence, while the rest of the sentence, including the **verb**, is the predicate. Here are some examples of subjects and predicates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Predicate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>laughed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>plays football.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The house</td>
<td>is very old.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The detectives</td>
<td>interviewed the suspects.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The predicate always contains at least a verb. In these examples, the verbs are *laughed*, *plays*, *is* and *interviewed*.

### 1.3 Identifying the subject

The subject (S) of a sentence can often be identified by asking a question beginning with *who* or *what*:

```
Amy laughed.
Q. Who laughed?
A. Amy (= S)
```

```
The house is very old.
Q: What is very old?
A: The house (= S)
```

In addition, the subject of a sentence has the following grammatical properties:

1. **Subject–verb inversion.** In a declarative sentence (a statement – see 1.14.1), the subject comes before the verb:

   **Declarative:** James (S) is (V) at school.

   When we change this to an interrogative sentence (a question – see 1.14.2), the subject and the verb change places with each other:

   **Interrogative:** Is (V) James (S) at school?

2. **Subject–verb agreement.** The subject of a sentence agrees in number (singular or plural) with the verb which follows it. Compare:

   **Singular subject:** The dog barks all night.

   **Plural subject:** The dogs bark all night.
Here, the form of the verb (*barks* or *bark*) is determined by whether the subject is singular (*the dog*) or plural (*the dogs*). This is known as subject–verb agreement.

However, subject–verb agreement only applies when the verb has a present-tense form. In the past tense, there is no agreement with the subject:

**Singular subject:**  The dog barked all night.

**Plural subject:**  The dogs barked all night.

Furthermore, agreement applies only to third-person subjects. For instance, the same verb form is used whether the subject is *I* (the first-person singular) or *we* (the first-person plural):

**Singular subject:**  I sleep all night.

**Plural subject:**  We sleep all night.

### 1.4 Verb types

The pattern of a simple sentence is largely determined by the type of verb it contains. There are three verb types: intransitive ([see 1.4.1](#)), linking ([see 1.4.2](#)) and transitive ([see 1.4.3](#)).

#### 1.4.1 Intransitive verbs

An intransitive verb can occur alone in the predicate of a sentence, because it requires no other sentence element to complete its meaning:

* Amy laughed.  

* The baby cried.  

* The temperature dropped.  

* The sky darkened.  

* The ship disappeared.  

Each of these sentences contains just a subject and a verb, so their pattern is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence pattern 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S       V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy     laughed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1.4.2 Linking verbs

Unlike other verbs (such as *destroy, sing, laugh, eat, break*), the verb *be* does not denote any kind of ‘action’. Instead, it links the subject to another element following the verb:

Paul is 12.

Here, we would not say that Paul performs any ‘action’ in ‘being 12’. The verb simply links the two elements *Paul* and *12*, and for this reason, we call it a **linking verb**.

*Be* is by far the most common linking verb, though there are several others:

- David seems unhappy.
- The house *appeared* empty.
- She *looks* uncomfortable.
- The animals *became* restless.
- The crowd *went* wild.

The element following a linking verb is called the **subject complement** (SC – see 1.5). Therefore the pattern in these sentences is:
1.4.3 Transitive verbs

A transitive verb is a verb which cannot stand alone in the predicate of a sentence. Instead, it requires another sentence element to complete its meaning. Consider, for example, the verb destroy. This verb needs an element following it – one cannot simply destroy, one has to destroy something. Compare:

*The soldiers destroyed.

The soldiers destroyed the village.

Destroy, therefore, is a transitive verb. Further examples of transitive verbs include:

The generator produces electricity.

Jim bought a new house.

She really enjoyed her party.

Christopher Wren designed St Paul’s Cathedral.

In these examples, the element that completes the meaning of the transitive verb (the village, electricity, a new house, etc.), is called the direct object (DO – see 1.6). These sentences therefore display the pattern:
Many verbs have both intransitive (see 1.4.1) and transitive uses, sometimes with different meanings. Compare the following pairs:

**Intransitive:** The boys grew (S+V)

**Transitive:** The boys grew mushrooms (S+V+DO)

**Intransitive:** The old man shook (S+V)

**Transitive:** The old man shook his fist (S+V+DO)

**Intransitive:** Simon sings (S+V)

**Transitive:** Simon sings ballads (S+V+DO)

### 1.5 Subject complement

When the verb in a sentence is a linking verb, such as be, seem, appear (see 1.4.2), the element following the verb is called the subject complement (SC):

Paul is 12.

The subject complement typically denotes an attribute or property of the subject. In this example, it denotes the age of the subject, Paul. Here are some more examples of subject complements:
Subject complement

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My tea is</td>
<td>cold.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Johnson is</td>
<td>an engineer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The house appeared</td>
<td>empty.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.6 Direct object

In the sentence *The soldiers destroyed the village*, we refer to the element *the village* as the direct object (DO). The DO is required to complete the meaning of the verb *destroyed*. Here are some more examples of sentences with DOs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct object</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The detectives interviewed</td>
<td>the suspects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This shop sells</td>
<td>excellent bread.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The storm caused</td>
<td>a lot of damage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The DO is typically that part of a sentence which is affected by the ‘action’ of the verb. It can often be identified by asking a question beginning with *what* or *whom*:

The soldiers destroyed the village.

Q. *What* did the soldiers destroy?

A. *The village* (= DO)

The detectives interviewed the suspects.

Q. *Whom* did the detectives interview?

A. *The suspects* (= DO)
Some sentences contain two objects:

We gave David the prize.

The two objects here are David and the prize. The element the prize is the direct object (What did we give David? – The prize). The other object, David, is called the indirect object (IO). Here are some more examples of sentences with two objects:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indirect object</th>
<th>Direct object</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They awarded</td>
<td>James</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a salary increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She told</td>
<td>her husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I asked</td>
<td>him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The postman brought</td>
<td>us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a package</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When two objects are present in a sentence, the indirect object comes first, followed by the direct object, so the pattern is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence pattern 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We gave David the prize.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pattern 4 sentences can often be rewritten as follows:

We gave David the prize. ~ We gave the prize to David.

2 The symbol ~ is used throughout this book to mean ‘may legitimately be changed to’.
Object complement

An object complement (OC) describes an attribute of the direct object (see 1.6):

The dye turned the water blue.

Here, blue is the object complement. It describes an attribute (the colour) of the water, which is the direct object. Here are some more examples:

His comments made me angry (OC).

They elected Amy Treasurer (OC).

Mary called Simon a fool (OC).

Object complements occur after the object which they describe, so the pattern in these sentences is:

Sentence pattern 5

S V DO OC

The dye turned the water blue.

At first glance, some Pattern 5 sentences may look very similar to Pattern 4 sentences. Compare:

    (S+V+DO+OC)

    (S+V+IO+DO)

The grammatical difference between these two can be seen when we rephrase them. Sentence [2] can be rephrased as:

In contrast, sentence [1] cannot be rephrased in the same way:

[1a] *The Manager made captain for Jones.

The element captain in [1] describes an attribute of Jones (Jones is captain), so captain is an object complement.

Similarly, compare:

**Pattern 5:** Mary called Simon a fool. (Simon is a fool)

**Pattern 4:** Mary called Simon a taxi. ( . . . called a taxi for Simon)

### 1.9  The five sentence patterns

In the previous sections, we looked at the following sentence elements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>S</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="see 1.3" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>V</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="see 1.4" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject complement</td>
<td>SC</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="see 1.5" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct object</td>
<td>DO</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="see 1.6" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect object</td>
<td>IO</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="see 1.7" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object complement</td>
<td>OC</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="see 1.8" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These elements combine to form the five basic sentence patterns shown in Table 1.

Notice that the elements S (subject) and V (verb) are present in all the patterns. This means that all sentences contain at least a subject and a verb. There is one exception to this: imperative sentences like *Look!* and *Move over!* have a verb, but no subject ( ![see 1.14.3](#) ).
### Table 1  Sentence patterns and verb types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence pattern</th>
<th>Verb type</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 S+V            | Intransitive | *Amy (S) laughed (V).*  
*The audience (S) applauded (V).*  
*The temperature (S) dropped (V).* |
| 2 S+V+SC         | Linking      | *My tea (S) is (V) cold (SC).*  
*My friend (S) is (V) ill (SC).*  
*David (S) seems (V) unhappy (SC).* |
| 3 S+V+DO         | Transitive   | *The soldiers (S) destroyed (V) the village (DO).*  
*The police (S) interviewed (V) the suspects (DO).*  
*The storm (S) caused (V) a lot of damage (DO).* |
| 4 S+V+IO+DO      | Transitive   | *We (S) gave (V) David (IO) the prize (DO).*  
*They (S) awarded (V) James (IO) a salary increase (DO).*  
*I (S) asked (V) him (IO) a question (DO).* |
| 5 S+V+DO+OC      | Transitive   | *The dye (S) turned (V) the water (DO) blue (OC).*  
*His comments (S) made (V) me (DO) angry (OC).*  
*They (S) elected (V) Amy (DO) President (OC).* |

**Key:**  
S = subject;  
V = verb;  
SC = subject complement;  
DO = direct object;  
IO = indirect object;  
OC = object complement
Active and passive sentences

Sentences are either active or passive.

**Active:** Shakespeare wrote King Lear.

**Passive:** King Lear was written by Shakespeare.

The active sentence has the pattern S+V+DO (Pattern 3 – see Table 1). The direct object King Lear becomes the subject of the passive version, while Shakespeare, the subject of the active version, moves to the end of the passive version.

Passive sentences are formed by adding the passive auxiliary be (see 2.7.3) and by using a different form of the verb – in this case written instead of wrote. On the verb forms, see 2.3.1.

Here are some more examples of active and passive pairs:

**Active:** The burglar broke a pane of glass.

**Passive:** A pane of glass was broken by the burglar.

**Active:** The curator shows the manuscript to visitors.

**Passive:** The manuscript is shown to visitors by the curator.

**Active:** The police are seeking witnesses.

**Passive:** Witnesses are sought by the police.

The ‘by-phrase’ (by the burglar, by the curator, by the police) is sometimes omitted, leaving an **agentless passive:**

**Active:** The burglar broke a pane of glass.

**Passive:** A pane of glass was broken by the burglar.

**Agentless Passive:** A pane of glass was broken.

Only sentences with a transitive verb (see 1.4.3) can have a passive version. However, a small number of verbs cannot be passivized, even though they are transitive in the active version. These include have, resemble, and suit:
The elements of a simple sentence

- **Active:** James has a new car.
- **Passive:** *A new car is had by James.*
- **Active:** Paul resembles Anthony.
- **Passive:** *Anthony is resembled by Paul.*
- **Active:** That colour suits you.
- **Passive:** *You are suited by that colour.*

The distinction between an active sentence and a passive sentence is called **voice**.

### 1.11 Adjuncts

The five sentence patterns (Table 1, p. 20) can all be extended by the use of **adjuncts**. Adjuncts (A) contribute optional, additional information to a sentence. For example, the S+V sentence *The sky darkened* can be extended by the addition of adjuncts, to become:

- **The sky darkened suddenly.** (S+V+A)
- **The sky darkened before the hailstorm.** (S+V+A)
- **The sky darkened at about 9 o’clock.** (S+V+A)

In the following examples, we show how each of the five sentence patterns may be extended by adding an adjunct:

**Pattern 1: S+V+A**

Amy laughed **loudly** (A).

**Pattern 2: S+V+SC+A**

My tea is cold as **usual** (A).

**Pattern 3: S+V+DO+A**

The soldiers destroyed the village **deliberately** (A).
Pattern 4: S+V+IO+DO+A

We gave David the prize in the end (A).

Pattern 5: S+V+DO+OC+A

The dye turned the water blue in just a few seconds (A).

Adjuncts can also appear at the beginning of a sentence, before the subject:

Suddenly, the sky darkened. (A+S+V)

Before the hailstorm, the sky darkened. (A+S+V)

At about 9 o’clock, the sky darkened. (A+S+V)

And finally, adjuncts can co-occur. That is, more than one adjunct can occur in the same sentence:

Before the hailstorm (A) the sky darkened suddenly (A).

Unfortunately (A) my tea is cold as usual (A).

On Sunday (A), after the game (A), we met Simon outside the stadium (A).

In contrast with this, a simple sentence can contain just one subject, one verb, one direct object, and so on.

1.12 The meanings of adjuncts

Adjuncts (▶see 1.11) contribute various types of additional information to a sentence. The principal information types are set out below.

1 Time (when something happens):

The play opened yesterday.

Our guests arrived at seven o’clock.

We visit Greece every year.
2 Place (*where* something happens):

Amy attended university *in New York*.

We met Simon *outside the restaurant*.

I saw David *at the swimming pool*.

3 Manner (*how* something happens):

She sings *beautifully*.

The children listened *intently*.

*Gradually* the room filled with smoke.

►See also 4.6.

### 1.13 Vocatives

A vocative is used to identify the person or persons to whom a sentence is addressed:

*James*, your dinner is ready.

Come inside, *children*.

*Doctor*, I need a new prescription.

The car was parked behind the building, *your Honour*.

I’m sorry I’m late, *everyone*.

*Ladies and gentlemen*, thank you for that warm welcome.

Like adjuncts (►see 1.11), vocatives are optional elements in sentence structure.
1.14 Sentence types

There are four major sentence types: declarative (see 1.14.1), interrogative (see 1.14.2), imperative (see 1.14.3), and exclamative (see 1.14.4).

1.14.1 Declarative sentences

A declarative sentence is typically used to convey information or to make a statement:

This is Gladstone Park.

David is listening to music.

Simon bought a new house.

James retired in 1998.

In a declarative sentence, the subject usually comes first, and it is followed by the verb. Declarative sentences are by far the most common type. All the sentences we have looked at so far have been declarative sentences.

1.14.2 Interrogative sentences

An interrogative sentence is used in asking a question, and in seeking information:

Is this Gladstone Park?

Have you found a job yet?

Did you receive my e-mail?

Do you take sugar?

Specifically, these are called yes–no interrogatives, because they expect either yes or no as the response.
Alternative interrogatives offer two or more alternative responses:

- Do you want tea or coffee?
- Is that a Picasso or a Dali?

Wh-interrogatives are introduced by a word beginning with *wh*, and they expect an open-ended response:

- What happened?
- Where do you work?
- Who won the FA Cup in 1999?

The word *how* may also introduce an interrogative:

- How do you forward an e-mail?
- How can I get to Charing Cross?
- How is your mother?

### 1.14.3 Imperative sentences

An imperative sentence is used to issue orders or instructions:

- Wait a minute.
- Take the overnight train from King’s Cross.
- Release the handbrake.
- Cut the meat into cubes.

Imperative sentences usually have no subject, as in these examples. However, the subject *you* may sometimes be included for emphasis:

- Don’t you believe it.
- You fix it (if you’re so clever).
### 1.14.4 Exclamative sentences

Exclamative sentences are exclamations, and they are introduced by *what* or *how*:

- **What** a fool I've been!
- **What** a lovely garden you have!
- **How** true that is!
- **How** big you've grown!

In exclamative sentences, *what* is used to introduce noun phrases ([see 3.2](#)), while *how* introduces all other types.

The four sentence types – declarative, interrogative, imperative and exclamative – have different grammatical forms. However, there is no one-to-one relationship between the form of a sentence and its role in communication. For instance, the following sentence has a declarative form:

> You need more money.

However, if this is spoken with a rising intonation, it becomes a question:

> You need more money?

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

> Who knows? (= Nobody knows.)

### 1.15 Fragments and non-sentences

All the sentences we have looked at so far have been grammatically complete. Grammatically complete sentences typically contain at least a subject and a verb. However, a great deal of communication consists of incomplete sentences or fragments. In conversation, for instance, speakers often omit the subject, especially when the subject is *I*:
Must set my alarm clock tonight.

Caught the early train.

Can’t see anything.

In these cases, the subject *I* is understood.

Fragments are also commonly used in response to questions:

**Speaker A:** What did you buy for Sandra?

**Speaker B:** A gold necklace.

Speaker B’s utterance is a fragment, which we interpret in the same way as the complete sentence *I bought a gold necklace for Sandra*.

Newspaper headlines are often highly compressed, so that complete sentences are reduced to fragments:

**GOVERNMENT IN PENSIONS SCANDAL**

This fragment has no verb, but we interpret it as the complete sentence *The Government is involved in a pensions scandal*.

We refer to these as fragments because we can interpret them in the same way as grammatically complete sentences. Only some of the sentence elements are missing.

**Non-sentences** have no sentence structure at all, and they generally occur without any surrounding context. They are frequently used in public signs and notices:

Exit

No Parking

Motorway Ahead

Paddington, 2 miles
10% Off

Closing Down Sale

Ticket Office

Non-sentences in conversational English include *bye, goodbye, hello, no, ok, right, sure, thanks, thanks very much, yes,* as well as the interjections *ouch!, ow!, phew!, yippee!, yuk!*

Fragments and non-sentences are a major feature of informal spoken English. In fact, they account for about one-third of all utterances in conversation.
Open and closed word classes

Words may be divided into the following major word classes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word class</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nouns</td>
<td>brother, child, China, ecology, James, tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main verbs</td>
<td>break, consider, destroy, eat, sing, talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>angry, cold, foolish, happy, tidy, young</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbs</td>
<td>carefully, gradually, happily, slowly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronouns</td>
<td>I, me, my, you, he, his, her, we, our</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary verbs</td>
<td>can, could, do, may, might, will, would</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepositions</td>
<td>after, at, for, in, of, over, with, without</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjunctions</td>
<td>although, and, because, but, or, when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>a, an, the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numerals</td>
<td>one, two, twenty, first, second, third</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some word classes are open, that is, they admit new words as members as the need arises. The major open classes are the first two above – nouns and main verbs. The class of nouns is potentially infinite, since it is continually being expanded as new discoveries are made, new products are developed and new ideas are explored. In recent years, for example, developments in computer technology have given rise to many new nouns, including:

- bitmap
- modem
- CD-ROM
- multimedia
- dotcom
- newsgroup
- e-commerce
- pixel
- e-mail
- voicemail
- Internet
- website
- laptop

These developments have also given rise to some new verbs:

- download
- right-click
- upload
- double-click
- reboot

The adjective and adverb classes also admit new members from time to time, though far less prolifically than the class of nouns. The class of numerals is open, since we can always add 1 to a number to make a new number.

In contrast with this, prepositions, for instance, belong to a closed word class. We never invent new prepositions (words like after, at, before, in, with) simply because we never need them.
Nouns denote both concrete objects and abstract entities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concrete</th>
<th>Abstract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>book</td>
<td>anger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chair</td>
<td>difficulty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dog</td>
<td>eagerness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grass</td>
<td>history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lake</td>
<td>information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>house</td>
<td>progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tree</td>
<td>terror</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many nouns can be identified by their characteristic endings:

- **-ence**  
  - absence, difference, evidence, experience

- **-ment**  
  - embarrassment, experiment, government, treatment

- **-tion**  
  - education, information, situation, vegetation

- **-ism**  
  - defeatism, optimism, populism, symbolism

For more examples of noun endings, see 5.3.

### 2.2.1 Singular and plural nouns

Most nouns have two forms, a singular form and a plural form. Regular nouns form the plural by adding -s to the singular:
### 2.2 Nouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>boy</td>
<td>boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>table</td>
<td>tables</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, some very frequent nouns have irregular plurals:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>man</td>
<td>men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>woman</td>
<td>women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child</td>
<td>children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foot</td>
<td>feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goose</td>
<td>geese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mouse</td>
<td>mice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tooth</td>
<td>teeth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sheep</td>
<td>sheep</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The distinction between singular and plural is called **number contrast**.

For more on the spelling of plural nouns, see 5.11.
2.2.2 Common and proper nouns

Proper nouns are the names of individual people and places, including geographical features such as roads, rivers, mountains and oceans:

Patrick         Hong Kong
Nelson Mandela   Euston Road
China           Atlantic Ocean
Paris           River Thames
New Delhi       Mount Everest

The names of institutions, newspapers, buildings and ships are also proper nouns:

The Wall Street Journal   London Underground
The Royal Albert Hall      Titanic
Harvard University        Mayflower
Millennium Dome

Finally, proper nouns include the days of the week, the months of the year and other periods of the calendar:

Monday         Christmas
Tuesday         Passover
January        Ramadan
February       Thanksgiving

Proper nouns are written with an initial capital (upper-case) letter. All other nouns are common nouns. Since proper nouns usually refer to unique individuals, places, or events in the calendar, they do not normally have a plural form. However, they may take a plural ending when number is specifically being referred to:

There are two Patricks in my class.
Countable and uncountable nouns

Singular nouns denote just one instance, while plural nouns denote more than one instance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>one boy</td>
<td>two boys, three boys, four boys ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one day</td>
<td>two days, three days, four days ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one computer</td>
<td>two computers, three computers, four</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>computers ...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These nouns are called **countable nouns**. In contrast, some nouns cannot be counted in this way:

- *one advice, two advices, three advices ...*
- *one furniture, two furnitures, three furnitures ...*
- *one software, two softwares, three softwares ...*

These nouns are called **uncountable nouns**. Uncountable nouns refer to things which are considered as indivisible wholes, and therefore cannot be counted.

Uncountable nouns have two important grammatical features:

1. They have a singular form (*advice, furniture, software*), but no plural form (*advices, furnitures, softwares*)
2. They do not take *a* or *an* before them (*an advice, a furniture, a software*)

Other uncountable nouns include: *fun, information, health, honesty, luck, luggage, mud, music, traffic.*
Genitive nouns denote possession:

John’s car = the car belonging to John

the baby’s toys = the toys belonging to the baby

The genitive (sometimes called genitive case) is formed:

1. By adding ‘s (apostrophe s) to a singular noun:

   the baby       the baby’s toys
   our son        our son’s wife
   the President  the President’s office

2. If the noun already has an -s ending because it is plural, we add the apostrophe alone to form the genitive:

   the Farmers    the Farmers’ Union
   two doctors    two doctors’ reports

3. With irregular plural nouns (see 2.2.1), the genitive is formed by adding apostrophe s, just as in (1) above:

   the children   the children’s clothes
   the men        the men’s toiletries
   the women      the women’s group
   the people     the people’s decision

4. Nouns ending in -s, in which the -s does not denote a plural, generally take an apostrophe alone:

   Prince Charles  Prince Charles’ children
   Martin Nichols  Martin Nichols’ house

However, apostrophe s is also sometimes added:

   Prince Charles’s children.
Dependent and independent genitives

Genitives are either dependent or independent. A dependent genitive is followed by a noun:

- the child’s toys
- a student’s essay
- Caroline’s friend

An independent genitive is not followed by a noun:

- a friend of Caroline’s
- a colleague of Frank’s
- an old army pal of Jim’s

An independent genitive is often used in referring to relationships between people, as in these examples. Notice that this construction has a very specific meaning. The independent genitive a friend of Caroline’s does not mean the same as the dependent genitive Caroline’s friend:

**Independent:** We met a friend of Caroline’s in Spain.

**Dependent:** We met Caroline’s friend in Spain.

The independent genitive means ‘one of Caroline’s friends’, who may or may not be known to the hearer. In contrast, the dependent genitive means ‘one specific friend’, who is assumed to be known to the hearer.

Independent genitives are also used in references to places and businesses:

- She stayed at Rebecca’s = Rebecca’s house
- I ran into Jim in Sainsbury’s = Sainsbury’s supermarket
- I left my wallet in the barber’s = the barber’s shop

See also Possessive pronouns, 2.6.2.
The gender of nouns plays an important role in the grammar of some languages. In French, for instance, a masculine noun such as *ciel* (sky) requires the masculine form (*le*) of the definite article (*le ciel* = the sky). A feminine noun, such as *mer* (sea) requires the feminine form (*la*) of the definite article (*la mer* = the sea).

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

- The *waiter* was very efficient.  The *waitress* was very efficient.
- The *tiger* roars at night.  The *tigress* roars at night.

These spelling differences (*waiter/waitress, tiger/tigress*) reflect distinctions of sex, but they have no grammatical implications. We use the same definite article *the* whether we are referring to *the waiter* or *the waitress*, *the tiger* or *the tigress*.

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

However, gender is important in English when we replace a noun with a pronoun (►see 2.6):

- The *waiter* was very efficient.  ~*He* was very efficient.
- The *waitress* was very efficient.  ~*She* was very efficient.

Here, the choice of pronoun (*he* or *she*) is determined by the sex of the person being referred to. Gender differences are also seen in other pronoun pairs, including *his/her* and *himself/herself*.

►See also Gender-neutral pronouns, 2.6.4.
Main verbs include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main verbs</th>
<th>Auxiliaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>believe</td>
<td>read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>break</td>
<td>see</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>destroy</td>
<td>run</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eat</td>
<td>sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go</td>
<td>teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>love</td>
<td>walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meet</td>
<td>work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We distinguish them here from the **auxiliary verbs** (see 2.7) such as *can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, would*. Main verbs can occur as the only verb in a sentence:

Caroline eats pizza.

In contrast, an auxiliary verb such as *will* cannot occur alone:

*Caroline will pizza.*

Instead, an auxiliary verb always occurs with a main verb:

Caroline will eat pizza.

### 2.3.1 The five verb forms

Verbs have five forms:

1. **the base form**
   
   Amy decided to walk to school.

2. **the -s form**
   
   Amy walks to school.

3. **the past form**
   
   Amy walked to school.

4. **the -ed form**
   
   Amy has walked to school.

5. **the -ing form**
   
   Amy is walking to school.
The endings -s, -ed, and -ing are called inflections (see 5.8). The inflections are added to the base form of the verb.

In regular verbs, two of the forms are identical: the past form (*walked*) and the -ed form (*walked*). However, we must distinguish between these two forms because they are not always identical. For example, the irregular verb *write* has the following five forms:

1. **the base form**
   
   Amy loves to *write* poetry.

2. **the -s form**
   
   Amy *writes* poetry.

3. **the past form**
   
   Amy *wrote* a poem.

4. **the -ed form**
   
   Amy has *written* a poem.

5. **the -ing form**
   
   Amy is *writing* a poem.

See the Appendix for a list of irregular verbs, together with their five forms.

In the following sections, we look at each of the five verb forms in turn.

### 2.3.2 The base form

The base form of a verb is used:

1. **After to:**

   We decided to *walk*.

   Amy loves to *write* poetry.

   The combination of *to* and the base form of a verb is called the **infinitive**.

2. **In the present tense, with all subjects except he, she, or it (the third-person singular pronouns – see 2.6.1):**

   I *walk*                we *walk*
   you *walk*             they *walk*
Compare:

he/she/it walks (= the -s form – see 2.3.3)

3 In imperative sentences (see 1.14.3):

Walk quickly.

Don’t move.

Leave your coat here.

4 In the subjunctive (see 3.3.6):

I insist that she resign immediately.

2.3.3 The -s form

The -s form of a verb is produced by adding -s to the base form. It is used only in the present tense, when the subject of the verb is he, she, or it (the third-person singular pronouns – see 2.6.1):

She walks to school.

Amy writes poetry.

Compare:

I walk to school. (= the base form, see 2.3.2)

2.3.4 The past form

The past form of a verb is produced by adding -ed to the base form. It is used for the past tense, with all subjects:

I cooked dinner last night.

You cooked dinner last night.
David cooked dinner last night.

We cooked dinner last night.

The children cooked dinner last night.

2.3.5 The -ed form

Like the past form (see 2.3.4), the -ed form of a verb is produced by adding -ed to the base form. The -ed form is used:

1 After the passive auxiliary be (see 2.7.3):

The play was directed by Trevor Nunn.

The Queen was shown to her seat.

Our suitcases were stolen from the hotel.

Two new scenes were written for the final version.

2 After the perfective auxiliary have (see 2.7.5):

Trevor Nunn has directed many plays.

The Mayor has shown the Queen to her seat.

Someone had stolen our suitcases.

The scriptwriter had written two new scenes.

3 In subordinate clauses (see 4.1):

Published in 1998, the book became a best-seller.

The term ‘-ed form’ is a just a cover term. Only regular verbs actually end in -ed in this form (e.g. was destroyed). Irregular verbs display a very wide variety of endings in the -ed form (e.g. begun, written, brought, shown, stolen). See Appendix.
The -ing form of a verb is produced by adding -ing to the base form. The -ing form is used:

1. After the progressive auxiliary be (see 2.7.4):
   - She is walking to school.
   - Alan was sleeping when I arrived.

2. In subordinate clauses (see 4.1):
   - Paul slammed the door, bringing the ceiling down.

Irregular verbs

Many of the most common verbs in English are irregular. This means that their past form and their -ed form are not produced in the usual way (that is, by adding -ed to the base form). For instance, the verbs bring, choose and think are irregular:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base</th>
<th>-s</th>
<th>Past</th>
<th>-ed</th>
<th>-ing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bring</td>
<td>brings</td>
<td>brought</td>
<td>brought</td>
<td>bringing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>choose</td>
<td>chooses</td>
<td>chose</td>
<td>chosen</td>
<td>choosing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>think</td>
<td>thinks</td>
<td>thought</td>
<td>thought</td>
<td>thinking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The irregular verbs display a great diversity of spelling in the past form and in the -ed form (see Appendix). However, we can distinguish the following major groups:

1. The base form ends in d, and the past form and the -ed form end in t:
### 2 Words and word classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base</th>
<th>-s</th>
<th>Past</th>
<th>-ed</th>
<th>-ing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bend</td>
<td>bends</td>
<td>bent</td>
<td>bent</td>
<td>bending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>build</td>
<td>builds</td>
<td>built</td>
<td>built</td>
<td>building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>send</td>
<td>sends</td>
<td>sent</td>
<td>sent</td>
<td>sending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spend</td>
<td>spends</td>
<td>spent</td>
<td>spent</td>
<td>spending</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 The base form has *i*, the past form has *a*, and the *-ed* form has *u*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base</th>
<th>-s</th>
<th>Past</th>
<th>-ed</th>
<th>-ing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>begin</td>
<td>begins</td>
<td>began</td>
<td>begun</td>
<td>beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drink</td>
<td>drinks</td>
<td>drank</td>
<td>drunk</td>
<td>drinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sing</td>
<td>sings</td>
<td>sang</td>
<td>sung</td>
<td>singing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swim</td>
<td>swims</td>
<td>swam</td>
<td>swum</td>
<td>swimming</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 The base form has *ee* or *ea*, and the past form and the *-ed* form have *e*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base</th>
<th>-s</th>
<th>Past</th>
<th>-ed</th>
<th>-ing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bleed</td>
<td>bleeds</td>
<td>bled</td>
<td>bled</td>
<td>bleeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feed</td>
<td>feeds</td>
<td>fed</td>
<td>fed</td>
<td>feeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keep</td>
<td>keeps</td>
<td>kept</td>
<td>kept</td>
<td>keeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leave</td>
<td>leaves</td>
<td>left</td>
<td>left</td>
<td>leaving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4 The base form is identical to the past form and the -ed form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base</th>
<th>-s</th>
<th>Past</th>
<th>-ed</th>
<th>-ing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cut</td>
<td>cuts</td>
<td>cut</td>
<td>cut</td>
<td>cutting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hit</td>
<td>hits</td>
<td>hit</td>
<td>hit</td>
<td>hitting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>put</td>
<td>puts</td>
<td>put</td>
<td>put</td>
<td>putting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quit</td>
<td>quits</td>
<td>quit</td>
<td>quit</td>
<td>quitting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 The past form and the -ed form are identical, and end in ought or aught:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base</th>
<th>-s</th>
<th>Past</th>
<th>-ed</th>
<th>-ing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bring</td>
<td>brings</td>
<td>brought</td>
<td>brought</td>
<td>bringing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buy</td>
<td>buys</td>
<td>bought</td>
<td>bought</td>
<td>buying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>catch</td>
<td>catches</td>
<td>caught</td>
<td>caught</td>
<td>catching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teach</td>
<td>teaches</td>
<td>taught</td>
<td>taught</td>
<td>teaching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3.8 **Regular and irregular variants**

Some irregular verbs have regular variants, which may be used for both the past form and the -ed form. In the following examples, both the regular *dreamed* and the irregular *dreamt* are used as the past form:

**Regular:** She *dreamed* she was on a hill overlooking Alexandria.

**Irregular:** I can’t remember what I *dreamt* last night.
Similarly, the two variants learnt and learned are used as the -ed form in these examples:

**Regular:** Saddam Hussein ought to have learned from his experience.

**Irregular:** Rajiv may have learnt a lesson from this episode.

The following verbs also have regular and irregular variants:

- burn burned / burnt
- knit knitted / knit
- leap leaped / leapt
- smell smelled / smelt
- spill spilled / spilt
- diver dived / dove
- leaned / leant
- proved / proven
- spelled / spelt
- spoiled / spoilt

In general, American English tends to prefer the regular variants (e.g. *I dreamed last night* rather than *I dreamt last night*).

### 2.3.9 The verb be

The verb be is very irregular, and exhibits a total of eight different forms. These forms are shown here:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base form</th>
<th>Present-tense forms</th>
<th>Past-tense forms</th>
<th>-ed form</th>
<th>-ing form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>be</td>
<td>I am</td>
<td>I was</td>
<td>been</td>
<td>being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>are</td>
<td>were</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he/she/it</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>was</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we</td>
<td>are</td>
<td>were</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>are</td>
<td>were</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they</td>
<td>are</td>
<td>were</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Many of these forms are contracted in informal use:

\[
\begin{align*}
  & \text{I} \quad \text{’m} = \text{am} \\
  & \text{he/she/it} \quad \text{’s} = \text{is} \\
  & \text{you/we/they} \quad \text{’re} = \text{are}
\end{align*}
\]

Some of the forms also have contracted negative counterparts:

\[
\begin{align*}
  & \text{he/she/it} \quad \text{isn’t} = \text{is not} \\
  & \text{he/she/it} \quad \text{wasn’t} = \text{was not} \\
  & \text{you/we/they} \quad \text{aren’t} = \text{are not} \\
  & \text{you/we/they} \quad \text{weren’t} = \text{were not}
\end{align*}
\]

In British English, the form aren’t is used as a contraction of am not in tag questions (see 4.7.3):

I am right, aren’t I?

### 2.3.10 Multi-word verbs

**Multi-word verbs** are combinations of a verb and one or more other words. The combinations function like a single verb. We distinguish three types:

1. **Phrasal verbs** are combinations of a verb and an adverb (see 2.5):

   The music *faded away* as we left the station.

   The engine *cut out* just before landing.

   *Weigh up* all the factors before making a decision.

   Jeremy has been *trying out* the car in the Alps.

2. **Prepositional verbs** are combinations of a verb and a preposition (see 2.8):

   *I’ll look into* the matter immediately.
Amy doesn’t approve of smoking.

The barrister called for a unanimous verdict.

Paul is looking after his sister.

3 Phrasal-prepositional verbs are combinations of a verb, an adverb and a preposition:

I won’t put up with this noise any longer.

I went along with their ideas for the sake of peace.

Members of the Huntu tribe shy away from violence.

Don’t give in to his demands.

2.4 Adjectives

Adjectives express a quality or attribute of a noun:

a happy child               a surly person          toxic waste
an old man                  defective brakes       a greedy child
a red flag                  a dangerous road      a large hotel

Typical adjective endings include:

-ble  accessible, comfortable, possible, responsible, terrible
-ive  constructive, deceptive, defective, furtive, interactive
-ous  continuous, delicious, enormous, rigorous, serious
-\textit{y}  funny, greedy, happy, rainy, tasty, weary

Most adjectives can occur before a noun, or after a linking verb (\textit{see} 1.4.2):

a violent storm  \textasciitilde the storm was violent
a delicious meal  \textasciitilde the meal is delicious
However, a small number of adjectives are restricted to just one position. The adjective *afraid*, for instance, can only appear after a linking verb:

the children were afraid *~ the afraid children

Conversely, the adjective *chief* can only occur before a noun:

the chief result *~ the result is chief

In a small number of fixed expressions, an adjective appears immediately after the noun:

the people responsible
the Princess Royal
the heir apparent
the roadway proper

Adjectives can modify a small number of pronouns (*see 2.6*). They always follow the pronoun:

something terrible
someone new
nobody special
nothing unusual

### 2.4.1 Gradable adjectives

Most adjectives can take a modifying word, such as *fairly*, *very* or *extremely*, before them:

fairly cold very cold extremely cold
The modifying word locates the adjective on a relative scale of intensity. In this example, the scale is from *fairly cold* to *extremely cold*. This characteristic of adjectives is called **gradability**.

The modifying words (*fairly, very, extremely*) are called **intensifiers** (see 2.5.3).

### 2.4.2 Comparative and superlative adjectives

The adjective *cold* has two other forms, *colder* (the **comparative** form) and *coldest* (the **superlative** form). The form *cold* is called the **base** form. Most adjectives have these three forms. Here are some more examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base form</th>
<th>Comparative form</th>
<th>Superlative form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>new</td>
<td>newer</td>
<td>newest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>old</td>
<td>older</td>
<td>oldest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dark</td>
<td>darker</td>
<td>darkest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>big</td>
<td>bigger</td>
<td>biggest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The comparative form is produced by adding an `-er` ending to the base form. The superlative form is produced by adding an `-est` ending, again to the base:

- **Base cold** + `-er` = comparative colder
- **Base cold** + `-est` = superlative coldest

Some adjectives form the comparative and superlative using *more* and *most* respectively:
In general, adjectives with one syllable in the base form take the \textit{-er} and \textit{-est} endings, while longer words use \textit{more} and \textit{most}:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base form</th>
<th>Comparative form</th>
<th>Superlative form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>recent</td>
<td>more recent</td>
<td>most recent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>important</td>
<td>more important</td>
<td>most important</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The adjectives \textit{good} and \textit{bad} have irregular comparative and superlative forms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base form</th>
<th>Comparative form</th>
<th>Superlative form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>better</td>
<td>best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bad</td>
<td>worse</td>
<td>worst</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.4.3 Participial adjectives

Participial adjectives have the endings -ed or -ing that we normally associate with verbs (see 2.3.1):

- a complicated process
- an amazing achievement
- a crazed expression
- a boring book
- a disabled person
- a confusing account
- an embarrassed smile
- a fascinating photograph
- an experienced driver
- a rewarding experience
- a talented singer
- a staggering result

Most participial adjectives have a corresponding verb (to complicate, to amaze, etc), but some do not. For example, there is no verb to talent, corresponding to a talented singer.

Like other adjectives, participial adjectives may be gradable:

- a very complicated process
- an extremely rewarding experience

They also have comparative and superlative forms:

- complicated more complicated most complicated
- rewarding more rewarding most rewarding

►See also Adjective phrases, 3.4.
Many adverbs are formed by adding \textit{-ly} to an adjective (see \textbf{2.4}):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>certain</td>
<td>certainly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extreme</td>
<td>extremely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exact</td>
<td>exactly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mad</td>
<td>madly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quick</td>
<td>quickly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slow</td>
<td>slowly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soft</td>
<td>softly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, by no means all adverbs end in \textit{-ly}. In particular, many adverbs referring to time and place have no distinctive ending. These include:

- afterwards
- now
- away
- soon
- back
- there
- here
- today
- inside
- tomorrow
- never
- yesterday

Note also that some adjectives end in \textit{-ly}, including \textit{costly}, \textit{deadly}, \textit{friendly}, \textit{kindly}, \textit{lively}, \textit{timely}.

The words \textit{hard} and \textit{fast} can be used as both adverbs and adjectives:

\textbf{Adverb:} John works \textit{hard}.

Peter drives \textit{fast}. 

53
**Adjective:**

John is used to **hard** work.

Peter drives a **fast** car.

Adverbs are most commonly used to modify:

1. A verb:
   - Amy speaks **softly**.
   - David works **quickly**.
   - Paul will arrive **soon**.

2. An adjective:
   - **fairly** slow
   - **terribly** warm
   - **extremely** rude

3. Another adverb:
   - **fairly** slowly
   - **very** closely
   - **extremely** badly

### 2.5.1 Gradable adverbs

Many adverbs are gradable, that is, they can take a modifying word such as **fairly** or **very** which locates the adverb on a scale of intensity:

- fairly slowly, very slowly, extremely slowly
- fairly suddenly, very suddenly, extremely suddenly
2.5.2 Comparative and superlative adverbs

Some adverbs exhibit three forms, the base form, the comparative form (ending in -er) and the superlative form (ending in -est):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base form</th>
<th>Comparative form</th>
<th>Superlative form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John works hard.</td>
<td>Mary works harder.</td>
<td>Paul works hardest.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, most adverbs express comparison using the words more and most:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base form</th>
<th>Comparative form</th>
<th>Superlative form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>importantly</td>
<td>more importantly</td>
<td>most importantly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>probably</td>
<td>more probably</td>
<td>most probably</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recently</td>
<td>more recently</td>
<td>most recently</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.5.3 Intensifiers

An intensifier is a special type of adverb which is used to express intensity in an adjective or in another adverb. The most common intensifier is very:

very cold  very suddenly
very eager  very soon

Other intensifiers include almost, completely, entirely, extremely, fairly, highly, quite, slightly, totally, utterly.
In informal use, the word *pretty* is often used as an intensifier:

```
   The weather was pretty dreadful.
   You’ll have to move pretty quickly.
```

2.5.4 The meanings of adverbs

Adverbs express three major types of meaning:

1. **Manner** adverbs indicate *how* something happens:

   * Amy was playing *happily* in the garden.
   * Paul writes *beautifully*.
   * The thief crept *silently* along the roof.
   * The passengers waited *calmly* for the lifeboats.

   Other manner adverbs include *carefully, clearly, dangerously, heavily, heroically, patiently, quietly, quickly, rapidly, scientifically, slowly, softly, spontaneously*.

2. **Time** adverbs indicate *when* something happened, as well as frequency of occurrence:

   * We visited Rome *recently*.
   * Bernard has an interview *tomorrow*.
   * I’m hoping to retire *soon*.
   * Sometimes we go to Joe’s in the High Street.

   Other time adverbs include: *afterwards, again, always, never, now, often, presently, previously, rarely, then, today, yesterday*.
Place adverbs indicate a *place* or a *direction*:

- Leave your coat there.
- Why are you still *here*?
- She just turned and walked *away*.
- The car shot *forward* when I released the clutch.

Other place adverbs include: *backwards, downwards, everywhere, inside, outside, somewhere*.

---

**Pronouns**

Many pronouns can be used as substitutes for nouns:

*David* loves football. *He* supports Manchester United.

Here, the pronoun *he* substitutes for the noun *David*, to which it refers back. Using the pronoun means that we can avoid repeating the noun.

The major subclasses of pronouns are:

- **Personal pronouns**: *I/me, he/him, etc.*  
  (➤see 2.6.1)
- **Possessive pronouns**: *my/mine, your/yours, etc.* (➤see 2.6.2)
- **Reflexive pronouns**: *myself, yourself, etc.* (➤see 2.6.3)

As Table 2 shows, these three subclasses are closely related to each other. We discuss each subclass in the following sections.

2.6.1 **Personal pronouns**

The **personal pronouns** (➤see Table 2, p. 58) exhibit contrasts for **person** (first person, second person, or third person), **number** (singular or plural),
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Personal pronouns</th>
<th>Possessive pronouns</th>
<th>Reflexive pronouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Subjective</td>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Dependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>my</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>he</td>
<td>him</td>
<td>his</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>she</td>
<td>her</td>
<td>her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-personal</td>
<td>it</td>
<td>it</td>
<td>its</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>we</td>
<td>us</td>
<td>our</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>they</td>
<td>them</td>
<td>their</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and case (subjective or objective). In addition, the third-person singular pronouns he/she/it exhibit a contrast for gender (masculine, feminine or non-personal).

The subjective forms of the personal pronouns are used when the pronoun is the subject of the sentence (see 1.2):

- I gave David a present.
- You need a holiday, Sam.
- He/she/it needs medical help.
- We travelled by plane.
- You should all complete an application form.
- They enjoyed the film.

The objective forms are used in all other positions. These positions are:

1. After a verb (see 2.3):

- David gave me a present.
- I'll see you soon.
- The minister supports him/her/it.
- Marie met us at the airport.
- I'll bring you a nice surprise.
- Susan telephoned them.

2. After a preposition (see 2.8):

- David gave it to me.
- I'll probably get there before you.
She arrived after him/her/it.

He’s not coming with us.

I’m tired talking to you people.

I’m writing a song for them.

There is no formal distinction between subjective you and objective you:

**Subjective:** You e-mailed me yesterday.

**Objective:** I e-mailed you yesterday.

Likewise, there is no formal distinction between singular you and plural you. When necessary, speakers and writers make the reference explicitly plural by expanding it, for instance by using *both of you, you both, all of you, you people, you children, you guys* (American English, informal).

### 2.6.2 Possessive pronouns

The **possessive pronouns** (see Table 2, p. 58) exhibit contrasts for person (first person, second person, or third person) and for number (singular or plural). Like the personal pronouns (see 2.6.1), possessive pronouns have gender-based contrasts (masculine, feminine or non-personal) in the third-person singular.

Each possessive pronoun has two distinct forms, the dependent form and the independent form. **Dependent** possessives are used before a noun:

This is *my* car.

I’ve borrowed *your* computer.

She took *his/her/its* photograph.

We’ve lost *our* way.

They sold *their* house.
Independent possessives are used without a following noun. They most commonly occur after *of*, in independent genitives (see 2.2.5):

- a friend of *mine*
- this partner of *yours*
- a colleague of *his/hers*
- an uncle of *ours*
- that dog of *yours*
- a relative of *theirs*

Independent possessives also occur in other positions, especially when the context makes clear what the pronoun refers to:

- John’s car is fast, but *mine* is cheaper to run.  
  (‘mine’ = ‘my car’)
- You are in my address book, but am I in *yours*?  
  (‘yours’ = ‘your address book’)

The non-personal possessive pronoun *its* cannot be used independently. Compare:

- The blue ribbon is *his*.
- The red ribbon is *hers*.
- *The yellow ribbon is *its*.*

*Its* can only be used dependently, before a noun:

- The horse shook *its* head.
2.6.3 Reflexive pronouns

The reflexive pronouns end in -self (singular) or -selves (plural) (see Table 2, p. 58). They exhibit distinctions of person (first person, second person or third person), and number (singular or plural). The third-person singular reflexives (himself/herself/itself) show distinctions of gender (masculine, feminine or non-personal).

The reflexive pronouns are used to refer back to the subject of the same sentence:

Michael was very badly injured and is now unable to feed himself.

Here, himself refers back to Michael, the subject of the sentence.

Less commonly, reflexive pronouns are used for emphasis:

The Chancellor mentioned tax cuts, but he himself knows that the time is not right for reform.

Here, the reflexive himself co-occurs with the corresponding personal pronoun (subjective case) he. Similarly:

I myself we ourselves
you yourself they themselves
she herself

2.6.4 Gender-neutral pronouns

English lacks a gender-neutral pronoun in the singular. He is masculine, and she is feminine, but no pronoun exists to refer to people of unknown or unidentified sex (it can only be used to refer to objects and animals, not to people). Therefore a problem arises in sentences such as:

Somebody has left his coat behind.

Clearly, the sex of ‘somebody’ is not known, so there is no way of knowing whether to use his coat or her coat. Traditionally, the masculine his has been used in these circumstances, as in the example above.
However, the arbitrary choice of his over her is now felt by many people to be unacceptably sexist.

A common solution is to use his or her (or his/her):

    Somebody has left his or her coat behind.

Likewise, the subjective pronouns he or she, he/she (and even s/he) are sometimes used as gender-neutral pronouns:

    Encourage your child to read when he or she reaches the age of 3.

However, this can be stylistically irritating, especially when it is repeated:

    He or she has to satisfy the jury that he or she is right.

    A candidate who wishes to enter the school before his or her eighteenth birthday may be asked to write to state his or her reasons.

Recently, the plural pronouns their (possessive) and they (subjective) are increasingly being used:

    Somebody has left their coat behind.

    Encourage your child to read when they reach the age of three.

2.6.5 Demonstrative pronouns

The demonstrative pronouns are:

    this, that, these, those

This and that are singular, and are used with singular nouns:

    Do you need this pen?

    I really like that plant.
These and those are plural, and are used with plural nouns:

Who owns these pens?

We should buy some of those plants.

The demonstrative pronouns may also be used independently, that is, without a following noun:

This is a great film.

That is the challenge we face.

These are very good apples.

Those are quite cheap.

2.6.6 Relative pronouns

The relative pronouns are:

who, whom, whose, which, that

Relative pronouns introduce a relative clause (see 4.3.2):

That’s the man who lives beside us.

That’s the man whom we met yesterday.

The problem which we’re facing is very serious.

The thing that worries me most is the overdraft.

Who and whom differ in case. Who is subjective:

the man who lives beside us (cf. the man lives beside us)

Whom is objective:

the man whom we met (cf. we met the man)
In formal contexts, and especially in writing, *whom* is used after a preposition (see 2.8):

- the man on *whom* we rely
- the people with *whom* he used to work
- the person to *whom* it is addressed

In less formal contexts, including everyday speech, *whom* is often omitted altogether, and the preposition is moved to the end:

- the man we rely on
- the people he used to work with
- the person it is addressed to

### 2.6.7 Pronoun it

The pronoun *it* has two major uses:

1. As a personal pronoun (see 2.6.1) *it* can replace a third-person singular noun with non-human reference:
   - *The car* skidded on ice. ~ *It* skidded on ice.
   - Paul left *his coat* at school. ~ Paul left *it* at school.

2. *It* is used in expressions relating to the weather and to time:
   - *It* is very cold.
   - *It* rained last night.
   - *It* is four o’clock.
   - *It* is getting late.
This is sometimes called ‘empty it’ or ‘dummy it’, because it does not refer to anything in particular. Empty it is also used, with even vaguer reference, in many other expressions, including:

Hold it! (= ‘Stop’)

Take it easy!

Can you make it to my party tonight?

See also Cleft sentences (4.17) and Postponed subjects (4.18).

2.6.8 Pronoun one

The pronoun one has two distinct uses:

1 Substitute one is used as a substitute for a noun that has been mentioned earlier:

The black coat is nice but the green one is awful.

Here, the pronoun one substitutes for the noun coat (cf. the green coat is awful). Further examples of substitute one include:

The problem is a complex one. (one = ‘problem’)

The house was not a modern one, but it was comfortable. (one = ‘house’)

I need a scanner so I’ll just have to buy one. (one = ‘a scanner’)

Substitute one has a plural form, ones:

The black coats are nice but the green ones are awful.

2 Generic one carries a generic meaning corresponding to ‘people in general’:

One can’t expect miracles.
One loses interest in everything when one has children.

Generic *one* has a genitive form *one’s*:

When one is cold, *one’s* capillaries close to minimise heat loss.

The corresponding reflexive pronoun ([see 2.6.3](#)) is *oneself*:

*One* could easily find *oneself* out of a job.

Generic *one* is largely confined to written English. It can often be replaced by the less formal *you*:

*You* could easily find *yourself* out of a job.

### 2.7 Auxiliary verbs

In [2.3](#) we introduced the distinction between a main verb such as *believe, eat, love*, and an auxiliary verb such as *can, may, might, will*. We said that a main verb can occur alone in a sentence:

Caroline *eats* pizza.

whereas an auxiliary verb such as *will* cannot occur alone:

*Caroline *will* pizza.

An auxiliary verb always occurs with a main verb:

Caroline *will eat* pizza.

Auxiliary verbs are sometimes called **helping verbs**, because they ‘help’ the main verb in some way. For instance, in *Caroline will eat pizza*, the auxiliary verb *will* expresses prediction.
2.7.1 Modal auxiliaries

The modal auxiliary verbs (or ‘modals’) are:

- can shall
- could should
- may will
- might would
- must

Here are examples of the modals in use:

- We *can* visit the park if the weather’s fine.
- She *could* sense that something was wrong.
- Susan *may* be late tomorrow morning.
- I *might* see you again before I leave.
- You *must* try a little harder.
- I *shall* speak to him on his return.
- David *should* join the army.
- The play *will* open on 17 March.
- I *would* love a game of tennis.

The modals have corresponding negative forms:

- can *can’t/cannot*
- could *couldn’t*
- may *mayn’t* (British English – rare)
- might *mightn’t*
- must *mustn’t*
shall  
shan’t (British English – rare)

should  
shouldn’t

will  
won’t

would  
wouldn’t

Traditional grammars made a very sharp distinction between shall and will. They recommended that shall should be used to express future time with I as subject (‘I shall arrive at six’), and that will should be used with all other subjects (‘He will arrive at six.’). The reverse was recommended when expressing intention: ‘I will work hard’, but ‘He shall work hard’.

In fact, these distinctions no longer apply in common use, if they ever did apply. The word shall has more or less disappeared from American English, and there is evidence that it is also in decline in British English, except perhaps in the most formal contexts. Will is the preferred form in both varieties.

2.7.2 The meanings of modal auxiliaries

The modal auxiliary verbs express a very wide range of meanings. The principal meanings are:

**Permission:** You may go in now.
You can have a piece of chocolate.

**Obligation:** You must complete both sides of the form.

**Ability:** David can play the guitar.
My grandfather could dance the Charleston.

**Prediction:** I will be home at seven.
We shall write as soon as possible.

**Probability or Possibility:** This may be your last chance.
You must be very tired.
2.7.3 The passive auxiliary be

The passive auxiliary *be* is used to form a passive sentence (▶see 1.10):

**Passive:** The play was written by Tom Stoppard.

Compare:

**Active:** Tom Stoppard wrote the play.

The passive auxiliary is followed by the -ed form of a verb (▶see 2.3.5).

The verb *get* is sometimes used as a passive auxiliary:

It started to rain as I left the house, and I got soaked.

At the end of the film, the villain gets shot by the police.

2.7.4 The progressive auxiliary be

As the name suggests, the **progressive auxiliary** *be* is used to denote action in progress:

Paul is learning French.

It also has a past form:

Paul was learning French.

A progressive auxiliary is followed by the -ing form of a verb (▶see 2.3.6).

▶See also Aspect, 3.3.5.

2.7.5 The perfective auxiliary have

The **perfective auxiliary** is *have*:

Peter has injured his foot.
Caroline has finished her dissertation.

We had discussed the matter in 1996.

I had met Mr Callaghan before.

The perfective auxiliary is followed by the -ed form of a verb (see 2.3.5).

►See also Aspect, 3.3.5.

2.7 Auxiliary do

The auxiliary verb *do* has three main uses:

1. In forming questions:
   
   *Do* you like Robert?
   
   *Did* you enjoy the match?
   
   *Does* your father use a computer?

2. In forming negative statements, with *not*:
   
   I *do not* want it.
   
   She *did not* graduate.
   
   Simon *does not* eat cheese.

3. In negative imperatives, with *not*:
   
   *Do not* touch that.
   
   *Do not* move.

   In informal use, *do not* is often contracted to *don’t*:
   
   *Don’t* touch that.
   
   *Don’t* move.
2.7.7 Semi-auxiliaries

Semi-auxiliaries are multi-word auxiliary verbs, including:

- be about to
- happen to
- seem to
- be going to
- have to
- tend to
- be supposed to
- mean to
- used to

Like the other auxiliaries, semi-auxiliaries occur before a main verb:

The meeting is about to start.

David is going to retire at the end of August.

MPs are supposed to declare their financial interests.

Paul's car broke down so he had to walk.

Ottoman art tends to be very stylized.

2.8 Prepositions

The class of prepositions includes the following words:

- about
- below
- in
- to
- across
- between
- into
- toward(s)
- after
- by
- of
- under
- against
- down
- off
- until
- at
- during
- on
- up
- before
- for
- over
- with
- behind
- from
- through
- without

Prepositions are mainly used to introduce a noun phrase (▶see 3.2):

- after dark
- for the children
- across the road
- from London
after the war under suspicion
around the world with mayonnaise
before my lunch without fear

Multi-word prepositions are two- and three-word combinations which act as a unit:

according to in accordance with
ahead of in front of
apart from in relation to
because of in spite of
by means of in terms of
due to on behalf of

▶ See also Prepositional Phrases, 3.6.

2.9 Conjunctions

Conjunctions are used to link phrases and clauses together. There are two types:

1 Coordinating conjunctions (or simply ‘coordinators’) are used to link elements of equal grammatical status. The main coordinators are and, but, and or:

The weather was [cold] and [wet].
[Paul plays football] and [Amy enjoys tennis].
[Simon is coming] but [he can’t stay for long].
[I read your book] but [I didn’t enjoy it].
Would you prefer [coffee] or [cappuccino]?
[You can leave now] or [you can wait here].
The coordinator *or* is used with *either*:

You can have *either* [pizza] *or* [a hamburger].

In the negative counterpart of this, the coordinator *nor* is used with *neither*:

You can have *neither* [pizza] *nor* [a hamburger].

On coordination, see 4.8.

2 **Subordinating conjunctions** (or simply ‘subordinators’) introduce a subordinate clause:

Paul has to leave *because* he has a dental appointment.

Here, the main clause is *Paul has to leave*. The subordinate clause is *because he has a dental appointment*, and it is introduced by the subordinator *because*.

Other subordinators include:

- although  that
- after  unless
- as  until
- before  when(ever)
- if  whereas
- since  while

Multi-word subordinators include the following:

- as long as  in order that
- as soon as  provided that
- as though  so long as
- except that  such that

On subordinate clauses, see Chapter 4.
2.10 Articles

The articles are *the* and *a/an*. Articles always occur before a noun, and they express the kind of reference that the noun has.

The **definite article** *the* is used to express definite reference:

> We saw the play in London.

This refers to ‘a particular play’, which must have been previously identified. Compare:

> We saw a play in London.

This refers to ‘some unspecified play’, which may be identified later:

> We saw a play in London. It was *The Chairs* by Ionesco.

The **indefinite article** is *a*, and its variant *an*. The choice between these variants is determined by the initial sound (not the spelling) of the word which follows the article. *A* is used when the following word begins with a consonant sound:

* a chair  
  * a large salary
* a film  
  * a UFO
* a huge increase

*An* is used when the following word begins with a vowel sound:

* an active person  
  * an MA course
* an eager student  
  * an overture
* an examination  
  * an x-ray
* an L-plate

The indefinite article is only used with singular, countable nouns. The definite article *the* is used with singular and plural nouns:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Countable</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>a castle</em></td>
<td><em>a castles</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>the castle</em></td>
<td><em>the castles</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uncountable</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>a traffic</em></td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>the traffic</em></td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Uncountable nouns have no plural form – see 2.2.3.

### 2.11 Numerals

Numerals include all numbers, whether written as words (*one, two, three*) or as digits (1, 2, 3). There are two main subclasses of numerals:

1. **Cardinal numerals** are used in counting. They refer to quantity:
   - zero, nought, 0
   - one, 1
   - two, 2
   - three, 3
   - fifty, 50
   - one hundred, 100
   - one thousand, 1,000

2. **Ordinal numerals** refer to positions in a sequence:
   - first, 1st
   - second, 2nd
   - third, 3rd
   - fiftieth, 50th
one hundredth, 100th

one thousandth, 1,000th

By analogy with first, the word last is also an ordinal numeral, although it cannot be written as a digit.
3.1 The five phrase types

When we looked at pronouns (see 2.6), we said that they are often used to replace a noun:

David loves football. He supports Manchester United.

Here, the personal pronoun he replaces the noun David. But consider:

The young boy who lives beside us loves football. He supports Manchester United.

In this case, he replaces the entire sequence the young boy who lives beside us. This is not a noun – it is a noun phrase (see 3.2). We call it a noun phrase because its central word – boy – is a noun. More correctly, then, a pronoun can be used to replace a noun phrase.

There are five phrase types:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrase type</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noun phrase</td>
<td>the young boy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Main word: noun boy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb phrase</td>
<td>has been stolen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Main word: verb stolen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjective phrase</td>
<td>very greedy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Main word: adjective greedy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adverb phrase  
   **too quickly**  
   Main word: adverb *quickly*

Prepositional phrase  
   **after the storm**  
   Main word: preposition *after*

In a noun phrase, the main word is a noun, in a **verb phrase**, the main word is a verb and so on. Before looking at each of the five phrase types, a brief note on the word ‘phrase’.

In grammar, a ‘phrase’ can consist of just one word, the main word alone. For instance, we say that both *greedy* and *very greedy* are adjective phrases. Why not simply say that *greedy* is an adjective? This is because the same rules apply to adjectives and adjective phrases. The same positional rules apply to *greedy* and to *very greedy*:

Children can be

*greedy.*

*very greedy.*

Simon was a

*greedy*

*very greedy*  

child.

Instead of saying each time ‘adjective or adjective phrase’, it is simpler to say ‘adjective phrase’, and thereby include adjectives. So when we talk about phrases, remember that they may consist of just one word.

### 3.2 Noun phrases

Noun phrases have the following basic structure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Determiner</th>
<th>Premodifier</th>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Postmodifier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the</td>
<td>young</td>
<td>boy</td>
<td>who lives beside us</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Determiners introduce noun phrases. Premodifiers and postmodifiers depend on the main word – the noun – and may be omitted.

### 3.2.1 Determiners

The most common determiners are the articles (see 2.10) – the definite article *the* and the indefinite article *a/an*.

- the tree
- the books
- a newspaper
- an optician

Other determiners include:

1. Possessive pronouns (see 2.6.2):
   - my books
   - your ideas
   - his diet
   - our house
   - their problem

2. Demonstrative pronouns (see 2.6.5):
   - this book
   - that car
   - these buildings
   - those children
Numerals (see 2.11):

- one page
- two books
- second chance
- fourth paragraph

Each, every, all, both and some:

- each child
- every time
- all types
- some sugar
- both children

Many, more and most:

- many years
- more food
- most people

With certain restrictions, determiners can co-occur in a noun phrase:

- all the children
- our first home
- every second week
- his many talents
- all my many relatives
Determiners are unique to noun phrases. They do not occur in any of the other phrase types.

### 3.2.2 Premodifiers

Premodifiers in a noun phrase occur before the noun, and after any determiners which may be present. In a noun phrase, the premodifier is typically an adjective:

- **green eyes**
- **a young child**
- **some beautiful flowers**

Premodifiers can co-occur, that is, more than one adjective can premodify the same noun:

- **lovely green eyes**
- **an innocent young child**
- **some beautiful yellow flowers**

As well as adjectives, the following words can function as premodifers in a noun phrase:

1. **Nouns** (see 2.2):
   - *bank manager*  *bedroom window*
   - *computer manuals*  *the Science Museum*

2. **Genitive nouns** (see 2.2.4):
   - *David’s homework*  *the President’s office*
   - *the company’s accounts*  *our child’s school*
Postmodifiers in a noun phrase occur after the noun, and are most commonly prepositional phrases (see 3.6) introduced by *of*:

- a piece of cheese
- the top of the hill
- a view of the sea
- the rotation of the earth
- a biography of Mozart
- the Museum of Mankind

The postmodifier may also be introduced by other prepositions:

- the house on the hill
- the Museum in Kensington
- a coat with a brown collar
- people without computer skills

As well as prepositional phrases, postmodifiers of noun phrases can be:

1. Relative clauses (see 4.3.2):
   - the boy who lives beside us
   - the books which you bought
   - the film that I enjoyed most

2. To-clauses (see 4.2):
   - a valve to regulate the airflow
   - a place to store your clothes
   - the first man to walk on the moon
Postmodifiers in a noun phrase can co-occur. The following examples illustrate noun phrases with two postmodifiers each:

- a holiday [for two] [in Rome]
- the shop [in the High Street] [that sells fish]
- the photograph [you took] [of Napoleon’s tomb]

### 3.2.4 Restrictive and non-restrictive postmodifiers

A postmodifier in a noun phrase may be restrictive or non-restrictive. A **restrictive** postmodifier serves to define the noun:

The student *who got the highest grade* was given a prize.

Here, the postmodifier, *who got the highest grade*, is used to define exactly which student was given a prize. The postmodifier is therefore strictly necessary to the meaning of the sentence. Compare this with:

The student, *who comes from Birmingham*, was given a prize.

Here, the postmodifier, *who comes from Birmingham*, does not define exactly which student, from among all the students in the class, was given a prize. It simply conveys additional, optional information. This is a **non-restrictive** postmodifier.

In writing, non-restrictive postmodifiers are usually marked off with commas, as in the example above. In speech, the intonation pattern usually indicates their status.

### 3.2.5 Postmodifiers and complements

Complements are a type of noun-phrase postmodifier ([see 3.2.3](#)), but they have a much closer link with the noun than ordinary postmodifiers. Compare the following:

1. **Postmodifier:** The news *that he gave us today* was welcomed by everyone.
[2] Complement:

The news that he intends to resign was welcomed by everyone.

In [1], the postmodifier that he gave us today does not define the news. It does not tell us what the news was. In contrast with this, the complement in [2], that he intends to resign, plays a defining role. It tells us precisely what the news was (he intends to resign).

The distinction between a postmodifier and a complement is not just one of meaning. There is also a grammatical difference. In the postmodifier, we can usually replace that with which:

[1a] Postmodifier:

The news which he gave us today was welcomed by everyone.

We cannot replace that with which in the complement:

[2a] Complement:

*The news which he intends to resign was welcomed by everyone.

In general, nouns which take complements tend to have abstract reference. Here are some more examples:

the realisation that it wouldn’t work

the fact that no one came

the idea that secularisation means something

the theory that light is a wave motion

3.2.6 Apposition

Apposition is a relationship between two noun phrases which have identical reference:

the poet, Andrew Motion
The two noun phrases, *the poet* and *Andrew Motion*, refer to the same person, and are said to be in **apposition** to each other. Further examples of apposition include:

- the Yugoslav capital, Belgrade
- John’s favourite food, pasta
- the SAC’s chairman, Sir Alan Peacock
- our good friends, the Browns

Apposition is often used as a device for clarifying the meaning of the first noun phrase:

- the SB (the Polish secret police)
- the larynx (voice box)
- 230 litres (50 gallons)

In this type of ‘clarifying’ apposition, the word *or* is sometimes introduced between the two noun phrases:

- phototaxis, *or* light-directed motion
- vexillology, *or* the study of flags

►See also **Pseudo-coordination**, 4.10.

### 3.2.7 The functions of noun phrases

Noun phrases are grammatically very versatile. They can perform a wide range of functions in sentence structure (►see Chapter 1). We illustrate the main functions of noun phrases here:

1. **Subject** (►see 1.2):

   - *A large tile* fell from the roof.
   - *Four people* entered the room.
   - *The man who lives beside us* is unwell.
2 Subject complement (see 1.5):

Paul is my nephew.

She is a teacher of English.

That is the wrong way to wire a plug.

3 Direct object (see 1.6):

The plane left the runway.

I bought a jar of coffee.

Our teacher writes detective stories.

4 Indirect object (see 1.7):

She told the chairman the bad news.

I offered the girl beside me a drink.

It gives people with disabilities more independence.

5 Object complement (see 1.8):

He called her an idiot.

They appointed him President of the Board of Trade.

The unions made Britain the country it is today.

6 Adjunct (see 1.11):

Last week, our freezer broke down.

She’s going to Harvard next year.

One day you’ll regret quitting college.
3.3 Verb phrases

A verb phrase consists of a main verb (see 2.3), which may be preceded by one or more auxiliary verbs (see 2.7):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Auxiliary 1</th>
<th>Auxiliary 2</th>
<th>Auxiliary 3</th>
<th>Main Verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>may</td>
<td>have</td>
<td>been</td>
<td>stolen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.1 The ordering of auxiliary verbs

When two or more auxiliary verbs occur in a verb phrase, they observe the following relative order:

Modal – Perfective – Progressive – Passive

However, it is very unusual to find all four of the auxiliary verb types in the same verb phrase. Usually, a maximum of two or three auxiliaries will co-occur, as in the following examples:

**Modal – Passive:**
The seat can be lowered.

**Progressive – Passive:**
This lecture is being recorded.

**Perfective – Progressive:**
She has been collecting books for years.

**Perfective – Passive:**
The deficit has been reduced.

**Modal – Perfective – Passive:**
The concert should have been cancelled.
Tense

There are two tenses in English, the present tense and the past tense. In regular verbs, the present tense is indicated by the -s form of the verb, when the subject is third-person singular:

3rd-person singular:  
he walks  
she walks  
it/David/the man walks

For all other subjects, the base form of the verb is used:

1st-person singular:  
I walk

2nd-person singular:  
you walk

1st-person plural:  
we walk

2nd-person plural:  
you walk

3rd-person plural:  
they walk

On the verb forms, see 2.3.1.

The past tense is indicated by an -ed verb ending, regardless of the subject:

1st-person singular:  
I walked

2nd-person singular:  
you walked

3rd-person singular:  
he/she/it/David/the man walked

1st-person plural:  
we walked

2nd-person plural:  
you walked

3rd-person plural:  
they walked
In these examples, only a main verb is present, so this verb carries the tense marker. When an auxiliary verb is present, the tense is indicated by the first (or only) auxiliary verb, and not by the main verb:

**Present tense:**
- The chairman *is* speaking.
- The ambassador *has* done his duty.
- A new script *is* being written.

**Past tense:**
- The chairman *was* speaking.
- The ambassador *had* done his duty.
- A new script *was* being written.

►See also Finite and non-finite verb phrases, 3.3.4.

### 3.3.3 Expressing future time

As we saw in ►3.3.2, English has two tenses, the present tense and the past tense. The *-s* ending indicates present tense and the *-ed* ending indicates past tense. However, there is no ending to indicate the future, so it would be incorrect to speak of a ‘future tense’ in English. In fact, future time is very often expressed by using the present tense form of a verb:

- Peter *arrives* next Friday.
- Your flight *leaves* in ten minutes.
- David *graduates* in September.

There are several other ways to express future time in English:

1. **Modal auxiliary will** (►see 2.7.1):
   - Peter *will* arrive next Friday.
   - Your flight *will* leave in ten minutes.
David will graduate in September.

The contracted form ‘ll is often used informally:

I’ll see you later.

2 Semi-auxiliary be going to (present tense) (▶see 2.7.7):

Peter is going to arrive next Friday.

Your flight is going to leave in ten minutes.

David is going to graduate in September.

3 Progressive auxiliary be (present tense) + -ing verb (▶see 2.7.4):

Peter is arriving next Friday.

Your flight is leaving in ten minutes.

David is graduating in September.

3.3.4 Finite and non-finite verb phrases

Verb phrases are either finite or non-finite. A verb phrase is finite if the first (or only) verb exhibits tense (past or present). The following examples illustrate finite verb phrases. The finite (‘tensed’) verbs are in italics.

Simon leaves work at five.

Simon left early yesterday.

Simon has left.

Simon had left when I arrived.

Simon has been leaving early every day.
Notice that when two or more verbs occur in a finite verb phrase (e.g. *has left, has been leaving*), only the first verb indicates the tense. All the other verbs have **non-finite** forms. The non-finite verb forms are:

1. The base form, often introduced by *to* (*to leave*)
2. The *-ed* form (*left*)
3. The *-ing* form (*leaving*)

If the first (or only) verb in a verb phrase has one of these forms, then the verb phrase is non-finite:

*To leave now would be such a pity.*

*Leaving home can be very traumatic.*

*Left to himself, Paul copes quite well.*

*Having left school at 15, David spent years without a job.*

In a non-finite verb phrase, all the verbs have a non-finite form. The distinction between finite and non-finite verb phrases is important in the classification of clauses (**see 4.2**).  

### 3.3.5 Aspect

Tense (**see 3.3.3**) refers to the absolute location of an event in time – either past or present. **Aspect** refers to how an event is to be viewed with respect to time. We can illustrate this using the following examples:

[1] David fell in love on his eighteenth birthday.

[2] David has fallen 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 past-tense verb.

In [2] also, the action took place in the past, but it is implied that it took place quite recently. It is further implied that David’s falling in love...
is still relevant at the time of speaking – *David has fallen in love, and that’s why he’s behaving so strangely now.*

The auxiliary *has* in [2] is the perfective auxiliary (▶see 2.7.5), and it expresses **perfective aspect** in the verb phrase *has fallen*.

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, it is called **progressive aspect**. Progressive aspect is expressed by using the progressive auxiliary *be* (▶see 2.7.4).

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

**Perfective aspect, past tense:** David *had fallen* in love.

**Progressive aspect, past tense:** David *was falling* in love.

### 3.3.6 Mood

**Mood** refers to distinctions in the form of a verb phrase that express the speaker’s attitude towards what is said. There are three moods: indicative, imperative and subjunctive.

1. **Indicative** mood is the most common mood in declarative, interrogative and exclamative sentences (▶see 1.14):

   - Paul enrolled in a music class
   - Does Amy like her new school?
   - What a big house you have!

2. The **imperative** is used in issuing orders:

   - Move over.
   - Stop that at once.
3 **Subjunctive** mood is used when we refer to a non-factual or hypothetical situation:

If I were you, I would accept the offer.

If Mr Heseltine were Prime Minister, what would he do?

This is called the **were-subjunctive** because the verb phrase consists solely of *were*.

The **mandative subjunctive** is used after a small number of verbs, including *ask, decide, insist, recommend, suggest*, when these verbs are followed by *that*:

The committee insisted that she resign immediately.

The lawyer asked that he be given more time to prepare.

The mandative subjunctive is also used after the following adjectives: *crucial, essential, imperative, important, necessary, vital*:

It is important that every room be ventilated.

It is vital that prisoners be supervised at all times.

The use of the subjunctive is much more common in American English than in British English. In British English, the indicative mood is often preferred:

If I was you, I would accept the offer.

It is vital that prisoners are supervised at all times.

The subjunctive survives in a number of formulaic expressions:

as it were

*be that as it may*

*far be it from me*
if need be
God be praised
long live the Queen
wish you were here

3.4 Adjective phrases

Adjective phrases have the following basic structure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Premodifier</th>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Postmodifier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>very</td>
<td>reluctant</td>
<td>to leave</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The premodifier in an adjective phrase is most commonly an intensifier (see 2.5.3):

very useful

extremely cold

wonderfully creative

In expressions of measurement and age, a noun phrase may function as a premodifier in an adjective phrase:

three months old

a metre long

10 mm wide

Postmodifiers occur after the adjective:

glad you could come

guilty of murder
The major functions of adjective phrases are:

1. Subject complement (see 1.5):
   
   Our aunt is *quite ill*.
   
   You were *very lucky*.
   
   My old teacher seemed *genuinely happy to see me*.

2. Premodifier of a noun (see 3.2.2):
   
   Emily was wearing a *very old* dress.
   
   I’ve used a *slightly different* recipe this time.
   
   She’s a *rather boring* person.

3. Object complement (see 1.8):
   
   Ice cream always makes Simon *ill*.
   
   The new wallpaper makes the room *much brighter*.
   
   The Gulf Stream keeps our climate *fairly mild*.
3.5 Adverb phrases

Adverb phrases have the following basic structure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Premodifier</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
<th>Postmodifier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>very</td>
<td>quickly</td>
<td>indeed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The premodifier in an adverb phrase is always an intensifier (see 2.5.3):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Premodifier</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>very</td>
<td>gradually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>too</td>
<td>slowly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extremely</td>
<td>badly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quite</td>
<td>soon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Postmodifiers in adverb phrases are quite rare. Apart from indeed, only enough is commonly used:

- funnily enough
- oddly enough
- naturally enough
- strangely enough

3.5.1 The functions of adverb phrases

The major functions of adverb phrases are:

1. Premodifier of an adjective (see 2.4):

   - David is extremely sensitive.
   - Titanic was a very successful film.
   - The meat was far too salty.
2 Premodifier of an adverb (see 2.5):

I spoke to John very recently.

She drives far too slowly.

The other witness saw the incident slightly more clearly.

3 Adjunct (see 1.11):

Suddenly the factory closed and 200 jobs were lost.

Full-time students receive a medical card automatically.

He died in his forties quite recently.

3.6 Prepositional phrases

Prepositional phrases have the following basic structure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Premodifier</th>
<th>Preposition</th>
<th>Complement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>just</td>
<td>after</td>
<td>the game</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The complement in a prepositional phrase is most commonly a noun phrase:

in London

around the world

across our street

through the open window

Clauses (see 4.3) can also function as the complement in a prepositional phrase:

It’s a good way of reducing the debt.

He succeeded by working hard.
Prepositional phrases usually consist of a preposition followed by its complement. Premodifiers in a prepositional phrase are quite rare, but here are some examples:

- just after the game
- straight across the road
- right around the building

3.6.1 The functions of prepositional phrases

The major functions of prepositional phrases are:

1. Postmodifier of a noun (see 3.2.3):

   - The population of China is growing.
   - The demand for British steel has dropped dramatically.
   - Caroline is reading a book on Renaissance painting.

2. Adjunct (see 1.11):

   - I’ve got to see the doctor on Wednesday.
   - Before the war, he played football for Leeds United.
   - We met David beside the river.

3. Subject complement (see 1.5):

   - Your lunch is in the microwave.
   - The other gift is for James.
   - Phil Collins was with a band called Genesis.
4 Postmodifier of an adjective (\textit{see} \textbf{3.4}): 

Sarah is very proud \emph{of her achievements}.

The villagers are not very tolerant \emph{of strangers}.

The officers were found guilty \emph{of disreputable conduct}.

5 Object complement (\textit{see} \textbf{1.8}): 

Sue has a job putting cards \emph{in alphabetical order}.

I am obliged to place these matters \emph{before the jury}.

She’s got a drawing board \emph{on her knee}. 
This chapter covers three broad areas: **subordination** and **coordination** (see 4.1–4.10); **linking sentences** (see 4.11–4.15); and **focusing** and **emphasizing** (see 4.16–4.19).

### 4.1 Complex sentences

In Chapter 1 we looked at the simple sentence *Paul plays football*, and we analysed it in terms of the following sentence elements: subject (S), verb (V) and direct object (DO):

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
S & V & DO \\
Paul & plays & football.
\end{array}
\]

We also looked briefly at the following sentence:

> When the plane landed, the ground crew removed the cargo.

We can analyse this sentence in the same way, in terms of the following sentence elements: adjunct (A), subject (S), verb (V) and direct object (DO):

\[
\begin{array}{ccccc}
A & S & V & DO \\
When the plane landed & the ground crew & removed & the cargo.
\end{array}
\]
However, unlike the simple sentence, this sentence can be analysed further. This is because the adjunct (A) *when the plane landed* is itself a ‘sentence-like’ construction. It has its own subject, *the plane*, and its own verb, *landed*. So it displays the sentence pattern S+V. It also has an important additional element: it is introduced by the subordinating conjunction *when* (▶see 2.9).

The presence of the subordinating conjunction indicates that *when the plane landed* is not an independent sentence. It is certainly ‘sentence-like’, since it displays the sentence pattern S+V, but it cannot stand alone. For this reason, we say that *when the plane landed* is a *subordinate clause*, not a sentence.

A subordinate clause such as *when the plane landed* is a dependent clause – it is part of a larger structure, usually a sentence. In contrast, *the ground crew removed the cargo* can stand alone – it is not subordinate to any higher structure.

A sentence which contains a subordinate clause is called a complex sentence.

### 4.2 Markers of subordination

There are two main indicators that a clause is subordinate:

1. **The presence of a subordinating conjunction.** Clauses which are introduced by one of the subordinating conjunctions (▶see 2.9) are subordinate clauses. Here are some examples:

   - *James left the room because he was angry.*
   - *If you need more money, just phone me.*
   - *I read a magazine while I was waiting.*

   However, not all subordinate clauses are introduced by a subordinator. The subordinator *that*, for instance, may be omitted:
Paul knows that Amy prefers tennis.

Paul knows Amy prefers tennis.

In [1] *that* indicates that the clause *that Amy prefers tennis* is subordinate. In [2], however, there is no formal marker of subordination, though the clause *Amy prefers tennis* is still a subordinate clause. So while a subordinator always indicates a subordinate clause, not all subordinate clauses are introduced by a subordinator.

2 The form of the verb phrase. If the verb phrase is non-finite (see 3.3.4), then the clause in which it occurs is a subordinate clause.

We recall that the non-finite verb forms are (1) the base form (often with *to*), (2) the *-ed* form and (3) the *-ing* form.

These three verb forms give their names to three subordinate clause types:

**to-clauses**

The road was widened *to improve the traffic flow.*

*To receive all the channels, you may need an antenna.*

A satellite must reach an altitude of 100 miles *to get clear of the atmosphere.*

**-ed clauses**

*Deprived of oxygen*, plants will quickly die.

The warriors faced each other, *dressed in black armour.*

*Designed for drafting*, mechanical pencils are also useful for sketching.

**-ing clauses**

Michelangelo painted *lying on his back.*

The teacher stood in the doorway, *saying nothing.*

Emily rang the doorbell, *her heart pounding.*
In a to-clause, to sometimes occurs as in order to or so as to:

*In order to reduce heat loss, we’ve sealed the window frames.*

*Be punctual so as to reduce waiting time.*

The form of the verb phrase, then, is a marker of subordination. If the verb phrase is non-finite, the clause which contains it is a subordinate clause.

### 4.3 Subordinate clause types

The main subordinate clause types are **adjunct clauses** (see 4.3.1), relative clauses (see 4.3.2), nominal relative clauses (see 4.3.3), *that*-clauses (see 4.3.4), and comparative clauses (see 4.3.5).

#### 4.3.1 Adjunct clauses

Adjunct clauses are subordinate clauses that function as adjuncts in sentence structure (see 1.11). They are introduced by a wide range of subordinating conjunctions, including although, because, if, since, when, while:

*Although he is only 18, he has a very mature attitude.*

*Sandra left early because she has an interview tomorrow.*

*If you don’t hurry you’ll miss your flight.*

*He’s lived in the same house since he was a boy.*

*When he was young, Van Gogh loved to paint trees.*

*I’ll watch a video while you’re out.*

Adjunct clauses express a very wide range of meanings (see 4.6).
4.3.2 Relative clauses

A relative clause is introduced by one of the relative pronouns, *that*, *who*, *which* or *whose* (see 2.6.6):

- The book *that* I am reading is fascinating.
- The man *who* lives beside us is unwell.
- This is a company *which* does not exclude people.
- I’ve got a friend *whose* parents are divorced.

In some circumstances, the relative pronoun may be omitted, leaving a zero relative clause:

- The book *I am reading* is fascinating.
  (cf. The book *that* I am reading . . .)

In another variant, the relative pronoun is again omitted, and the verb has an -ed form or an -ing form (see 2.3.1). This is a reduced relative clause:

- Houses *built in the 1940s* are usually draughty.
  (cf. Houses *which were built in the 1940s* . . .)
- The train *arriving at Platform One* is the Cambridge train.
  (cf. The train *which is arriving at Platform One* . . .)

4.3.3 Nominal relative clauses

A nominal relative clause is introduced by *what*, *whatever*, *whoever*, *where* or *how*:

- What you need is a long holiday.
- Take whatever you want.
- Whoever wins the most seats will form a government.
This is where the rebellion started.

Laura showed me how to set the timer.

There is a close correspondence between a nominal relative clause and a noun phrase (see 3.2):

What you need is a long holiday.

≈ The thing that you need is a long holiday.

Whoever wins the most seats will form a government.

≈ The party that wins the most seats will form a government.

Laura showed me how to set the timer.

≈ Laura showed me the way to set the timer.

### 4.3.4 That-clauses

A that-clause is introduced by the subordinating conjunction that:

Everyone knows that smoking is dangerous.

The new ruling means that pensioners will suffer.

Bernard has decided that he wants to live in Canada.

It is important to distinguish clearly between the subordinating conjunction that and the relative pronoun that. Relative pronoun that introduces a relative clause, and it can usually be replaced by which:

The book that I am reading is fascinating.

≈ The book which I am reading is fascinating.

In contrast, the subordinating conjunction that cannot be replaced by which:

Everyone knows that smoking is dangerous.

≈ Everyone knows which smoking is dangerous.
4.3.5 Comparative clauses

Comparative clauses are introduced by than or as. Clauses introduced by than express comparison in a gradable adjective or adverb:

Mary is older than I am.

It travels faster than you’d expect.

Everything is more expensive than it used to be.

Comparative clauses introduced by as express equivalence:

Mary is as old as I am.

This is as good as it gets.

You can be as personal as you like.

4.4 Clauses as sentence elements

As elements in sentence structure, subordinate clauses most commonly function as adjuncts (see 1.11). They may also have the following functions:

1 Subject (see 1.2):

What you need is a long holiday. nominal relative

Leaving home can be very traumatic. -ing clause

To give up now would be such a pity. to-clause

That he should fail to turn up is really annoying. that-clause

With the exception of nominal relatives and -ing clauses, clauses functioning as subjects are rare. The -ed type (Dressed in armour . . . ) cannot function as a subject.

►See also Postponed subjects, 4.18.
2 Direct object (see 1.6):

Paul knows that Amy prefers tennis. \(\text{that-clause}\)

Jim offered to drive us to the airport. \(\text{to-clause}\)

Mary enjoys visiting art galleries. \(\text{-ing clause}\)

We still don’t know what will happen. \(\text{nominal relative}\)

3 Subject complement (see 1.5):

A detective’s first job is to collect the evidence. \(\text{to-clause}\)

The main problem is finding enough money. \(\text{-ing clause}\)

The real reason is that I can’t stand him. \(\text{that-clause}\)

That’s what I’m trying to tell you. \(\text{nominal relative}\)

4.5 Clauses as phrase elements

When a subordinate clause occurs as an element in a phrase, it most commonly functions as a postmodifier. Subordinate clauses may occur as postmodifiers in the following phrase types (the phrases are bracketed).

1 Postmodifier in a noun phrase (see 3.2.3):

[The man who lives beside us] is unwell. \(\text{relative clause}\)

[The man to ask about plumbing] is Mr Davis \(\text{to-clause}\)

That-clauses function as complements in noun phrases (see 3.2.5):

[The fact that no one came] is really disappointing.

[The news that everyone on board was killed] has just reached us.
2 Postmodifier in an adjective phrase (see 3.4):

I wasn’t [aware that I had to register.] that-clause

Chelsea were [reluctant to admit defeat.] to-clause

3 Complement in a prepositional phrase (see 3.6):

She has a reputation [for being difficult.] -ing clause

He’s still coming to terms [with what happened.] nominal relative

4.6 The meanings of adjunct clauses

For the meanings expressed by adjuncts in a sentence, see 1.12. We identified three main types of meaning: manner, time and place. However, when clauses function as adjuncts, they can express a much wider range of meanings. The main types of meaning expressed by adjunct clauses are shown here:

**Time:**

I’ll speak to you again before you leave.

When you leave, please close the door.

I’ll read the newspaper while I’m waiting.

**Condition:**

I’ll be home early if I can catch the early train.

Provided he works hard, he’ll do very well at school.

Don’t call me unless it’s an emergency.

**Concession:**

He paid for the meal, 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 see why she’s angry.
**Reason:**

Bernard was an hour late because he missed his train.

I borrowed your laptop, 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 e-mail.

Hamilton lost the case, so he had to pay all the costs.

**Purpose:**

Leave a window open to let the steam out.

In order to meet growing demand, the BBC introduced a new service in the UHF part of the spectrum.

You should write down the number so you won’t forget it.

The type of meaning expressed by an adjunct clause is often predictable from the subordinating conjunction which introduces it. For instance, if always introduces a **conditional clause**, and because always introduces a reason clause.

However, some subordinating conjunctions can introduce more than one type. While can introduce a clause expressing time (I’ll read the newspaper while I’m waiting) as well as a clause expressing concession (While I don’t agree with her, I can see why she’s angry). Similarly, since can express time (He’s lived there since he was a boy) as well as reason (Since you can’t drive, you’ll have to take a taxi).

### 4.7 Peripheral clauses

In this section we look briefly at a range of clause types which are peripheral in sentence structure. These peripheral clauses are grammatically unintegrated, to varying degrees, in the sentences that contain them.
4.7.1 Comment clauses

A **comment clause** is a brief clause inserted into a sentence, expressing the speaker's attitude towards what is being said:

- We could, I suppose, share one between us.
- So the building was used, I imagine, for storing grain.
- She was acting on impulse, I guess.
- I can't help you, I'm afraid.

Other comment clauses include: I assume, I reckon, I should think, I must say, I'm sorry to say, I must admit.

4.7.2 Reporting clauses and direct speech

A **reporting clause** identifies the speaker of direct speech:

- 'The music is too loud,' said Jim.
- The lady said, 'I don't need any help'.

In **direct speech**, the exact words used by a speaker are quoted, as in these examples. In **indirect speech**, the words are subsequently reported by someone else:

**Direct speech:** 'The music is too loud', said Jim.

**Indirect speech:** Jim said that the music was too loud.

The switch from direct speech to indirect speech involves a change of tense. Here, the present tense verb (*is*) in direct speech becomes the past tense verb (*was*) in indirect speech.

Reporting clauses are often extended by the use of adjuncts (*see 1.11*):

- 'The music is too loud', said Jim angrily.
- 'It's a wonderful gift', said Laura gratefully.
- 'I'm not coming back', cried Tom, as he slammed the door.
4.7.3 Tag questions

Particularly in spoken English, questions are often added to the end of a declarative sentence (see 1.14.1):

You were born in London, weren’t you?

The interrogative weren’t you? is called a tag question, because it is ‘tagged on’ to the end of the declarative You were born in London. Tag questions are used to seek agreement with what has just been said in the declarative part. Further examples include:

It’s very warm, isn’t it?

The policy hasn’t really worked, has it?

Bernard worked in Whitehall, didn’t he?

4.7.4 Parenthetics

A parenthetical is a complete sentence which is inserted ‘parenthetically’ into another sentence. In writing, parenthetics are marked off from the main sentence by enclosing them in brackets or dashes:

The range of colours (most suppliers have 72) can include metallics, and both warm and cool greys.

By Bugatti standards it was not technically advanced – smaller Bugattis used similar technical layouts – merely bigger and grander, in all respects.

A parenthetical sentence has no grammatical connection with the main sentence. In speech, parenthetics are sometimes introduced by and:

There is a sense in which and Hogarth realized this satire is also a form of entertainment.
4.7.5  Sentential relative clauses

A **sentential relative clause** is introduced by the relative pronoun *which*. Sentential relatives are used to add a comment about what has just been said:

- James took the early train, *which was lucky for him*.
- Mary finally passed her exams, *which was a relief to everyone*.
- John doesn’t want to meet Laura, *which I can understand*.

4.8  Coordination

Coordination links items of ‘equal’ grammatical status. In the following examples the coordinated items are italicised:

1. **Anthony** and **Caroline** have arrived.
2. She bought a *new dress* and a *handbag*.
3. The house was *old* and *damp*.
4. Simon writes *clearly* and *legibly*.

Sentences [1] and [2] illustrate the coordination of noun phrases ([see 3.2](#)). Sentence [3] involves coordination of adjective phrases ([see 3.4](#)), and sentence [4] involves coordination of adverb phrases ([see 3.5](#)).

Coordination can also be used to link clauses:

- **David drinks milk** and **I drink beer**.
- **The deception was uncovered** and **the minister resigned**.
- **The hotel was lovely** but **the weather was awful**.

Finally, parts of clauses may be coordinated. The following examples show the coordination of predicates ([see 1.2](#)):
James quit his job and went to live in Scotland.

The plane took off but never reached its destination.

### 4.9 Coordination types

Coordination normally uses one of the coordinating conjunctions *and*, *but* or *or* to create a link between items:

- Quickly *and* resolutely, he strode into the bank.
- The course was short *but* intensive.
- I don’t like laziness *or* dishonesty.

This type of coordination, with a coordinating conjunction actually present, is called **syndetic coordination**.

Coordination can also occur without a coordinating conjunction, as in:

- *Quickly, resolutely*, he strode into the bank.

Coordination without the use of a coordinating conjunction is called **asyn- detic coordination**.

When three or more items are coordinated, the coordinating conjunction is usually placed between the final two items only:

- *We need bread, cheese, eggs, flour and milk.*

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

- *We need bread and cheese and eggs and flour and milk.*

This is called **polysyndetic coordination**. It is usually only used for effect, for instance, to express repetition or continuation:

- *He just talks and talks and talks.*
- *I’ve said it again and again and again.*
- *This play will run and run and run.*
The coordinators *and* and *or* can be used to link any number of items in coordination. However, *but* is slightly different. It can link a maximum of two items, usually clauses:

Steve Cram ran well *but* he was overtaken in the last length.

4.10 **Pseudo-coordination**

The coordinators *and* and *or* are sometimes used when no real coordination is taking place:

I'll be there when I'm good *and* ready.

Here, *and* does not coordinate *good* with *ready*. If it did, the sentence would mean something like: *I'll be there when I'm good and when I'm ready*. Instead, it means *I'll be there when I'm fully/completely ready*.

This use of *and* without any coordinating role is called **pseudo-coordination**. Further examples of pseudo-coordination include:

Please try *and* come early.  
(= Please try to come early.)

Any more complaints *and* I'm leaving.  
(= If I receive any more complaints, I will leave.)

Do that again *and* I'll report you.  
(= If you do that again, I will report you.)

When it acts as a coordinator, the conjunction *or* links items which are to be considered as alternatives:

Would you like tea *or* coffee?  

You can fly business class *or* economy class.

In the following example, however, the items linked by *or* are not alternatives:

The software is supplied with several useful ‘wizards’ *or* templates.
Here, *templates* is used to clarify the specialist computer term *wizards*, so this is a type of apposition (►see 3.2.6).

### 4.11 Sentence connectors

Throughout this book we have taken the sentence as the largest grammatical unit. However, in all forms of continuous communication, both spoken and written, sentences do not operate independently of each other. Instead, effective communication depends to a very large extent on placing sentences in the correct sequence, and on creating meaningful links between them. In this section we look at some grammatical devices which enable us to create links between sentences in discourse.

There are two main types of sentence connectors: logical connectors (►see 4.11.1) and structural connectors (►see 4.11.2).

#### 4.11.1 Logical connectors

Logical connectors express a logical relationship between sentences. They express two main types of relationship:

1. **Contrast/concession.** Contrast/concession connectors are used to express a contrast between the information expressed by two sentences:

   The closing date for the receipt of applications is 15 December. *However*, students are advised to submit their applications as soon as possible after 1 September.

   It was already clear yesterday that Moscow was losing hope it could persuade the United States and its allies to hold off a ground war for much longer. *Nevertheless*, the Soviet president continued his campaign of high-level diplomacy.

   Anybody who says that there is great glory in war is off his head. *On the other hand*, I have to say that war does bring out in people extraordinary nobility [ . . . ]

Other contrast/concession connectors include: *alternatively, anyway, besides, instead, nonetheless, still, yet.*
Result. Result connectors are used to indicate that the second sentence expresses the result or consequence of what has gone before:

Approval has already been given for a golf course at Smithstown, only three miles away. Therefore, an extra facility in the area was considered to be unnecessary.

I have not yet issued you with an invoice for the period prior to Christmas. Consequently, I am enclosing an invoice for the total amount of time used so far.

Thousands of commuters have been evacuated from platforms as the police launch a full-scale search. As a result, all underground stations with connections to British Rail are also shut.

Other result connectors include: accordingly, hence, in consequence, so, then, thus.

4.11.2 Structural connectors

Structural connectors are devices for ordering sentences, and for organizing the points we wish to make. Structural connectors are used for the following purposes:

1 Listing. Listing connectors are used to list points in a specific order:

First, he cannot stand against the leader unless he is fairly sure of a victory [. . .] But second, and more important, should the Tories lose the next election he will be damned and written out of the succession [. . .]

Firstly you have your brakes [. . .] Secondly you’ve got the throttle here on the handlebars.

To begin with, turn down the colour control until you have a black and white image [. . .] then manipulate the contrast and brightness controls [. . .]
Other listing connectors include: *in the first place, in the second place, for one thing, for another thing, finally, lastly.*

2 **Adding.** Adding connectors are used to add new pieces of information to what has previously been said:

Without such disclosure any consent received would not be informed or valid. *In addition,* the doctor would be in breach of his duty.

Now there are fewer than 50 goats that have to share the island with 85,000 land-hungry people. *Furthermore,* it is almost impossible to guarantee their protection.

As I had known Michael, Sarah and Victoria from their childhood [* . . . ] this remark came as rather a shock. *Also,* I was baffled by the logic.

Other adding connectors include: *additionally, moreover, what is more, on top of that* (informal), *as well as that.*

3 **Summing up.** ‘Summing up’ connectors are used to introduce a section which ‘sums up’ or concludes what has gone before:

*To conclude:* the fear of an overwhelming burden of old people is one of the least defensible arguments [* . . . ]

*In sum,* everything concerning the size, population, institutions, and requirements of an imperial capital are inflated [* . . . ]

*All in all,* he felt he’d had enough.

Other ‘summing up’ connectors include: *altogether, in conclusion, in summary, overall, to summarize.*

4 **Exemplifying.** Exemplifying connectors introduce examples or instances in support of what has previously been said:

For this reason, quite serious injuries may not be investigated. *For example,* finger amputations may be overlooked.
Ultraviolet radiation is known to have effects on the immune system. *For instance*, coldsores not infrequently occur at the beginning of a summer holiday.

The reverse case also existed. *That is*, circumstances in which words derived from the holy tongue were to be avoided.

Other exemplifying connectors include: *e.g.* (= for example), *i.e.* (= *that is*), *namely*.

### 4.12 Expressing point of view

Writers can introduce their own point of view very directly by using one of the following:

- *in my opinion*
- *in my view*
- *as I see it*
- *if you ask me* (informal)

In addition, certain adverbs can express the writer’s point of view. Usually, an adverb at the start of a sentence describes the action of the verb:

1. **Gradually**, the swelling will disappear.

   This can be paraphrased as: *The swelling will disappear in a gradual manner*.

   Compare this with:

2. **Hopefully**, the swelling will disappear.

   This cannot be paraphrased as *The swelling will disappear in a hopeful manner*. Instead, *hopefully* here expresses the speaker’s attitude towards what is being said. So we might paraphrase [2] as: *I hope that the swelling will disappear*. 
The italicized adverbs in the following examples also express point of view:

Vincent Van Gogh arrived at the end of the last century to paint his vivid and expressive pictures telling us of his love for the place. 
_Sadly_, too much sunshine and far too much alcohol got the better of him.

The air mass bringing the coldest temperatures is the polar continental mass, which comes in from the Soviet Union. 
_Fortunately_, it is not that common.

The painting was stolen on Sunday night. 
_Surprisingly_, no one realized it was missing until Wednesday.

This should have been part of the vision of the new British Steel. 
_Regrettably_, it wasn’t.

Other point-of-view adverbs include: _curiously_, _frankly_, _funnily_ (enough), 
_honestly_, _ironically_, _luckily_, _oddly_ (enough), _predictably_, _presumably_, 
_wisely_.

### 4.13 Referring expressions

Continuous discourse always contains a great deal of cross-referring from one part of the text to another. In fact, the coherence of a text – whether written or spoken – depends on making unambiguous cross-references between the various parts. To give a simple example:

_Simon_ came home early. _He_ was not feeling well.

Here, the personal pronoun _he_ refers back to the proper noun _Simon_. 
The pronoun creates a simple, unambiguous connection between the two sentences. Referring back in this way is called anaphoric reference, or simply _anaphora_. The item that is referred back to is called the _antecedent_. So in this example, _Simon_ is the antecedent of _he_.

Using pronouns is the most common way to make cross-references in a text. The following examples illustrate the use of pronouns to refer back. In each example, the antecedent and its corresponding pronoun are shown in italic.
You should prepare a study timetable. You can modify it later if you need to.

I like Juliet Stephenson. I saw her in Truly Madly Deeply.

London Underground has announced the suspension of trains on the Circle Line. This is due to track maintenance work.

When we feel emotion, certain involuntary changes occur within us. These include changes in salivation, breathing, and heart-rate.

A pronoun can also refer back to the whole of a previous sentence:

Check-in time was ten o’clock. That meant we had to get up at six.

Referring back is the most common type of cross-referencing in a text. However, we can also refer forward:

It’s here at last. The new Nissan Micra was launched this week.

Referring forward is called cataphoric reference, or cataphora.

4.14 Antecedent agreement

In the sentences

Simon came home early. He was not feeling well.

we say that Simon is the antecedent of he (see 4.13). The pronoun he agrees with its antecedent in number (singular), person (third) and gender (masculine). This is called antecedent agreement.

For the purposes of clear communication, it is important to ensure that there is agreement between a pronoun and its antecedent. In the following, there is no agreement:

A good speaker system can be all that’s needed to transform your PC from a piece of furniture into an entertainment centre. They can give games a lift as much as any posh graphics card.
Since the antecedent *a good speaker system* is singular, we would expect the singular pronoun *it* in the second sentence: *It can give games a lift* . . .

Perhaps more importantly for clear communication, the antecedent should be unambiguous:

Laura used to babysit a little girl who kept throwing her shoes in the fire.

Here, the antecedent of *her* is ambiguous. Whose shoes were thrown in the fire, Laura’s or the little girl’s? In grammatical terms, is *Laura* or *a little girl* the antecedent of *her*?

### 4.15 Substitution using *so* and *do*

The word *so* can be used as a substitute for an entire previous sentence:

Q. Will we have time for breakfast at the airport?

A. I hope *so*.

(= I hope we will have time for breakfast at the airport.)

Using *so* in this way means that we can avoid unwieldy repetition.

The negative counterpart of *so* is *not*:

Q. Is Jim coming tonight?

A. I hope *not*.

(= I hope Jim is not coming tonight.)

*So* can also substitute for a phrase:

The meat was very fresh and *so* were the vegetables.

Here, *so* substitutes for the adjective phrase *very fresh*. The negative counterpart of phrasal *so* is *neither*:

The meat was not very fresh and *neither* were the vegetables.
The verb *do* can also be used as a substitute:

They asked me to drive them to the airport and I *did*.

*Do* sometimes combines with *so* as a substitute:

You should save a little money every month. If you *do so*, you will have no worries.

Here, *do so* substitutes for *save a little money every month*.

### 4.16 Fronting

**Fronting** occurs when we move one of the sentence elements from its usual position to the beginning of the sentence. Consider the following simple sentence:

David (S) owes (V) £4000 (DO).

The direct object £4000 can be ‘fronted’ as follows:

£4000 (DO) David (S) owes (V).

Fronting gives special emphasis to the fronted element. In this example, it might be used to express astonishment at the amount of money that David owes. The following examples also contain fronted direct objects:

*Ice-cream* he wants! (cf. He wants *ice-cream.*)

*Some games* we won easily. (cf. We won *some games* easily.)

*That much* I understand. (cf. I understand *that much.*)

A subject complement (►**see 1.5**) may also be fronted:

*Stone cold* her hands were. (cf. Her hands were *stone cold.*)

*Extremely rude* she was. (cf. She was *extremely rude.*)
Cleft sentences

The simple sentence *Simon studied French last year* can be rewritten as:

It was Simon who studied French last year.

This is called a **cleft sentence** because the original simple sentence has been divided (or ‘cleft’) into two clauses:

**Clause 1:**  \(\text{It was } Simon\)

**Clause 2:**  \(\text{who studied French last year}\)

A cleft sentence is used when we wish to emphasize one element of the original sentence, often as a way of excluding other possibilities:

It was *Simon* who studied French last year (not *Amy*).

Here, *Simon*, the subject of the original sentence, is emphasized. We can also emphasize other elements, including the direct object *French*:

It was *French* that Simon studied last year (not *German*).

Finally, we can emphasize the adjunct *last year*:

It was *last year* that Simon studied French (not *this year*).

The emphasized element in a cleft sentence is called the **focus**. Cleft sentences are introduced by *it*, and the verb is always *be*. Therefore the pattern of a cleft sentence is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>It</th>
<th>Be</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It</td>
<td>was</td>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>who studied French last year.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Postponed subjects

The subject is usually the first element in a sentence. However, if the subject is a clause, it may be postponed to the end:

It’s not surprising that James failed his exams.

Here, the subject is the that-clause that James failed his exams. The subject has been postponed to the end of the sentence, and its normal position is filled by it. In the more typical pattern, with the subject at the beginning, this sentence sounds stylistically awkward:

That James failed his exams is not surprising.

To-clauses may be postponed in the same way:

It was a good idea to bring an umbrella.
(cf. To bring an umbrella was a good idea.)

It is particularly desirable to postpone a subject clause when it is very long:

It soon came to our attention that no one from the area had actually applied for any type of housing benefit.
(cf. That no one from the area had actually applied for any type of housing benefit soon came to our attention.)

Postponing the subject is not always just a matter of style. With some verbs, postponement is obligatory:

It seems that many people are deeply attached to the monarchy.
*~That many people are deeply attached to the monarchy seems.

It appears that his statement had wider implications.
*~That his statement had wider implications appears.

It turned out that his secretary had stolen the money.
*~That his secretary had stolen the money turned out.
There-sentences are introduced by the word *there*:

*There is a man at the door.*

*There is a God after all.*

*There was a phonecall for you.*

*There is no such thing as a popular tax.*

*There*-sentences are chiefly used to introduce new information relating to the existence – or non-existence – of some state of affairs. For this reason they are sometimes called ‘existential’ sentences.

The word *there* in these constructions should be distinguished from the adverb *there*, which denotes place:

*There he is. (cf. He is there.)*
5.1 The structure of words

Many words in English have a recognisable internal structure. For example, the word *unsuccessful* can be broken down into the following three parts:

```
un + success + ful
```

The first part, *un-*, is called the **prefix**. The second part – *success* – is a complete word in itself, and is called the **base**. The last part, *-ful*, is called the **suffix**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prefix</th>
<th>Base</th>
<th>Suffix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>un</td>
<td>success</td>
<td>ful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prefixes and suffixes are added to existing words to create new words.

5.2 Prefixes

Prefixes are added to the beginning of a word to create a new word. They contribute specific types of meaning. For instance, when we add the prefix *pre-* to the word *1945*, we create a new word *pre-1945*, meaning *before* 1945. The following are the main prefixes used in English, together with the kinds of meaning they contribute.
anti-
against, opposed to anti-depressant, anti-nuclear, anti-war, anti-Western

de-
to reverse something decriminalise, de-activate, de-commission, deform

dis-
reverse of disagreement, disapprove, dislike, disqualify, disambiguate, disarm, disenfranchise, dislodge
remove something deform

extra-
beyond extraterrestrial, extra-curricular, extra-mural, extra-sensory

il-, im-, in-, ir-
not illegal, illegible, illegitimate, impatient, impossible, impolite, inappropiately, inconceivable, intolerant, irregular, irrelevant, irresponsible

inter-
between international, inter-racial, intergalactic, interwoven

mis-
to do something miscalculate, misconstrue, miskick, badly or incorrectly misunderstand

non-
not non-European, non-resident, non-stick, non-white

post-
after post-1945, postgraduate, post-colonial, post-war

pre-
before pre-1914, pre-war, predetermined, pre-set

pro-
in favour of pro-life, pro-democracy, pro-Europe
Suffixes

Suffixes are added to the end of a word to create a new word. Certain suffixes are associated with certain word classes. For instance, the suffix -able appears at the end of many adjectives, including *reasonable, remarkable, believable*. The suffix -ist is used to create many nouns, including *capitalist, physicist, specialist*. The following are the most common suffixes associated with the major word classes.

1. **Noun suffixes:**
   - -age: blockage, drainage, postage, spillage
   - -al: betrayal, dismissal, recital, removal
   - -ant: claimant, contestant, inhabitant, informant
   - -dom: freedom, kingdom, martyrdom, officialdom
   - -ee: absentee, employee, refugee, trainee
   - -er/-or: actor, blender, defender, eraser, teacher
   - -ism: ageism, favouritism, racism, terrorism
   - -ist: artist, cyclist, motorist, perfectionist
   - -ity: opportunity, publicity, responsibility, severity
   - -ment: embarrassment, environment, equipment, government
   - -ness: coolness, dryness, smoothness, willingness
   - -ship: citizenship, dictatorship, hardship, relationship
   - -tion: demonstration, ignition, migration, recreation

**5.3 Suffixes**

to do something again  
re-apply, re-design, re-introduce, repaint

reverse of  
unclear, undemocratic, unnecessary, unusual,

remove something  
undress, unleash, unmask, unscrew
2 Adjective suffixes:

- able achievable, profitable, reasonable, remarkable
- al accidental, industrial, musical, physical, whimsical
- ful grateful, hopeful, successful, tuneful, useful
- ish amateurish, childish, feverish, foolish, ghoulish
- less careless, homeless, hopeless, painless, restless
- like apelike, childlike, godlike, starlike
- y cloudy, creepy, funny, rainy, sleepy

3 Verb suffixes:

- ate adjudicate, congratulate, hyphenate, populate
- en broaden, deafen, ripen, sadden, tighten, widen
- ify amplify, beautify, clarify, classify, identify, purify
- ise/-ize economize, modernize, popularize, realise, terrorize

4 Adverb suffixes:

- ly brilliantly, carefully, slowly, smoothly, terribly
- wards afterwards, backwards, onwards, upwards
- wise anticlockwise, clockwise, health-wise, relationship-wise

5.4 Compounding and blending

Compounding involves combining two bases (▶ see 5.1) to create a new word. For instance, the bases head and ache combine to form headache. Further examples of compounding include:
Many adjectives are formed by compounding a noun with the -ed or -ing form of a verb (see 2.3.1), as set out below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>-ed/-ing Verb</th>
<th>Adjective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>drug</td>
<td>induced</td>
<td>drug-induced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poverty</td>
<td>stricken</td>
<td>poverty-stricken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>battery</td>
<td>operated</td>
<td>battery-operated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stress</td>
<td>related</td>
<td>stress-related</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rat</td>
<td>infested</td>
<td>rat-infested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>award</td>
<td>winning</td>
<td>award-winning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eye</td>
<td>catching</td>
<td>eye-catching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fun</td>
<td>loving</td>
<td>fun-loving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>penny</td>
<td>pinching</td>
<td>penny-pinching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time</td>
<td>consuming</td>
<td>time-consuming</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
See also Participial adjectives (2.4.3).

Blending is similar to compounding, except that only parts of existing words are combined to create a new word. For example, the word camcorder is formed by combining cam (from camera) with corder (from recorder). Other examples of blending include:

- bionic = biological + electronic
- biopic = biographical + picture
- Britpop = British pop music
- docudrama = documentary + drama
- docusoap = documentary + soap opera
- ecoterrorism = ecology + terrorism
- edutainment = education + entertainment
- Eurovision = European + television
- e-zine = electronic magazine
- heliport = helicopter + airport
- infotainment = information + entertainment
- motel = motor + hotel
- netiquette = Internet + etiquette
- netizen = Internet + citizen
- paratroopers = parachute + troopers
- pulsar = pulsating + star
- smog = smoke + fog
5.5 Acronyms, abbreviations, and clipping

**Acronyms** are formed by combining the initial letters or syllables of two or more words. The combination is pronounced as a single word:

- **AIDS**  
  *acquired immune deficiency syndrome*

- **BIOS**  
  *Basic Input Output System*

- **DOS**  
  *Disk Operating System*

- **FAQ**  
  *frequently asked questions*

- **laser**  
  *light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation*

- **Oxfam**  
  *Oxford Committee for Famine Relief*

- **radar**  
  *radio detecting and ranging*

- **RAM**  
  *random access memory*

- **ROM**  
  *read-only memory*

- **SAD**  
  *seasonal affective disorder*

- **SALT**  
  *Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty*

- **scuba**  
  *self-contained underwater breathing apparatus*

- **UNPROFOR**  
  *United Nations Protection Force*

- **WYSIWYG**  
  *What You See Is What You Get*

**Abbreviations** are also formed from the initial letters of words, but unlike acronyms, they are spoken by spelling out each letter:

- **ATM**  
  *automated teller machine*

- **BST**  
  *British Standard Time*

- **cpu**  
  *central processing unit*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DVD</td>
<td>digital video disk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>European Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HTML</td>
<td>hypertext markup language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>http</td>
<td>hypertext transfer protocol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISD</td>
<td>international subscriber dialling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>information technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o.g.</td>
<td>own goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTT</td>
<td>over the top</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>personal computer <em>(also political correctness)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRP</td>
<td>performance-related pay <em>(also profit-related pay)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSI</td>
<td>repetitive strain injury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UFO</td>
<td>unidentified flying object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commission for Refugees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URL</td>
<td>Universal Resource Locator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCR</td>
<td>video cassette recorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWW</td>
<td>World Wide Web</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following abbreviations are now widely used in e-mail messages and in online discussion groups:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFK</td>
<td>away from keyboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTW</td>
<td>by the way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FWIW</td>
<td>for what it's worth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FYI</td>
<td>for your information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Clipping is a type of abbreviation in which one or more syllables are omitted or ‘clipped’ from a word. Most commonly, the beginning of the word is retained:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clipping</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ad (or advert)</td>
<td>advertisement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decaff (also decaf)</td>
<td>decaffeinated coffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demo</td>
<td>demonstration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exam</td>
<td>examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>improv</td>
<td>improvisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lab</td>
<td>laboratory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>memo</td>
<td>memorandum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>movie</td>
<td>moving picture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>photo</td>
<td>photograph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pub</td>
<td>public house</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clipping is a very common method of creating familiar personal names, including Fred (from Frederick), Tim (from Timothy) and Seb (from Sebastian).

5.6 Back formations

Back formations are words (usually verbs) formed by removing from a noun what is thought to be a suffix, and adding a verb ending. In the following, the right-hand column shows the word from which the back formation is derived.
The verb *legitimize* is formed by back formation from the adjective *legitimate*.

### 5.7 Combining forms

Combining forms are segments that do not exist as words in their own right. They are added to the beginning or end of another segment or word to create a new word. The following combining forms have been especially productive in recent years:

- **bio-**
  - biodiversity, bioethics, biohazard, biosphere
- **cyber-**
  - cybernaut, cybernetics, cyberspace
- **e-**
  - e-mail/email, e-business, e-commerce, e-text
- **Euro-**
  - Eurocrat, Eurosceptic, Eurostar, Eurotunnel
- **hyper-**
  - hyperlink, hypermarket, hypermedia, hypertext
- **mega-**
  - megabucks, megabyte, megastar, megastore
- **techno-**
  - technobabble, technocrat, technojunkie, techno-pop
- **tele-**
  - telecottage, telematics, teleworking, telemarketing
- **-ware**
  - freeware, groupware, hardware, shareware, software
5.8 Inflections

Inflections are a special type of suffix (see 5.3). They are added to the end of a word to indicate a grammatical property. For instance, the -s inflection is added to a noun to indicate plural number (tree/trees).

Inflections differ from other suffixes in one important respect. The suffix -ment, for example, added to the verb embarrass creates a completely different word, the noun embarrassment. Adding an inflection, however, does not create a new word, but a different grammatical form of the same word. For example, the words tree and trees are two forms of the same lexical word tree. In a dictionary, they would both appear under tree. They differ only in number: tree is singular and trees is plural.

In comparison with other languages, English has very few inflections. They are always suffixes, that is, they are always added to the end of a word. The inflections are shown in Table 3.

### Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inflection Type</th>
<th>Inflection</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nouns</td>
<td>Plural number</td>
<td>-s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genitive</td>
<td>-’s</td>
<td>John’s car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-’</td>
<td>the boys’ school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Verbs</td>
<td>-s form (3rd-person singular)</td>
<td>-s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>past form</td>
<td>-ed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-ed form</td>
<td>-ed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-ing form</td>
<td>-ing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives and adverbs</td>
<td>Comparative</td>
<td>-er</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Superlative</td>
<td>-est</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 5.9 Adding inflections: general spelling rules

There are four general spelling rules for adding inflections. These are set out below:

1 **Spelling rule 1.** Double the final consonant before adding *-ed*, *-ing*, *-er* or *-est*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>+ed</th>
<th>+ing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rub</td>
<td>rubbed</td>
<td>rubbing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stop</td>
<td>stopped</td>
<td>stopping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gag</td>
<td>gagged</td>
<td>gagging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jam</td>
<td>jammed</td>
<td>jamming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plan</td>
<td>planned</td>
<td>planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>occur</td>
<td>occurred</td>
<td>occurring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regret</td>
<td>regretted</td>
<td>regretting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>+er</th>
<th>+est</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>red</td>
<td>redder</td>
<td>reddest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>big</td>
<td>bigger</td>
<td>biggest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grim</td>
<td>grimmer</td>
<td>grimmest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wet</td>
<td>wetter</td>
<td>wettest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• In British English, verbs ending in -el double the l:

- travel → travelled → travelling
- marvel → marvelled → marvelling

However, in American English, final l is not doubled:

- travel → traveled → traveling
- marvel → marveled → marveling

• Final l is not doubled when it follows a or o:

- conceal → concealed → concealing
- reveal → revealed → revealing
- cool → cooled → cooling

• Final g is not doubled when it follows n:

- strong → stronger → strongest
- young → younger → youngest

2. **Spelling rule 2.** Change final y to i before adding -s, -ed, -er or -est:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>+-s</th>
<th>+-ed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cry</td>
<td>cries</td>
<td>cried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>occupy</td>
<td>occupies</td>
<td>occupied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>try</td>
<td>tries</td>
<td>tried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>worry</td>
<td>worries</td>
<td>worried</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>+-er</th>
<th>+-est</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>easy</td>
<td>easier</td>
<td>easiest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverb</td>
<td>+-er</td>
<td>+-est</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>early</td>
<td>earlier</td>
<td>earliest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- If the final *y* follows a vowel, then it is retained:

  - convey: conveys, conveyed
  - delay: delays, delayed
  - play: plays, played
  - enjoy: enjoys, enjoyed

- The verbs *lay*, *pay*, and *say* do not take an *-ed* ending:

  - lay: lays, laid
  - pay: pays, paid
  - say: says, said

3 **Spelling rule 3.** Drop silent *e* before adding *-ed*, *-ing*, *-er*, or *-est:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>+-ed</th>
<th>+-ing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>care</td>
<td>cared</td>
<td>caring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>change</td>
<td>changed</td>
<td>changing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hope</td>
<td>hoped</td>
<td>hoping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>love</td>
<td>loved</td>
<td>loving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>+-er</th>
<th>+-est</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>blue</td>
<td>bluer</td>
<td>bluest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If the base ends in *ie*, change *ie* to *y* before adding -*ing*:

- die, dying
- lie, lying
- tie, tying

The *e* is retained in *dyeing* and *canoeing*.

**Spelling rule 4.** Add *e* before -s if the base ends in one of the following: *s, sh, ch, tch, x or z*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>+s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pass</td>
<td>passes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>push</td>
<td>pushes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teach</td>
<td>teaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>catch</td>
<td>catches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relax</td>
<td>relaxes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buzz</td>
<td>buzzes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>+s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mass</td>
<td>masses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>box</td>
<td>boxes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>church</td>
<td>churches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>match</td>
<td>matches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wish</td>
<td>wishes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quiz</td>
<td>quizzes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On irregular noun plurals, see 5.11.

### 5.10 Adding -ly and -ally

Many adverbs are formed by adding -ly to an adjective:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>quiet</td>
<td>quietly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recent</td>
<td>recently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soft</td>
<td>softly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the adjective already ends in y, change y to i:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>steady</td>
<td>steadily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weary</td>
<td>wearily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, if the adjective ends in -ic, add -ally (not -ly) to form the adverb:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>basic</td>
<td>basically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dramatic</td>
<td>dramatically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enthusiastic</td>
<td>enthusiastically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emphatic</td>
<td>emphatically</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The adverb *publicly* (from the adjective *public*) is an exception to this rule.

### 5.11 Plural nouns

Regular nouns form the plural by adding *-s* to the singular form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>+ s</th>
<th>= Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>table</td>
<td>+ s</td>
<td>= tables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>truck</td>
<td>+ s</td>
<td>= trucks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>elephant</td>
<td>+ s</td>
<td>= elephants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some plurals are formed by changing the singular ending in an irregular way:

- *-y* → *-ies*  
  - ability → *abilities*  
  - memory → *memories*  
  - party → *parties*  

- *-s* → *-es*  
  - cross → *crosses*  
  - loss → *losses*  
  - mass → *masses*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rule</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-f or -fe → -ves</td>
<td>thief → thieves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>shelf → shelves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>life → lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-on → -a</td>
<td>criterion → criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>phenomenon → phenomena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-um → -a</td>
<td>bacterium → bacteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>millennium → millennia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-us → -i</td>
<td>focus → foci</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nucleus → nuclei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-a → -ae</td>
<td>amoeba → amoebae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>formula → formulae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-o → -oes</td>
<td>echo → echoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hero → heroes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tomato → tomatoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>But:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>radio → radios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>video → videos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-is → -es</td>
<td>analysis → analyses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>crisis → crises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ex or -ix → -ices</td>
<td>index → indices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>matrix → matrices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Variants with s or z

Many words can be spelled with either -s- or -z-:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>-s- variant</th>
<th>-z- variant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>criticise</td>
<td>criticize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finalise</td>
<td>finalize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organise</td>
<td>organize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organisation</td>
<td>organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>polarise</td>
<td>polarize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>realise</td>
<td>realize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>realisation</td>
<td>realization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both variants are acceptable, though in general, American English prefers the -z- variant, while British English prefers the -s- variant.

No choice is available in the following words, which are always spelled with -s-:

- advise
- arise
- chastise
- comprise
- despise
- disguise
- enterprise

exercise
guise
revise
rise
supervise
surprise
wise
**British and American spelling variants**

Spelling differences between British English and American English are not as widespread as is often thought. The vast majority of words have the same spelling in both varieties. However, the following systematic spelling differences may be observed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>British English</th>
<th>American English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-our / -or</td>
<td>behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>colour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>favourite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>humour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>neighbour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-re / -er</td>
<td>centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fibre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>litre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>metre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ogue / -og</td>
<td>analogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>catalogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ae, oe / e</td>
<td>anaemia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>anaesthesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>diarrhoea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>foetus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>haemorrhage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ence / -ense</td>
<td>defence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>offence</td>
<td>offense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pretence</td>
<td>pretense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miscellaneous</td>
<td>aluminium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cheque</td>
<td>check</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jewellery</td>
<td>jewelry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kerb</td>
<td>curb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manoeuvre</td>
<td>maneuver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mould</td>
<td>mold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plough</td>
<td>plow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tyre</td>
<td>tire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sulphur</td>
<td>sulfur</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5.14 Problem spellings

Even the most experienced writers have difficulties with the spelling of some words. This is especially true in the case of pairs, like *it’s* and *its*, which sound alike but have different spellings and meanings. In this section we disambiguate the most troublesome of these pairs.

**accept/except:**

Accept is a verb: *You should accept his offer.* Except is a preposition (see 2.8): *I like all types of music except jazz.*

**advice/advise:**

Advice is a noun: *Ask your teacher for advice.* Advise is a verb: *His doctor advised him to stop smoking.*

**affect/effect:**

Affect is a verb: *Pollution in the atmosphere affects our climate.* Effect is a noun: *What effect does pollution have?* Effect is sometimes used as a verb, meaning *to bring about (change): The National Health Service has effected huge social change in Britain.*
altar/alter:
Altar is a noun: The sacrifice was placed on the altar. Alter is a verb, meaning to change: It’s too late now to alter your holiday plans.

choose/chose:
Both are forms of the same verb, choose. Choose is the base form (▶ see 2.3.2): Choose your clothes carefully, It is difficult to choose. Chose is the past form (▶ see 2.3.4): We chose a site overlooking the valley. The -ed form of this verb is chosen.

council/counsel:
Council is a noun: The local council has introduced parking restrictions. Counsel is a verb, meaning to guide or advise, usually in relation to behaviour: We’ve hired a social worker to counsel the children. The corresponding noun, counsel, means advice or guidance.

discreet/discrete:
Both are adjectives. Discreet means tactful: I’ve made some discreet enquiries. The corresponding noun is discretion. Discrete means separate, distinct: The speech signal is first divided into discrete segments. The corresponding noun is discreteness.

its/it’s:
Its is a possessive pronoun (▶ see 2.6.2): The horse shook its head. It’s is a contraction of it is: It’s a lovely day or it has: It’s been ages since we met.

licence/license:
In British English, licence is a noun, as in driving licence, and license is a verb, meaning to give permission: The restaurant is licensed to sell spirits. Licence does not exist in American English. License is used as the noun and as the verb.

personal/personnel:
Personal is an adjective: You shouldn’t ask personal questions. Personnel is a noun, meaning staff: All personnel should report to reception.
**practice/practise:**
Practice is a noun, meaning (a) training for sport, music, etc: I’ve got piano practice at six, (b) the exercise of a profession, e.g. medical practice, legal practice. In British English, practise is a verb: Amy practised her speech in front of a mirror. The word practise does not exist in American English. Practice is used as the noun and as the verb.

**principal/principle:**
Principal is most commonly used as an adjective, meaning most important: The government’s principal concern should be unemployment. As a noun, principal refers to the most important, or highest-ranked, person in an organization, e.g. Principal of a school. Principle is a noun, meaning rule of conduct: a person of principle, moral principles.

**quiet/quite:**
Quiet is an adjective: a quiet child, keep quiet. Quite is an intensifier (▶see 2.5.3), and is used before an adjective or an adverb: It’s quite cold outside, I spoke to James quite recently.

**stationary/stationery:**
Stationary is an adjective: a stationary vehicle. Stationery is an noun, meaning pens, paper, etc.

**than/then:**
Than is used in comparative constructions (▶see 4.3.5): Paul is older than Amy, The professor is younger than I expected. Then is an adverb of time: We toured the Museum and then we went home. As a sentence connector, then means in that case: Do you like horror films? Then you’ll love Poltergeist.

**your/you’re:**
Your is a possessive pronoun (▶see 2.6.2): Your car has been stolen. You’re is a contraction of you are: You’re a real pal.
Irregular verbs (see 2.3.7) are verbs in which the past form and the -ed form are not spelled in the regular way. The ‘regular way’ adds -ed to the base form of the verb (e.g. base form = *walk*, past form = *walked*, -ed form = (has) *walked*). Some of the verbs listed here have regular and irregular variants (see 2.3.8). On the five verb forms, see 2.3.1. For the verb be, see 2.3.9.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base form</th>
<th>-s form</th>
<th>Past form</th>
<th>-ed form</th>
<th>-ing form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>awake</td>
<td>awakes</td>
<td>awoke</td>
<td>awoken</td>
<td>awaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bear</td>
<td>bears</td>
<td>bore</td>
<td>borne</td>
<td>bearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beat</td>
<td>beats</td>
<td>beat</td>
<td>beaten</td>
<td>beating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>become</td>
<td>becomes</td>
<td>became</td>
<td>become</td>
<td>becoming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>begin</td>
<td>begins</td>
<td>began</td>
<td>begun</td>
<td>beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bend</td>
<td>bends</td>
<td>bent</td>
<td>bent</td>
<td>bending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bet</td>
<td>bets</td>
<td>bet</td>
<td>bet</td>
<td>betting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bid</td>
<td>bids</td>
<td>bid</td>
<td>bid</td>
<td>biding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bind</td>
<td>binds</td>
<td>bound</td>
<td>bound</td>
<td>binding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base form</td>
<td>-s form</td>
<td>Past form</td>
<td>-ed form</td>
<td>-ing form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bite</td>
<td>bites</td>
<td>bit</td>
<td>bitten</td>
<td>biting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bleed</td>
<td>bleeds</td>
<td>bled</td>
<td>bled</td>
<td>bleeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blow</td>
<td>blows</td>
<td>blew</td>
<td>blown</td>
<td>blowing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>break</td>
<td>breaks</td>
<td>broke</td>
<td>broken</td>
<td>breaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bring</td>
<td>brings</td>
<td>brought</td>
<td>brought</td>
<td>bringing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>breed</td>
<td>breeds</td>
<td>bred</td>
<td>bred</td>
<td>breeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>build</td>
<td>builds</td>
<td>built</td>
<td>built</td>
<td>building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>burn</td>
<td>burns</td>
<td>burned</td>
<td>burnt</td>
<td>burning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>burst</td>
<td>bursts</td>
<td>burst</td>
<td>burst</td>
<td>bursting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buy</td>
<td>buys</td>
<td>bought</td>
<td>bought</td>
<td>buying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cast</td>
<td>casts</td>
<td>cast</td>
<td>cast</td>
<td>casting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>catch</td>
<td>catches</td>
<td>caught</td>
<td>caught</td>
<td>catching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>choose</td>
<td>chooses</td>
<td>chose</td>
<td>chosen</td>
<td>choosing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cling</td>
<td>clings</td>
<td>clung</td>
<td>clung</td>
<td>clinging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>come</td>
<td>comes</td>
<td>came</td>
<td>come</td>
<td>coming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>creep</td>
<td>creeps</td>
<td>crept</td>
<td>crept</td>
<td>creeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cut</td>
<td>cuts</td>
<td>cut</td>
<td>cut</td>
<td>cutting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deal</td>
<td>deals</td>
<td>dealt</td>
<td>dealt</td>
<td>dealing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dig</td>
<td>digs</td>
<td>dug</td>
<td>dug</td>
<td>digging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base form</td>
<td>-s form</td>
<td>Past form</td>
<td>-ed form</td>
<td>-ing form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dive</td>
<td>dives</td>
<td>dived</td>
<td>dived</td>
<td>diving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do</td>
<td>does</td>
<td>did</td>
<td>done</td>
<td>doing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>draw</td>
<td>draws</td>
<td>drew</td>
<td>drawn</td>
<td>drawing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dream</td>
<td>dreams</td>
<td>dreamed</td>
<td>dreamt</td>
<td>dreaming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drink</td>
<td>drinks</td>
<td>drank</td>
<td>drunk</td>
<td>drinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drive</td>
<td>drives</td>
<td>drove</td>
<td>driven</td>
<td>driving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eat</td>
<td>eats</td>
<td>ate</td>
<td>eaten</td>
<td>eating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fall</td>
<td>falls</td>
<td>fell</td>
<td>fallen</td>
<td>falling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feed</td>
<td>feeds</td>
<td>fed</td>
<td>fed</td>
<td>feeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feel</td>
<td>feels</td>
<td>felt</td>
<td>felt</td>
<td>feeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fight</td>
<td>fights</td>
<td>fought</td>
<td>fought</td>
<td>fighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>find</td>
<td>finds</td>
<td>found</td>
<td>found</td>
<td>finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flee</td>
<td>flees</td>
<td>fled</td>
<td>fled</td>
<td>fleeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fling</td>
<td>flings</td>
<td>flung</td>
<td>flung</td>
<td>flinging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fly</td>
<td>flies</td>
<td>flew</td>
<td>flown</td>
<td>flying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forget</td>
<td>forgets</td>
<td>forgot</td>
<td>forgotten</td>
<td>forgetting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>freeze</td>
<td>freezes</td>
<td>froze</td>
<td>frozen</td>
<td>freezing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>get</td>
<td>gets</td>
<td>got</td>
<td>got</td>
<td>getting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>give</td>
<td>gives</td>
<td>gave</td>
<td>given</td>
<td>giving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base form</td>
<td>-s form</td>
<td>Past form</td>
<td>-ed form</td>
<td>-ing form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go</td>
<td>goes</td>
<td>went</td>
<td>gone</td>
<td>going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grind</td>
<td>grinds</td>
<td>ground</td>
<td>ground</td>
<td>grinding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grow</td>
<td>grows</td>
<td>grew</td>
<td>grown</td>
<td>growing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have</td>
<td>has</td>
<td>had</td>
<td>had</td>
<td>having</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hear</td>
<td>hears</td>
<td>heard</td>
<td>heard</td>
<td>hearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hide</td>
<td>hides</td>
<td>hid</td>
<td>hidden</td>
<td>hiding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hit</td>
<td>hits</td>
<td>hit</td>
<td>hit</td>
<td>hitting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hold</td>
<td>holds</td>
<td>held</td>
<td>held</td>
<td>holding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hurt</td>
<td>hurts</td>
<td>hurt</td>
<td>hurt</td>
<td>hurting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keep</td>
<td>keeps</td>
<td>kept</td>
<td>kept</td>
<td>keeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kneel</td>
<td>kneels</td>
<td>knelt</td>
<td>knelt</td>
<td>kneeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knit</td>
<td>knits</td>
<td>knitted</td>
<td>knit</td>
<td>knitting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>know</td>
<td>knows</td>
<td>knew</td>
<td>known</td>
<td>knowing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lay</td>
<td>lays</td>
<td>laid</td>
<td>laid</td>
<td>laying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lead</td>
<td>leads</td>
<td>led</td>
<td>led</td>
<td>leading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lean</td>
<td>leans</td>
<td>leaned</td>
<td>leant</td>
<td>leaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leap</td>
<td>leaps</td>
<td>leaped</td>
<td>leapt</td>
<td>leaping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learn</td>
<td>learns</td>
<td>learned</td>
<td>learnt</td>
<td>learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leave</td>
<td>leaves</td>
<td>left</td>
<td>left</td>
<td>leaving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### English irregular verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base form</th>
<th>-s form</th>
<th>Past form</th>
<th>-ed form</th>
<th>-ing form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lend</td>
<td>lends</td>
<td>lent</td>
<td>lent</td>
<td>lending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>let</td>
<td>lets</td>
<td>let</td>
<td>let</td>
<td>letting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lie³</td>
<td>lies</td>
<td>lay</td>
<td>lain</td>
<td>lying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>light</td>
<td>lights</td>
<td>lit</td>
<td>lit</td>
<td>lighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lose</td>
<td>loses</td>
<td>lost</td>
<td>lost</td>
<td>losing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>make</td>
<td>makes</td>
<td>made</td>
<td>made</td>
<td>making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mean</td>
<td>means</td>
<td>meant</td>
<td>meant</td>
<td>meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meet</td>
<td>meets</td>
<td>met</td>
<td>met</td>
<td>meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pay</td>
<td>pays</td>
<td>paid</td>
<td>paid</td>
<td>paying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prove</td>
<td>proves</td>
<td>proved</td>
<td>proven</td>
<td>proving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>put</td>
<td>puts</td>
<td>put</td>
<td>put</td>
<td>putting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quit</td>
<td>quits</td>
<td>quit</td>
<td>quit</td>
<td>quitting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>read</td>
<td>reads</td>
<td>read</td>
<td>read</td>
<td>reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ride</td>
<td>rides</td>
<td>rode</td>
<td>ridden</td>
<td>riding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ring</td>
<td>rings</td>
<td>rang</td>
<td>rung</td>
<td>ringing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rise</td>
<td>rises</td>
<td>rose</td>
<td>risen</td>
<td>rising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>run</td>
<td>runs</td>
<td>ran</td>
<td>run</td>
<td>running</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>say</td>
<td>says</td>
<td>said</td>
<td>said</td>
<td>saying</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

³ The verb *lie*, meaning *to tell an untruth*, is a regular verb.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base form</th>
<th>-s form</th>
<th>Past form</th>
<th>-ed form</th>
<th>-ing form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>see</td>
<td>sees</td>
<td>saw</td>
<td>seen</td>
<td>seeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seek</td>
<td>seeks</td>
<td>sought</td>
<td>sought</td>
<td>seeking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sell</td>
<td>sells</td>
<td>sold</td>
<td>sold</td>
<td>selling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>send</td>
<td>sends</td>
<td>sent</td>
<td>sent</td>
<td>sending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>set</td>
<td>sets</td>
<td>set</td>
<td>set</td>
<td>setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sew</td>
<td>sews</td>
<td>sewed</td>
<td>sewn</td>
<td>sewing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shake</td>
<td>shakes</td>
<td>shook</td>
<td>shaken</td>
<td>shaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shine</td>
<td>shines</td>
<td>shone</td>
<td>shone</td>
<td>shining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shoot</td>
<td>shoots</td>
<td>shot</td>
<td>shot</td>
<td>shooting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>show</td>
<td>shows</td>
<td>showed</td>
<td>shown</td>
<td>showing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shrink</td>
<td>shrinks</td>
<td>shrank</td>
<td>shrunk</td>
<td>shrinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shut</td>
<td>shuts</td>
<td>shut</td>
<td>shut</td>
<td>shutting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sing</td>
<td>sings</td>
<td>sang</td>
<td>sung</td>
<td>singing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sink</td>
<td>sinks</td>
<td>sank</td>
<td>sunk</td>
<td>sinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sit</td>
<td>sits</td>
<td>sat</td>
<td>sat</td>
<td>sitting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sleep</td>
<td>sleeps</td>
<td>slept</td>
<td>slept</td>
<td>sleeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slide</td>
<td>slides</td>
<td>slid</td>
<td>slid</td>
<td>sliding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>smell</td>
<td>smells</td>
<td>smelted</td>
<td>smelt</td>
<td>smelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speak</td>
<td>speaks</td>
<td>spoke</td>
<td>spoken</td>
<td>speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base form</td>
<td>-s form</td>
<td>Past form</td>
<td>-ed form</td>
<td>-ing form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speed</td>
<td>speeds</td>
<td>sped</td>
<td>sped</td>
<td>speeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spell</td>
<td>spells</td>
<td>spelled</td>
<td>spelt</td>
<td>spelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spend</td>
<td>spends</td>
<td>spent</td>
<td>spent</td>
<td>spending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spill</td>
<td>spills</td>
<td>spilled</td>
<td>spilt</td>
<td>spilling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spin</td>
<td>spins</td>
<td>spun</td>
<td>spun</td>
<td>spinning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spit</td>
<td>spits</td>
<td>spat</td>
<td>spat</td>
<td>spitting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>split</td>
<td>splits</td>
<td>split</td>
<td>split</td>
<td>splitting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spoil</td>
<td>spoils</td>
<td>spoiled</td>
<td>spoilt</td>
<td>spoiling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spread</td>
<td>spreads</td>
<td>spread</td>
<td>spread</td>
<td>spreading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spring</td>
<td>springs</td>
<td>sprang</td>
<td>sprung</td>
<td>springing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stand</td>
<td>stands</td>
<td>stood</td>
<td>stood</td>
<td>standing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>steal</td>
<td>steals</td>
<td>stole</td>
<td>stolen</td>
<td>stealing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stick</td>
<td>sticks</td>
<td>stuck</td>
<td>stuck</td>
<td>sticking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sting</td>
<td>stings</td>
<td>stung</td>
<td>stung</td>
<td>stinging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strike</td>
<td>strikes</td>
<td>struck</td>
<td>struck</td>
<td>striking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>string</td>
<td>strings</td>
<td>strung</td>
<td>strung</td>
<td>stringing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strive</td>
<td>strives</td>
<td>strove</td>
<td>striven</td>
<td>striving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swear</td>
<td>swears</td>
<td>swore</td>
<td>sworn</td>
<td>swearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sweep</td>
<td>sweeps</td>
<td>swept</td>
<td>swept</td>
<td>sweeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base form</td>
<td>-s form</td>
<td>Past form</td>
<td>-ed form</td>
<td>-ing form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swell</td>
<td>swells</td>
<td>swelled</td>
<td>swollen</td>
<td>swelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swim</td>
<td>swims</td>
<td>swam</td>
<td>swum</td>
<td>swimming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swing</td>
<td>swings</td>
<td>swung</td>
<td>swung</td>
<td>swinging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take</td>
<td>takes</td>
<td>took</td>
<td>taken</td>
<td>taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teach</td>
<td>teaches</td>
<td>taught</td>
<td>taught</td>
<td>teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tear</td>
<td>tears</td>
<td>tore</td>
<td>torn</td>
<td>tearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tell</td>
<td>tells</td>
<td>told</td>
<td>told</td>
<td>telling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>think</td>
<td>thinks</td>
<td>thought</td>
<td>thought</td>
<td>thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>throw</td>
<td>throws</td>
<td>threw</td>
<td>thrown</td>
<td>throwing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wake</td>
<td>wakes</td>
<td>woke</td>
<td>woken</td>
<td>waking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wear</td>
<td>wears</td>
<td>wore</td>
<td>worn</td>
<td>wearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weave</td>
<td>weaves</td>
<td>wove</td>
<td>woven</td>
<td>weaving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weep</td>
<td>weeps</td>
<td>wept</td>
<td>wept</td>
<td>weeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>win</td>
<td>wins</td>
<td>won</td>
<td>won</td>
<td>winning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wind</td>
<td>winds</td>
<td>wound</td>
<td>wound</td>
<td>winding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wring</td>
<td>wrings</td>
<td>wrung</td>
<td>wrung</td>
<td>wringing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>write</td>
<td>writes</td>
<td>wrote</td>
<td>written</td>
<td>writing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Glossary of terms

Acronym
A word formed from the initial letters of other words, e.g. AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome).

Active
► See Voice.

Adjective
Adjectives express a quality or attribute of a noun: a happy child; a violent storm; an old car. Adjectives can also appear after the noun: the child is happy.

Adjective phrase
A phrase in which the main word is an adjective. The adjective may occur on its own in the phrase (happy, old, rich), or it may have a premodifier before it (very happy, quite old, extremely rich). Some adjective phrases may also have postmodifiers after the adjective (tired of waiting, happy to meet you).

Adjunct
A grammatically optional element in sentence structure. Adjuncts convey optional, additional information, including when something happened (Our guests arrived on Sunday), where something happened (We met Paul outside the cinema) and why something happened (Amy cried because she lost her doll).

Adjunct clause
A subordinate clause which functions as an adjunct in sentence structure: Amy cried because she lost her doll; Although he is poor, he gives what he can to charity.
Adverb
Adverbs are used to modify a verb (Amy sings beautifully), an adjective (extremely big), or another adverb (very recently).

Adverb phrase
A phrase in which the main word is an adverb. The adverb may occur on its own (beautifully, recently), or it may have a premodifier before it (very beautifully, quite recently).

Alternative interrogative
A question which offers two or more alternative responses: Do you want tea or coffee?; Is that William or Harry? Cf.: Yes–no interrogative.

Anaphora
The use of a word or words to refer back to something previously mentioned. The personal pronouns are often used anaphorically, as in James likes football. He never misses a game. Here, he refers anaphorically to James. Cf.: Cataphora.

Antecedent
A word or words to which a following word refers back. In James likes football. He never misses a game, James is the antecedent of he. Cf.: Anaphora, Cataphora.

Apposition
A relationship between two units (usually noun phrases), in which both units refer to the same person or thing: The President, Mr Brown.

Article
The articles are the (the definite article) and an (the indefinite article).

Aspect
Aspect expresses how an event is viewed with respect to time. There are two aspects in English, the progressive aspect (William is leaving/was leaving) and the perfective aspect (William has left/had left).

Asyndetic coordination
Coordination without the use of and: We need bread, cheese, eggs, milk, flour. Cf.: Syndetic coordination, Polysyndetic coordination.

Auxiliary verb
A ‘helping’ verb which typically comes before the main verb in a sentence.
(I can drive; James has written to the Council.). Auxiliary verbs are divided into the following types: modal, passive, progressive, perfective, do auxiliary, semi-auxiliary.

**Back formation**
A verb formed by removing a noun ending, and adding a verb ending, e.g. televise, from television.

**Base form**
The form of a verb which follows to, and to which the inflections are added: to walk, walk+s, walk+ed, walk+ing.

**Case**
A distinction chiefly in pronouns which relates to their grammatical functions. Personal pronouns and the pronoun who have two cases: subjective case (e.g. I, we, who) and objective case (me, us, whom). Nouns exhibit two cases, the common case (dog, dogs) and the genitive case (dog’s, dogs’).

**Cataphora**
The use of a word or words to refer forward to a later word: When you see him, will you ask Simon to phone me? Cf.: Anaphora.

**Clause**
A sentence-like construction which operates at a level lower than a sentence.

**Cleft sentence**
A sentence with the pattern It + be + focus + relative clause, e.g. It was William who noticed the error. (cf. William noticed the error.). Cleft sentences are used to emphasize the focus, here, William.

**Clipping**
A type of abbreviation in which one or more syllables are omitted from a word, e.g. demo, from demonstration.

**Comment clause**
A peripheral clause in sentence structure, used to offer a comment on what is being said: I can’t afford it, I’m afraid.

**Comparative clause**
Comparative clauses are introduced by than, and express comparison: The play was better than I expected; David is stronger than he used to be.
Complement
A unit which completes the meaning of a word, e.g., a noun (the fact that the earth is round), or a preposition (under the table). The term is also applied to the unit which completes the meaning of a transitive verb (The soldiers destroyed the village).

Complex sentence
A sentence which contains one or more subordinate clauses: The match was abandoned because the pitch was waterlogged; The referee decided to abandon the match.

Compound sentence
A sentence which consists of two or more clauses linked by a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or): Emily works during the day and she studies at night.

Concord
Another term for subject–verb agreement.

Conditional clause
A conditional clause is typically introduced by if, and expresses a condition: If we get home early we can watch the new video.

Conjunction
The coordinating conjunctions (and, but, or) link elements of equal status (I play guitar and David sings). The subordinating conjunctions (e.g. if, because, since) introduce a subordinate clause: (Have some pasta if you want it.).

Coordination
The linking of two or more units using one of the coordinating conjunctions and, but and or: We bought meat and vegetables; David graduated last year but he still can’t find a job; You don’t need money or good looks.

Copular verb
Another term for linking verb.

Countable noun
Countable nouns denote things that can be counted: one chair, two chairs, three chairs, etc. Therefore they have both a singular form (chair) and a plural form (chairs). Also called count nouns. Cf.: Uncountable noun.
Declarative sentence
A sentence which is chiefly used for making a statement: The sky was blue; William became an engineer; The government has a huge majority. Cf.: Interrogative sentence.

Definite article
The definite article is the word the.

Demonstrative pronoun
The demonstrative pronouns are this, that, these and those.

Determiner
Determiners are elements in the structure of a noun phrase. They introduce the noun phrase: the computer; a newspaper; some people; many problems; three ships; all our friends.

Direct object
The element required by a transitive verb to complete its meaning: David announced his retirement; The company made a huge profit. Direct objects are most commonly noun phrases, but they can also be clauses: David announced that he will retire.

Direct speech
A method of reporting speech in which the actual words that were used are quoted: ‘I’m very tired’, said James. Cf.: Indirect speech.

Do auxiliary
The do auxiliary is used (a) to form questions (Do you like French films?) (b) to form negatives, with not (I do not enjoy violent films.), (c) to form negative directives, with not (Do not sit there!) (d) for emphasis (I do enjoy a good book!).

Etymology
The study of the origin and history of words.

Exclamative sentence
A sentence that expresses an exclamation: What a pity!; How tall he’s grown!

Existential sentence
See There-sentence.
Finite
If the first (or only) verb in a verb phrase exhibits tense (past or present), then the verb phrase is finite. The following sentences all contain a finite verb phrase: David left early; David leaves at eight every morning; David is leaving now; David had left. The term is also applied to clauses in which the verb phrase is finite. Cf.: Non-finite.

Form
In grammatical descriptions, the term form refers to the structure, appearance, or ‘shape’ of an element. For instance, we say that the adjective old has three forms, old, older, oldest. Cf.: Function.

Fragment
An incomplete sentence, often used in response to a question: Where did you leave the keys? On the table. Fragments are interpreted as complete sentences: I left the keys on the table. Cf.: Non-sentence.

Function
The grammatical role that an element performs in a sentence, clause, or phrase. For instance, in The old man is ill, the element the old man (a noun phrase) performs the function of subject. In turn, the adjective old performs the function of premodifier in the noun phrase the old man. Cf.: Form.

Gradable
A term used to describe adjectives and adverbs which can be modified by an intensifier: fairly cold; very cold; extremely cold, and have comparative and superlative forms: old, older, oldest.

Imperative sentence
A type of sentence used in giving orders: Move over, Come in, Don’t leave your coat there.

Indefinite article
The indefinite article is an.

Indirect object
Some transitive verbs require two elements to complete their meaning: We gave James a gift. Here, James is the indirect object, and a gift is the direct object. The indirect object typically refers to the person who receives something or benefits from the action.
**Glossary of terms**

**Indirect speech**
Indirect speech reports what has been said, but not in the actual words used by the speaker: *James said that he was very tired.* Compare: ‘*I’m very tired*, said James, which is **direct speech**.

**Infinitive**
The base form of a verb when it is introduced by *to*: *She loves to sing; They decided to cooperate.*

**Inflection**
An ending which indicates a grammatical category. For instance, the -s ending added to a noun indicates plural number.

**Intensifier**
A type of adverb used to express degree in an adjective or in another adverb. The most common intensifier is *very*: *very cold; very recently.* Other intensifiers include *extremely, fairly, highly, quite.*

**Interrogative sentence**
A type of sentence used in asking questions: *Is James here? Did you have a good time? What is this? How is the patient?*

**Intransitive verb**
A verb which requires no other element to complete its meaning: *David yawned; It is still snowing.* Cf.: **Transitive verb**.

**Linking verb**
The most common linking verb is *be*: *My uncle is a professional footballer.* Linking verbs link the subject (*my uncle*) with the subject complement (*a professional footballer*). Other linking verbs include *seem* (*He seems angry.*) and *appear* (*She appears distracted.*).

**Main clause**
A clause which can stand independently. In *Emily worked in Greece when she was young*, the main clause is *Emily worked in Greece.* The second clause, *when she was young*, can be omitted, and is a subordinate clause.

**Main verb**
In the verb phrase *was raining*, *raining* is the main verb, while *was* is the auxiliary verb.
Mass noun
Another term for uncountable noun.

Modal auxiliary
The modal auxiliary verbs are can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, would.

Mood
A grammatical category which indicates the attitude of the speaker to what is said. English has three moods: indicative, imperative, subjunctive.

Morphology
The study of the structure of words.

Multi-word verb
A combination consisting of a verb and one or two other words, acting as a unit. Multi-word verbs include prepositional verbs (look at, rely on), phrasal verbs (give in, take over), and phrasal-prepositional verbs (look forward to, put up with).

Nominal relative clause
A subordinate clause introduced by what, whatever, whoever, where: What you need is a long holiday; I can’t understand what he is saying; I’ll speak to whoever is responsible.

Non-finite
If the first (or only) verb in a verb phrase has the base form (Simon is reluctant to make an effort.), the -ing form (Working hard brings its own reward.) or the -ed form (Published in 1998, it soon became a best-seller.), then the verb phrase is non-finite. The term is also used to describe a clause containing a non-finite verb phrase. Cf.: Finite.

Non-restrictive relative
A ‘non-defining’ relative clause, which simply adds information: The passenger, who was about 20, was not injured. Compare the ‘defining’ restrictive relative clause: The passenger who was in the rear seat was not injured.

Non-sentence
An independent unit which has no sentence structure. Non-sentences are commonly used in public signs and notices: Exit, No Entry, 10% Off. Cf.: Fragment.
Noun
Common nouns are the names of objects (book, computer), people (boy, father), states (loneliness, happiness), abstract concepts (history, honesty), etc. Proper nouns refer to individual people (Nelson Mandela, Winston Churchill), places (London, Hong Kong), and geographical features (Ben Nevis, River Thames).

Noun phrase
A phrase in which the main word is a noun. The noun may occur on its own (children, water), or it may have a premodifier before it (young children, cold water). A noun phrase may also contain a postmodifier after the noun (children with learning disabilities, cold water from the stream). A noun phrase may be introduced by a determiner (the children, some water).

Number contrast
The contrast between singular and plural, e.g. dog/dogs, woman/women, this/these.

Object
See Direct object, Indirect object.

Object complement
A sentence element which denotes an attribute of the object. For instance, in The dye turned the water blue, blue denotes the colour of the water (the object), so blue is the object complement.

Objective case
The objective case of a personal pronoun is used when the pronoun is a direct object (Simon met me.) or an indirect object (Simon bought me a ticket.). It is also used after a preposition (Simon bought a ticket for me.). Cf.: Subjective case.

Parenthetical
A complete sentence inserted in another sentence: The merger – this is confidential – will go ahead as planned.

Participial adjective
An adjective with an -ed ending (a dedicated worker) or an -ing ending (a surprising result).
Participle
The -ed and -ing forms of a verb. In some grammars, these are called the -ed participle (or past participle) and the -ing participle (or present participle).

Passive
►See Voice.

Perfective auxiliary
The perfective auxiliary is have. It occurs before the -ed form of a main verb: Simon has arrived; We had hoped you could come.

Personal pronoun
The personal pronouns are I/me, you, he/him, she/her, it, we/us, they/them.
►See Subjective case, Objective case.

Phrasal verb
►See Multi-word verb.

Phrasal-prepositional verb
►See Multi-word verb.

Polysyndetic coordination
Coordination in which and or or is used between each pair of coordinated items: The lecture went on and on and on; You can have pasta or meatloaf or salad. Cf.: Asyndetic coordination, Syndetic coordination.

Possessive pronoun
The possessive pronouns are my/mine, your/yours, his, her/hers, its, our/ours, their/ theirs.

Predicate
Everything in a sentence excluding the subject: David (subject) won a scholarship (predicate).

Prefix
A sequence of letters, such as un- (unlawful), anti- (anti-abortion), post- (post-war) added to the beginning of a word to form a new word. Cf.: Suffix.
**Preposition**
Common prepositions include *after, at, before, beside, for, in, of, under, with.* Prepositions are used to introduce a noun phrase: *after the ballet; at the supermarket; before breakfast.*

**Prepositional complement**
The element (usually a noun phrase) which is introduced by a preposition: *after the ballet; under our roof, in New York, at ten o’clock.*

**Prepositional phrase**
A phrase which is introduced by a preposition. The preposition is followed by a prepositional complement, which is usually a noun phrase: *after the ballet; under our roof; in New York; at ten o’clock.*

**Prepositional verb**
►See Multi-word verb.

**Progressive auxiliary**
The progressive auxiliary *be* occurs before a main verb with *-ing* form: *I am organising a trip to Paris; Paul is collecting money for charity; The children were shouting.*

**Pronoun**
Pronouns are divided into the following main classes: *demonstrative, personal, possessive, reflexive.*

**Reduced relative clause**
A relative clause in which the relative pronoun is omitted, and the verb has *-ed* form or *-ing* form: *Films produced on a small budget are rarely successful* (compare: *Films which are produced on a small budget*); *The man standing beside you is my uncle* (compare: *The man who is standing beside you*).

**Reflexive pronoun**
The reflexive pronouns are *myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves.*

**Relative clause**
A relative clause is introduced by a relative pronoun such as *who, which, or that:* *The man who lives beside us is unwell; It’s a new company which specializes in web design; The project that I’m working on is really interesting.*
Relative pronoun
The relative pronouns are who(m), whose, which, and that. They are used to introduce a relative clause: *The man who lives beside us is unwell.*

Reporting clause
A clause such as *he said,* or *said Mary,* which identifies the speaker of direct speech: ‘I’m leaving now,’ *he* *said.*

Restrictive relative clause
A defining relative clause, which identifies the noun preceding it: *The passenger who was in the rear seat was not injured.* Cf.: **Non-restrictive relative clause.**

Semantics
The study of the relationship between linguistic forms and meaning.

Semi-auxiliary
A multi-word auxiliary verb. Examples include *have to* (*I had to catch a bus,*), *be going to* (*He’s going to fall,* and *be about to* (*The factory is about to close.*).

Sentential relative clause
A relative clause which expresses a comment on what has previously been said: *Amy can’t come this evening, which is a pity.*

Simple sentence
A sentence which contains no subordinate clause.

Subject
The sentence element that typically comes before the verb in a declarative sentence: *James (S) is (V) still at school.* In an interrogative sentence, the subject and the verb change places with each other: *Is (V) James (S) still at school?*

Subject complement
The sentence element that completes the meaning of a linking verb (usually *be*): *Paul is my nephew; Our house is too small; The weather was beautiful.*
Subjective case
The subjective case of a personal pronoun is used when the pronoun acts as subject: *I met Simon*, in contrast with the objective case: *Simon met me*.

Subject–verb agreement
A term used to denote the fact that a verb form agrees in number (singular or plural) with its subject (compare: *The dog barks*/ *The dogs bark*). Subject–verb agreement applies only to present tense verbs. Also known as concord.

Subjunctive
A term used to denote sentences which express a hypothetical or non-factual situation: *If I were you, I would invest the money*; *The Report recommended that the police officers be suspended immediately*.

Subordinate clause
A dependent clause within a larger structure (*John said that Mary is leaving*). Here, the subordinate clause is introduced by the subordinating conjunction *that*.

Subordinating conjunction
A word which introduces a subordinate clause. Common subordinating conjunctions include: *although, because, if, since, that, when, while*. Multi-word subordinating conjunctions include *as long as, as though, provided that, rather than*.

Subordination
A relationship between two clauses in which one clause is grammatically dependent on the other. Subordination is often overtly indicated by the use of a subordinating conjunction: *William studied architecture while he was in Germany*.

Suffix
An ending added to a word to create another word. Noun suffixes include *-ness (coolness, kindness)*, and *-ism (capitalism, optimism)*. Adjective suffixes include *-able (profitable, reasonable)* and *-al (accidental, musical)*.

Syndetic coordination
Coordination using *and, but, or or: Paul and Amy; tired but happy; tea or coffee*. Cf.: *Asyndetic coordination, Polysyndetic coordination*. 
Syntax
The study of the arrangement of words in a sentence.

Tag question
A question which is appended to a statement: You went to Harvard, didn’t you?; You’re not leaving, are you?

Tense
There are two tenses in English: the past tense and the present tense. Tense is denoted by the form of the verb: David walks to school (present tense); David walked to school (past tense).

That-clause
A subordinate clause introduced by the subordinating conjunction that: Everyone knows that smoking is dangerous.

There-sentence
A sentence introduced by there, followed, usually, by the verb be: There is a fly in my soup; There is something wrong with the printer. Also called an existential sentence.

Transitive verb
A verb which requires another element to complete its meaning: Paul makes model airplanes; David bought a boat. Cf.: Intransitive verb.

Uncountable noun
A noun which denotes things which are considered as indivisible wholes (furniture, mud, software) and therefore cannot be counted (*two furnitures, *three muds, *four softwares, etc.). Uncountable nouns have a singular form (software), but no plural form (*softwares). Cf.: Countable noun.

Verb
Verbs are divided into two types: (a) main verbs, such as break, buy, eat, sing, write and (b) auxiliary verbs such as can, could, may, must, might, shall, should, will, would.

Verb phrase
A phrase in which the main word is a verb. The verb may occur on its own (walked, sings), or it may be preceded by one or more auxiliary verbs (has walked, can walk, has been singing).
**Verbless clause**
A subordinate clause which lacks a main verb: *Though poor, he gives what he can to charity.* (cf. *Though he is poor . . . ).

**Voice**
A term used to describe the contrast between an active sentence: *The police arrested the suspect*; and a passive sentence: *The suspect was arrested* (by the police).

**Wh-interrogative**
A question introduced by *who, what, where, when or how*: *Who was at the door?*; *What would you like to drink?*; *Where are my keys?*; *When is your flight?*; *How do you switch it on?*

**Yes–no interrogative**
A question which normally expects an answer which is either *yes* or *no*: *Did you enjoy the film?* – *Yes/No*. Cf.: *Alternative interrogative*.

**Zero relative clause**
A relative clause which is not introduced by a relative pronoun: *This is the book William recommended*. Cf.: *This is the book that William recommended*.

**Zero subordinate clause**
A subordinate clause from which the subordinating conjunction *that* has been omitted: *He must think I’m a fool*. Cf.: *He must think that I’m a fool*.
Further reading


Index

a 75
abbreviation 133
acronym 133
active sentence 21, 70
adjective 48
adjective phrase 95
adjunct 22
adjunct clause 104
adjunct clause meanings 109
adjunct meanings 23
adverb 53
adverb meanings 56
adverb phrase 97
agentless passive 21
agreement 11
alternative interrogative 26
American spelling 6, 146
an 75
anaphora 120
antecedent 120
antecedent agreement 121
apostrophe 36
apposition 85
article 75
aspect 92
as syndetic coordination 114
auxiliary verb 39, 88
back formation 135
bad 51
base form 40
be 13, 46, 70
blending 132
British and American spelling 4, 146
cardinal numeral 76
case 59
cataphora 121
clause 10, 102ff.
cleft sentence 124
clipping 135
closed word class 30
combining form 136
comment clause 111
common noun 34
comparative adjective 50
comparative adverb 55
comparative clause 107
complement 84
complex sentence 10, 101
compound sentence 9
compounding 130
conjunction 73
connector 116
coordinating conjunction 73
coordination 113ff
countable noun 35, 75
declarative sentence 25
definite article 75
demonstrative pronoun 63
dependent genitive 37
dependent possessive pronoun 60
determiner 80
direct object 16
direct speech 111
*do* 71, 122

*ed* clause 103
*ed* form 42
either . . . or 74
exclamative sentence 27

*fast* 53
finite verb phrase 91, 103
fragment 27
fronting 123
future time 90

gender 38, 59
gender-neutral pronoun 62
genitive noun 36
get 70
good 51
gradable adjective 49
gradable adverb 54
grammar 1
grammar rules 1
grammatical hierarchy 7

*hard* 53
*have* 70
helping verb 67
imperative sentence 26, 93
indefinite article 75
independent genitive 37
independent possessive pronoun 61
indicative mood 93
indirect object 17
indirect speech 111
infinitive 40
inflection 40, 137,
*ing* clause 103
*ing* form 43
intensifier 55
International Corpus of English 7
interrogative sentence 25
intransitive verb 12
inversion 11
irregular verb 43, 150
*it* 65, 124, 125
*it’s* 148
*its* 61, 148

linking verb 13
logical connector 116
*ly* adverb 53, 142
main verb 39
mandative subjunctive 94
modal auxiliary 68
modal auxiliary meanings 69
mood 93
*more* 50, 55
*most* 50, 55
multi-word preposition 73
multi-word subordinator 74
multi-word verb 47

*neither* . . . *nor* 74
nominal relative clause 105
non-finite clause 103
non-finite verb phrase 91
non-sentence 28
nonrestrictive postmodifier 84
*not* 122
noun 32
noun phrase 79
number contrast 33
numeral 76

object complement 18
objective case 59
*one* 66
open word class 30
ordinal numeral 76

parenthetical 112
participial adjective 52
passive auxiliary 70
passive sentence 21, 70
past form 41