In order to create meaning, we form words with letters. Similarly, phrases are formed by combining words. For example - a bird, two swans, etc.

**Phrases** behave like units in a sentence and can be included within each other, meaning one phrase can be a constituent part of another phrase.

For example –

1-[This man] kicked [a football].

2- He is sleeping [on the carpet].

In Example 2 the phrase ‘On the carpet’ has an embedded noun clause ‘the carpet’

**Phrasal Categories**

Depending on the head word (H), phrases can be categorised as follows –

1) Noun phrase (NP)

2) Verb phrase (VP)

3) Adjective phrase (AjP)

4) Adverb phrase (AdvP)

5) Prepositional phrase (PP)

**Noun phrase** is a phrase headed by a noun or pronoun. It may be preceded by a pre-modifier, viz., Determiners, Possessives, Adjectives and Nouns and/or followed by a post-modifier viz. a clause or a prepositional phrase etc. There can be multiple modifiers, both pre-modifiers and post-modifiers, in a noun phrase.

For example -

1-[A *blue* bird] hit [the *yellow* car].

2-She saw [something *horrible*].

3-[The *old* house *with the red roof*] stands on the hill.

In example1-'A blue bird' and 'the yellow car', are noun phrases because the nouns 'bird' (subject), example 2- 'something' (object) is the principal word in the phrase. The word ‘blue’ is the pre-modifier before the head word ‘bird’ while ‘horrible’ is a post-modifier following the head word ‘something’. Similarly, 'the old house with the red roof' has 'old' as a pre-modifier while 'with the red roof' is the post-modifier to the head word, 'house'.

**Verb Phrase** is a phrase headed by a verb. The verb can be a main verb or a main verb along with an auxiliary verb. It can also have a finite verb or an infinite verb.

For example-

1-He *is* *sings a song.*

2-They *have been showing* progress.

3-The dishes *could be bought*.

4-She *loves* *to swim.*

**Adjective Phrase** is a phrase that has an adjective as head, and complement that may accompany the adjective.

For example -

1-She had *extremely menacing* eyes.

2-This task was *quite challenging*.

**Adverb Phrase** is a phrase with an adverb as the head word.

For example -

They speak *extremely softly* and I am unable to hear anything.

Walk *very carefully,* else you might slip.

Note: An adjective phrase and an adverb phrase have similar structures. One can differentiate between them by keeping in mind that an adjective phrase modifies the noun or pronoun while an adverb phrase

modifies parts of speech other than noun or pronoun. An adverb phrase is also used to modify phrases and/or sentences.

For example -

1-The cake was baked *with great care*.

*2-Quite surprisingly*, they won the championship.

**Prepositional Phrase** is a phrase with head word as a preposition (P) followed by a noun phrase (NP). So, the structure of a prepositional phrase can be written as P+NP.

For example -

1-Rama works *in a shop.*

2-They passed away *at the age of ninety.*

In example 1 the prepositions ‘in’ and in example 2 ‘at’ are the head words (P) followed by the noun phrases (NP) ‘a shop’ and ‘the age of ninety’ respectively.

**Clauses**

A clause is the part of a sentence which contains a subject (noun, pronoun or noun phrase) and a verb (or a verb phrase).

For example -

The man vanished

The milk had gone bad

It is hot

**Independent, Principal or Main Clause** is a clause independent of the other clause or clauses in the sentence joined using coordinating conjunctions like and, but, so, or, yet, because, however, etc. If detached from the sentence, the principal or main clause can be a stand-alone sentence as it has a subject and a predicate.

For example -

*1-He vanished* and *she never arrived*.

*2-The truth came out*, so *she ran away.*

*3-The plan was cancelled*  because it was raining.

**Subordinate or Dependent Clause** is a clause that is dependent on another clause in the sentence to make sense. The principal or main clause may be joined with the subordinate clause in a sentence by using subordinate conjunctions like since, when, where, before, after, etc.

For example -

1- knew *where I could find him.*

*2-As soon as they arrived*, he fainted.

3-He went for a walk *after he finished his homework*.

| Phrase | Clause | Sentence |
| --- | --- | --- |
| It is a group of words that does not have a subject and a verb. | It is a group of words that has a subject and a verb. | It is a group of words that has a subject and a verb. |
| It is a constituent part of a sentence. | It is a constituent part of a sentence. A clause may end with a comma but never a full stop, a question mark, or an exclamation mark. | It starts with a capital letter and ends with a full stop, a question mark or an exclamation mark. |
| A phrase cannot function as a self-contained unit of language that can stand alone. | An independent clause can stand alone as a sentence. | A sentence serves as a self-contained unit that can stand alone. |