

# IIT Madras

## ONLINE DEGREE

**Basic English**  
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**Indian Institute of Technology, Madras**  
**Lecture No. 43**  
**Phrase Structure**

Good afternoon, and welcome to the module on Grammar in this part of the course. A lot of people say that learning and teaching grammar can be boring. Do you agree? Well, not quite really, if we use a little imagination, and if we use a little intelligence and do some follow up work, then grammar teaching can be, or learning grammar can be fun, actually and it can give you greater confidence in your own proficiency in English.

And wherever there are any doubts or confusions or areas of weakness, like one error here or there, you can overcome these problems by looking at the core principles, looking at the fundamentals of Grammar. We will be talking about these issues in English Grammar. Let us go.

The first unit is called a Phrase Structure. So, long as there is one word only by itself, you do not need a rule, you use that word any way you like. There is no rule for that. If you want to say only yes, fine; only no, fine. But if you want to, yes, sir; no, madam; then you need a rule. Whether madam comes before no or after no; that is a rule, okay?

So in this unit, come back. In this unit phrase structure, we will talk about how words can come together and make the next higher unit in the construction of a sentence or a conversation, which is also called discourse. Next.

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- Any sentence in any language uses a variety of words, such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, etc.



Any language, any sentence in any language uses a variety of words; nouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, prepositions, interjections, conjunctions, articles, all kinds of things.

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- Audio Link: Speech by Indra Nooyi, CEO of Pepsico

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mkK3CeLGndz6SRUA492u3NeEyz9XVU\\_p/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mkK3CeLGndz6SRUA492u3NeEyz9XVU_p/view?usp=sharing)



Listen to this short clip from a talk by Indira Nooyi. She has been the chief executive officer of the PepsiCo and all ladies and all her countrymen proud. Listen to it for its contents first.

Audio: Please be a lifelong student. When we are kids, we ask questions like, why is the sky blue. Why is the bird flying so high? But for some reason, as we get older, that curiosity goes away. And if we are happy with the knowledge we have, then we are actually going to atrophy. So, please remain a lifelong student. Do not lose that curiosity.

Second, whatever you do, throw yourself into it. Throw your head, heart and hands into it. I look at my job, not as a job; I look at it as a calling, as a passion. And I do not care about the hours; I do not care about the hardship. Because to me, everything is a joy. So, whatever you do, please look upon it as a calling and a passion. Not as a job, not as something temporary.

The third and the most important one, please help others rise.

Professor: Okay? We will play it again. But after you have seen the text. This time, we would like you to see it for the words. Can you come to the next screen?

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## TRANSCRIPT

First, please be a lifelong student. You know when we are kids we ask questions like, why is the sky blue? Why is the bird flying so high? But for some reason as we get older, that curiosity goes away, and if we are happy with the knowledge we have, then we are actually going to atrophy. So, please remain a lifelong student, don't lose that curiosity.



Look at the words. Next screen also let them see.

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- Second, whatever you do throw yourself into it throw your head, heart and hands into it. I look at my job, not as a job, I look at it as a calling, as a passion and I don't care about the hours, I don't care about the hardship because to me everything is a joy. So, whatever you do, please look upon it as a calling and a passion not as a job not as something temporary.
- The third, and the most important one, please help others rise.
- Try and see which words on this slide are nouns, verbs, etc. Check your work with a dictionary.



Look at the first two bullet points on this screen. Now come back. This time, please listen to Indira Nooyi for the kinds of words that she uses. Do not allow content to distract you. Does she have only nouns, does she have only verbs, are nouns preceded and followed by other nouns or verbs, or X or Y? Please pay attention. You are this time listening for words, not for content.

Audio: Please be a lifelong student. When we are kids, we ask questions like, why is the sky blue. Why is the bird flying so high? But for some reason, as we get older, that curiosity goes away. And if we are happy with the knowledge we have, then we are actually going to atrophy. So, please remain a lifelong student. Do not lose that curiosity.

Second, whatever you do, throw yourself into it. Throw your head, heart and hands into it. I look at my job, not as a job; I look at it as a calling, as a passion. And I do not care about the hours; I do not care about the hardship. Because to me, everything is a joy. So whatever you do, please look upon it as a calling and a passion. Not as a job, not as something temporary.

The third and the most important one, please help others rise.

Professor: Look at the two bullet points on this screen. Take your time and try and see which words on this slide are nouns, verbs; you can do that on your notebook. And after you have marked them, after each word you have set, say, for example, 'second' is it a noun or an adjective or a verb? 'You' is it a noun or a verb? 'Head' is it a noun or a verb? 'Heart' is it a noun or a verb?

So, after the word, within parentheses, within brackets, write N for a noun, V for verbs, A for an adjective, A D V for an adverb, and then check with the dictionary. I am sure you have a dictionary, on your phone, in the hardcopy at your home or in your office. Please check with it and see if your answers are right. We will give you another exercise soon. Go to the next screen, please.

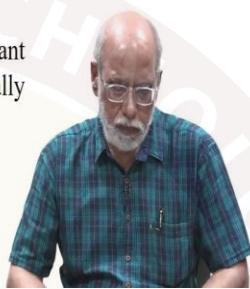
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## ACTIVITY

1. Look at the following extract and mark nouns by writing (N) in the parentheses next to them, adjectives by (A), Verbs by (V) and adverbs by (adv.).

It was Monday morning. Swaminathan was reluctant to open his eyes. He considered Monday specially unpleasant in the calendar.



Look at the following sentence and mark each word after that word using parentheses. Whether it is a noun, use N within brackets; if it is an adjective, then after the adjective within brackets, please write A; if it is a verb, write V; if it is an adverb write A D V dot. So, this sentence, for instance. It was Monday morning. Swaminathan was reluctant to open his eyes. He considered Monday specially unpleasant in the calendar. Take your time, mark after each word; noun, verb, adjective, adverb, and then compare with the answers. Compare your work with the answers we have given. Go to the next.

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## ANSWERS



It was (V) Monday (N) morning (N).  
Swaminathan (N) was (V) reluctant (A) to open  
(V) his eyes (N). He considered (V) Monday (N)  
specially (Adv.) unpleasant (A) in the calendar  
(N).



Here are the answers.

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- “Monday” occurs between “was” and “morning”. Is “Monday”, therefore, equally closely related to both the words? No! “Monday” is first related to “morning” rather than to “was”. Together “Monday morning” is related to “was”. But first “Monday” and “morning” come together.



Now, the question is, of the relationship of these words among themselves, how these words are related, say, for instance, Monday; it was Monday morning? When you have a sentence like, it was Monday morning, as it was on the earlier slide, then Monday occurs between 'was' and 'morning'.

Because it occurs between was in morning, is Monday equally related to both was and to morning? That is the question. The answer is no. Monday is first related to morning rather than two was. Together, Monday and morning make one phrase, Monday morning. And then, together they are related to 'was'. But first, Monday and morning come together to make one meaningful unit. Next.

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- This can be better understood by enclosing words in the sentence within brackets [ ].

1. S [ It was Monday morning.]

NP [It]

VP [was Monday morning]

NP [Monday morning.]



You can better understand it if I put them within brackets. Look at the sentence. Look at the bullet point number one. The sentences 'it was Monday morning'. It has two parts; a noun phrase and a verb phrase. The noun phrase has only one word, 'It'. The rest of the sentence is a verb phrase, VP, which is, 'was Monday morning'. Now within this verb phrase, you also have a noun phrase, which is 'Monday morning'. So, Monday and morning are more closely related together before they relate to 'was', and together they would relate to 'it'.

So, a phrase is a group of words that come together to behave as one unit. I will repeat myself. A phrase is a group of words. It may even be one word or a group of words that come together to behave like one unit; one meaningful, functional unit in a sentence. Go next.

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2. S[Swaminathan was reluctant to open his eyes]

NP [Swaminathan]

VP [was reluctant to open his eyes]

Adj P [reluctant to open his eyes]

Prep P [to open his eyes]

VP [ open his eyes]

NP [his eyes]

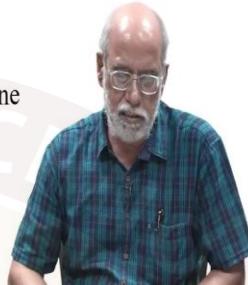


Look at this. Now, I am giving you another example. You can also do it yourself or do it with me. The sentence is, 'Swaminathan was reluctant to open his eyes'. So what is the noun phrase here? 'Swaminathan'. What is the verb phrase here? 'Was reluctant to open his eyes'. Now, within the verb phrase, we have an adjectival phrase; 'reluctant to open his eyes'. Some people might say, this is an adverb phrase because it modifies 'was'. What was Swaminathan reluctant to do? Reluctant to open his eyes. We will discuss that later. But, here is a phrase which begins with reluctant.

Now within reluctant, within this phrase, we have a prepositional phrase; reluctant to do what? To open his eyes. So there is the preposition, 'to', followed by a verb phrase, 'open his eyes'. A verb phrase is followed by another noun phrase, 'his eyes'. After a noun phrase, you cannot break it further. If you just say, 'his', does not mean anything; if you say, 'eyes', does not mean anything; 'whose eyes?' His what? Such questions will arise. Next.

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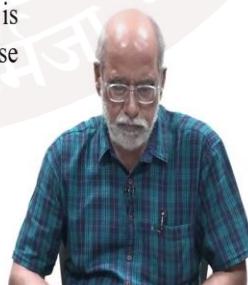
- A phrase can have only one word, as "It", or it can have more words, as in "was Monday morning".
- Here again there is a phrase within a phrase, as in Verb Phrase, verb "was" heads the phrase, but it has another phrase "Monday morning".
- These two words coming together behave like one word, and complete the meaning of "was".



A phrase, therefore, can have even one word; can have only one word as, 'it', or it can have more words; more than 1, more than 2, more than 3; it can have many words. But together, they behave like one unit. Here again, there is a phrase within a phrase. When you say, 'was Monday morning', then 'Monday morning' is a verb phrase, where 'was' is followed by a noun phrase, 'Monday morning'. So, these two words coming together make a phrase, that is, verb phrase, 'was Monday morning'. Next.

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- So one word or more, a phrase is part of a sentence that performs a function in it.
- But why can "It" be a phrase by itself, but "his" cannot be a phrase by itself? That is because "his" by itself is incomplete, "eyes" by itself is incomplete; Questions like "his" what?, whose "eyes"? , etc. arise.



So finally, let us get right. So, one word or more does not matter. Whether it is, 'it' or 'was Monday morning'. If a phrase is part of a sentence that performs a function in it, and it has, it works like a unit; it may be one word or more than one word. Go to the next.

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Phrases can be of many kinds. They can be noun phrases headed by nouns and working like nouns; or, there can be verb phrase, adjectival phrase, adverbial phrase and prepositional phrase.



So finally, how do we summarize? The phrase can be of many kinds. They can be noun phrases; behaving like nouns, working like nouns. Or they can be a verb phrase, behaving like a verb; adjectival phrase, behaving like an adjective, qualifying the noun. Or an adverbial phrase, behaviour like an adverb, qualifying either an adjective or a verb. Or a prepositional phrase, which relates to nouns, modifies nouns or is a compliment to a verb. So, these are the functions we will look at them. Next.

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## ACTIVITY



2. Look at the following extract from *Swami and Friends*. Let us see how many phrases you can identify. Put related words together within square brackets in the manner shown earlier.

*He considered Monday specially unpleasant in the calendar.*



To help you understand better, you can do this activity. Look at the following extract; this one sentence actually from 'Swami and Friends'. It is a; it is the first chapter of a novel by RK Narayan. In another unit, we will talk about it. In another module, actually, we talk at length about this book and this author. But here, let us see how many phrases you can identify within this sentence. So, do an exercise, put related words together within square brackets one after another as I have shown you. Go to the next.

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## ANSWERS



S[He considered Monday specially unpleasant in the calendar.]

NP [He]

VP[considered Monday specially unpleasant in the calendar.]

NP [Monday specially unpleasant in the calendar.]

Adv P [specially unpleasant in the calendar]

Adj P [unpleasant in the calendar]

Prep P [in the calendar]

NP [the calendar]



See. This is how I expect you to do. So, for instance, your first square brackets will take a sentence. So, outside the square bracket, we write S, meaning sentence. And the sentence is, 'he considered Monday specially unpleasant in the calendar'; close the bracket. This is a sentence.

What is the noun phrase? 'He'; only one word. So we close that within the bracket. What is the verb phrase? 'Considered Monday specially unpleasant in the calendar'; entire thing in one set of brackets, two brackets only. Within this verb phrase, there is a noun phrase. 'Monday specially unpleasant in the calendar'. Again adverbial phrase or adjectival phrase, 'specially unpleasant in the calendar'. Adjectival phrase within the adverbial phrase, 'unpleasant in the calendar because specially' is the adverb which has gone out.

Now, within this adjectival phrase, there is a prepositional phrase, 'in the calendar'; begins with an 'in', in is the head of this phrase. And within this prepositional phrase, there is the noun phrase, the calendar, where there is the modifier and calendar is the head.

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## ACTIVITY

- Look at the jumbled words below. Rearrange the words to make a sentence. The first one is done for you.

*calendar considered he in Monday specially the unpleasant*

He considered Monday specially unpleasant in the calendar.



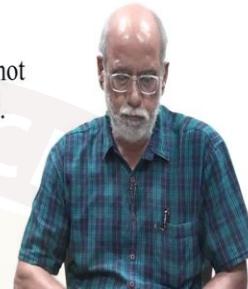
You can do this with another sentence. Let us look at the jumbled words. Given below a sentence actually but have not put them in order, I have jumbled those words. If you put them together, they will go like this. 'He considered Monday specially unpleasant in the calendar. Here, you have known phrase comes first, 'he'; then you have verb phrase as we discussed. So, if you know these things, if you know how words get together to make a phrase, make a sentence, make a clause, you will commit no mistakes, and you will write and speak easily and better. So do this practice. Go to the next.

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- Now try and reassemble the jumbled words below in a meaningful sentence.

*and day eyes day for he his his had on recollect  
sat shut stool the to what work*

Remember these words can be put together. Do not use any word more than once, and use every word.



I am now giving you another sentence, jumbled. This time I have not given you an answer. Look at this group of jumbled words highlighted; "and, day, eyes, day, for, he, his, is" etcetera. Remember, these words can be put together as a sentence as they were before I jumbled them. So, the rule of the game does not use any word more than once. But use every word. Now, following these two rules, put them together, make a sentence, and check your work with the answer

we

have

given.

Next.

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## ANSWERS



He sat on his stool and shut his eyes to recollect what work he had for the day.



This is it. "He sat on his stool and shut his eyes to recollect what work he had for the day." Come back to the other screen. Please, it is so easy for us to cheat ourselves. I can tell myself oh, come on, why bother, look at the answer and do it. In that case, who am I cheating? I am cheating myself because I am denying myself that chance to learn. Please do not do that. Even if there is a temptation, I know that is not, you are a good student, and you will overcome the temptation, and you will look at the given answer only after you have done your work. But after you have done your work, check with the given answer. Go to the next.

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## TRANSCRIPT



First, please be a lifelong student. You know when we are kids we ask questions like, why is the sky blue? Why is the bird flying so high? But for some reason as we get older, that curiosity goes away, and if we are happy with the knowledge we have, then we are actually going to atrophy. So, please remain a lifelong student, don't lose that curiosity.



Now, in this manner, we are going to give you more sentences. Look at this from the real-authentic slide given by a successful user of English. Now, to make sure that you have understood the concept of phrase and that you have understood the concept of which word comes together with which word first before as a unit, these two or three words come together with another unit. So, in order to make sure that you have understood and you can do them, do this, do the same exercise with the words on this slide.

You can check with us whether you got them right, that will give you the confidence. You see confidence is, cannot be given by anyone else to you; your teacher, your family, your friends, nobody can give you confidence because confidence cannot be gifted, it can only be acquired. And there is only one way to acquire confidence that is through practice and hard work.

So, do more actually. Why only this? Listen to others, read other good and very good texts and take one or two sentences out of them. Jumble those words and then ask yourself oh God, I do not remember how, in which manner these words were together and then try and do them, check them with the dictionary or with us; mail us, call us, and we will give you the right answer. And that will give you, progressively you will make fewer mistakes or no mistake. Then you can help others. Come to the last screen.

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Thank You!



So, that is the secret of success. That is the key to confidence and key to learning. More work by yourself, exercises of a given kind by yourself, and you learn you succeed. What we have done in this lesson is to tell you how you can teach yourself. Thank you very much. Have a good day.