

# **[Name] Grammar**

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## Template Instructions

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### HOW TO USE + TIPS:

- **You cannot edit this master copy, so download a copy for yourself to edit as your heart desires!**
- The table of contents is managed through headings (*Heading 1 for chapters, Heading 2 for sections, Heading 3 for sub-sections*). If you add your own chapters or sections, or otherwise want to change the table of contents, that formatting will need to be maintained or otherwise adjusted.
- You may want to re-order chapters/sections based on what is more relevant to your specific language.
- This is designed to include many possible sections with some basic guiding questions to help people if needed, but it is not all encompassing and will obviously need to be suited to individual needs.
  - You might delete/add parts (ex: if your language does not have articles, you could delete those parts).
  - You might combine parts (ex: if you only use particles for noun roles, you might move the particles info to be a chapter within nouns instead of a separate unit).
  - You might split up parts (ex: if you have a lot of cases, you might have a section for ‘syntactic cases’ and a different section for ‘locative cases’).
- Currently, none of the headings are numbered, in anticipation of people moving things around, to save you the headache of re-numbering everything.

## Language Overview

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### Basic Information

- What is the language called? Who speaks it? Where do they live?
- Roughly how old is the language? Did it evolve naturally? For a specific purpose?
- Does it have a written form or is it oral? If it has writing, what is the script type (alphabet, abugida, abjad, logograph, syllabary, etc)?
- Basic typology:
  - Agglutinative or fusional? Isolating, synthetic, or polysynthetic?
  - Accusative or Ergative alignment? Basic word order (ex: SOV)?
  - Head final or initial? Head marking or dependent marking?
- Is the number system base-10?
- Any other general information about the grammar or unique features (noun genders, cases, verb forms, etc)?

- Any other general information about the speakers' world or culture that affects the language or is otherwise important to know?

## History

### *Family*

If the conlang is part of a larger family, what does the family tree look like?

### *Evolution*

If the conlang has an evolutionary history, what are the various stages? What was the cultural context of each stage? What unique features or changes define each stage? This can include when it split off from its parent language (if any) and how the individual language has evolved on its own (if it has).

## Sources of NatLang Inspiration

Did any natural languages influence this conlang? Either realistically within the world (ex: a conlang romance language that splintered off from French etc) or just in your own personal creative process (ex: you wanted to explore tones following Mandarin patterns even if your conlang is not related to Mandarin at all/even from earth)

- [Language] — [Influences]

## Endonyms & Core Words

- Language = Ex: The *French* language
- Person = Ex: A *French* woman
- Adjective = Ex: A *french* town
- Countries/Locations = Ex: *France*
- Greeting = Ex: Bonjour
- Yes = Ex: Oui
- No = Ex: Non

## Phonology

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### Phonemic Inventory

#### *Vowel Phonemes*

What vowel phonemes are in this language? Delete/add columns/rows as needed.

Some ideas to consider for vowel inventories: length, tone, r-coloring, tense/lax or strong/weak, rounding contrasts, nasalization, etc. Are any of these features phonemic? Are any merely phonetic/allophonic (included in a later section)? Do any just not matter/don't apply?

	Front	Near-Front	Central	Near-Back	Back
High					
Near-High					
High-Mid					
Mid					
Low-Mid					
Near-Low					
Low					

Are there any diphthongs?

- Ex: /eɪ/

How are they written/romanized? If it has its own script, what is it? Is the writing loyal to phonemes/phonetics or are there irregular spelling rules?

### *Consonant Phonemes*

What consonant phonemes are in this language? Delete/add columns/rows as needed.

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Post-Alveolar	Retr oflex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
Plosive											
Nasal											
Trill											
Tap											
Affricate											

<b>Fricative</b>											
<b>Approximant</b>											
<b>Laterals</b>											
<b>Ejectives</b>											
<b>Clicks</b>											
<b>Implosives</b>											

Are there any other phonemic consonants that may not fit well on the chart?

- Ex: Clusters like the English /ks/, the Greek /ps/

How are they written/romanized? If it has its own script, what is it (depending on the complexity, you may want to give orthography its own chapter/section)? Is the writing loyal to phonemes/phonetics or are there irregular spelling rules?

## Phonotactics

### *Syllable Structure*

What is this language's syllable structure? What are all the possible syllables?

- [Minimum Syllable]
- [Any intermediate syllables]
- [Maximum Syllable]

What is allowed to be an onset?:

- Ex

What is allowed to be a nucleus?:

- Ex

What is allowed to be a coda?:

- Ex

### *Boundary Regulations*

Any specific rules for syllable boundaries?:

- Ex

Any specific rules for word boundaries?:

- Ex

## **Allophony**

### *Vowel Allophones*

Any general vowel allophones?:

- Ex

### *Consonant Allophones*

Any general consonant allophones?:

- Ex

## **Prosody**

### *Stress*

What is the language's stress pattern(s)?

### *Intonation*

What is the language's intonation pattern(s)?

## **Morpho-Phonology**

Are there any patterns, rules, or other information related to how phonology interacts with morphology in this language? Examples might include: root systems, word-structure rules that go beyond the syllable structure, etc.

## **Nouns**

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## **Noun Structure**

Are there any special rules or configurations for noun roots? What is a template for how common affixes attach to nouns and in what order? Are there overt or covert grammatical designations?

## **Gender / Classes**

Does your grammar distinguish noun classes or gender? If so, what is the system (mas/fem(/neu), animate/inanimate, other classes, etc)? How are they marked (phonology, semantics, articles, etc)?

## **Number**

Do nouns mark for specific numbers? Which ones (singular, plural, dual, trial, paucal, etc)? How do they mark number (affixes, mutation, reduplication, particles, etc)?

## **Cases**

Does your language use noun cases? If so, which ones? How are they marked (affixes, mutation, reduplication, particles, etc)? In which contexts is each one used?

If they don't use cases, how else are syntactic roles marked? That information can go into another section/chapter, or this one can be repurposed.

## **Determiners**

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Note: Depending on how your language works, this entire chapter could easily be merged with or replaced with the *Particles* chapter.

## **Articles**

Does your language use articles? If so, which ones (definite, indefinite, partitive, demonstrative etc)? What do they encode (gender, number, case, etc)? How do they work (separate words, affixes, etc)?

(Depending on how your language works, you may find it helpful to combine this information into a chapter in the nouns unit, or possibly as a part of the particles unit).

## **Honorifics**

Does your language mark formality, relation, or deference? If so, how (formal, informal, polite, impolite, etc)? What do they encode (gender, number, case, etc)? How do they work (separate words, affixes, etc)?

(Depending on how your language works, you may find it helpful to combine this information into a chapter related to pronouns, nouns, verbs, or possibly as a part of the particles unit).

## **Classifiers**

Does your language mark classifiers for nouns, such as when counting them like Mandarin or for verb formation like Navajo? If so, how do they work (by shape, function, class, etc)?

## **Pronouns**

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### **Personal Pronouns**

What are the core personal pronouns? Do they decline for case/syntactic roles (subject vs object, etc)? What information do they encode (gender, animacy, clusivity, spatiality, relation, familiarity/formality, etc)? Are they mandatory or is the language pro-drop?

### **Demonstrative Pronouns**

What are the demonstrative pronouns? Do they decline for case/syntactic roles (subject vs object, etc)? What information do they encode (gender, animacy, clusivity, spatiality, relation, familiarity/formality, etc)?

### **Possessive Pronouns**

What are the possessive pronouns? Do they decline for case/syntactic roles (subject vs object, etc)? What information do they encode (gender, animacy, clusivity, spatiality, relation, familiarity/formality, etc)? Alienable or inalienable possession?

### **Relative Pronouns**

What are the relative pronouns? Do they decline for case/syntactic roles (subject vs object, etc)? What information do they encode (gender, animacy, clusivity, spatiality, relation, familiarity/formality, etc)?

### **Interrogative Pronouns**

What are the interrogative pronouns? Do they decline for case/syntactic roles (subject vs object, etc)? What information do they encode (gender, animacy, clusivity, spatiality, relation, familiarity/formality, etc)?

## **Indefinite Pronouns**

What are the indefinite pronouns? Do they decline for case/syntactic roles (subject vs object, etc)? What information do they encode (gender, animacy, clusivity, spatiality, relation, familiarity/formality, etc)?

## **Adjectives**

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### **Adjective Structure**

Are there any groups of adjectives your grammar distinguishes? If so, what are they (animate vs inanimate, phonological declension patterns, etc)? Are there templates for common adjective morphology?

### **Agreement**

Do adjectives agree with nouns? If so, in what way (gender/class, number, case, etc)? How do they mark agreement (affixes, mutation, etc)?

### **Demonstrative Adjectives**

What are the demonstrative adjectives? Do they agree with nouns and if so, in what ways/how?

### **Possessive Adjectives**

What are the possessive adjectives? Do they agree with nouns and if so, in what ways/how?

### **Comparatives & Superlatives**

Are adjectives used in forming comparisons (ex: taller, tallest)? If so, how do they work?

(If your language only uses adverbs for this function, delete this section).

## **Verbs**

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### **Conjugation**

#### *Verb Structure*

Are there any groups of verbs your grammar distinguishes? If so, what are they (phonology differences in the stem/some kind of marker like French -er vs -re verbs, transitive/intransitive, semantic references, etc)? Are there templates for common verbal morphology? How do you form the stems that take conjugation markers?

### *Agreement*

Do verbs agree/conjugate for subject? For objects? For other components? Are there general patterns (more common for agglutinative languages – if so, list them here) or does it vary by tense/aspect etc (more common for fusional languages – if so, you might want to list those elsewhere and not use this section/chapter)?

### **Copula**

Does this language have one or more specific copula verbs, and if so, do they behave differently than other verbs? Are there rules for what types of predicates a copula can take (nounal vs adjectival predicates, etc.)? If not, you may wish to skip this section.

### **Tense**

Does this language mark tense onto verbs? If so, which ones? How are they marked?

### **Aspect**

Does this language mark aspect onto verbs? If so, which ones? How are they marked?

### **Mood**

Does this language mark mood onto verbs? If so, which ones? How are they marked?

### **Evidentiality**

Does this language mark evidentiality onto verbs? If so, which ones? How are they marked?

### **Voice**

Does this language mark voice onto verbs? If so, which ones? How are they marked?

(If the language does not change verb forms but instead does valency reducing/increasing operations in other ways, it may be helpful to list that information in the syntax unit instead, depending on your preferences.)

### **Polarity**

Does this language mark polarity/negation onto verbs? If so, which ones? How are they marked? Or does your language use syntactic means to negate verbs (like separate words)? If so, you may delete this section and use the *Negation* section of the *Syntax* chapter.

## **Non-Finite Verbs**

Does this language have non-finite verb forms? If so, which ones (infinitives, gerunds, participles, etc)? How are they marked?

(If these are only used with specific tenses, aspects, moods, or voices, it may be helpful to list that information in those chapters/sections and not use this chapter.)

## **Adverbs**

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### **Adverb Structure**

Are there any groups of adverbs your grammar distinguishes? If so, what are they (time, place, manner, etc). Do adverbs differ when used in varying functions (verb descriptors, adjective descriptors, other adverb descriptors, etc)?

### **Comparatives & Superlatives**

Are adverbs used in forming comparisons (ex: more beautiful, most beautiful)? If so, how do they work?

(If your language only uses adjectives for this function, delete this section).

## **Conjunctions**

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### **Coordinating**

Are there any coordinating conjunctions in this language? If so, how do they work (separate words, clitics, etc)?

### **Subordinating**

Are there any subordinating conjunctions in this language? If so, how do they work (separate words, clitics, etc)?

### **Correlative**

Are there any correlative conjunctions in this language? If so, how do they work (separate words, clitics, etc)?

## Adpositions

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### Adposition Structure

Does this language use adpositions? If so, which kinds (preposition, postposition, circumposition, inposition, etc)?

### Usages

How do they work?

### Particles

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Note: Depending on how your language works, this entire chapter could easily be merged with or replaced with the *Determiners* chapter.

### Noun Classifiers

Are any particles used for noun classification? If so, what do they classify (number, gender, case, topicalization, shape, mass vs count, etc)?

### Verb Classifiers

Are any particles used for verb classification? If so, what do they classify (tense, aspect, mood, voice, evidentiality, mirativity, etc)?

### Phrase Classifiers

Are any particles used for phrase classification? If so, what do they classify (questions, exclamation, etc)?

## Syntax

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### Word Order

What is the neutral, or unmarked, constituent order in the clause, if there is one? Does it differ between transitive and intransitive clauses? If the argument is a pronoun or noun?

Are any alternative orders possible, and if so, how are they employed (ex: topicalization, free word order, etc)? Is displacement possible? How much constituent ambiguity is tolerated, or is every argument clearly identified? (Depending on how your language works, you may wish to include these structures in the Clause Manipulation chapter).

## **Alignment**

Is the language primarily Accusative or Ergative in alignment? Or an alternative one, like Agentive, Tripartite, or Neutral? Is there a split in alignment, or additional patterns like Direct-Inverse?

Is alignment demonstrated via word order, agreement, or case marking? Is the alignment morphological, syntactic, or both? Is there a cohesive concept of a “subject” in your language?

## **Heads & Dependents**

Consider the word classes of this language — which classes are actually distinguished?

Is your language predominantly head-initial or head-final? Is your language predominantly head-marking or dependent-marking? What parts of the syntax are exceptions in ordering or marking, or areas that typologically can fit both categories of ordering or marking?

## **Clause & Sentence Structure**

### *Compound Sentences*

How are independent clauses joined together? Can anything be omitted? Are any special structures required or can there be a variety?

### *Complex Sentences*

How are dependent clauses joined to independent clauses, and if so how (subordination, coordination, nominalization, serialization, etc)? Can syntactic pivots of subjects or objects be accomplished? Are certain structures or markers required? Do certain clause types have different word order?

### *Complement, Adjunct, & Relative Clauses*

What kind of complements occur? Can there be finite and non-finite complement clauses? Clausal subjects, finite or non-finite? Adjunct clauses? How do relative clauses function? Are certain structures or markers required? Do certain complements have different word order? Depending on your language’s complexity, these may need to be broken up into further chapters.

## **Clause Manipulation**

### *Negation*

How does your language express clausal negation? Phrasal negation?

### *Questions*

How are questions marked in your language? Does it differ between content or y/n questions? Is there wh-fronting or wh-in-situ, or both?

### *Emphatic Structures*

Are there rules or structures for focusing one element? What about backgrounding an element?

### *Valency*

How would a passive/anti-passive be realized? Is it morphological or periphrastic? Are there any specific impersonal, causative, or applicative forms or structures? Any other methods of increasing or decreasing verb valency?

## **Numerals**

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### **1-Digit Numbers**

What are the core numerals of this language? Does this culture recognize 0 as a core numeral?

Note the base-system. A base 10 system will have (0)/1-9 as the single digit numerals, base 12 will have (0)/1-11, base 8 will have (0)/1-7, etc.

### **2-Digit Numbers**

How does this language form the various “tens” equivalents for your base system (ten, twenty, thirty, etc)?

How does it form complex numerals within the “tens” (eleven, twelve, twenty-one, etc)?

### **3-Digit Numbers**

How does this language form the various “hundreds” equivalents for your base system (one-hundred, two-hundred)?

How does it form complex numerals within the “hundreds” (101, 102, 150, 175, etc)?

### **Higher Numbers**

How does this language form 4-digit/“thousands” numbers? “Ten-thousands”? “Millions?” Etc.

This can also be separated into additional chapters as you desire.



## **Ordinal Numbers**

Does your language distinguish cardinal from ordinal numbers? How are they formed?

## **Lexical Evolution & Derivation**

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### **Noun Derivation**

What are common trends within noun etymology? Common strategies for deriving new nouns?

### **Adjective Derivation**

What are common trends within adjectival etymology? Common strategies for deriving new adjectives?

### **Verb Derivation**

What are common trends within verbal etymology? Common strategies for deriving new verbs?