

PHILOSOPHICAL AND PRACTICAL GRAMMAR, &c.

THE Grammar of a language is a collection of principles and rules, taken from the established usages of the nation using that language; in other words, an exhibition of the genuine structure of the language. These principles and rules are derived from the natural distinctions of words, or they are arbitrary, and depend for their authority wholly on custom.

A *rule* is an established form of construction in a particular class of words. Thus it is a rule in English that the plural number of nouns is formed by adding *s* or *es* to the singular, as *hand, hands, cage, cages, fish, fishes*.

An *exception* to a rule is, the deviation of a word from the common construction. Thus the regular plural of *man* would be *mans*; but the actual plural is *men*. This word then is an *exception* to the general rule of forming plural nouns.

Grammar is usually divided into four parts—orthography, etymology, syntax, and prosody.

Orthography treats of the letters of a language, their sounds and use, whether simple or in combination; and teaches the true mode of writing words, according to established usage.

Etymology treats of the derivation of words from their radicals or primitives, and of their various inflections and modifications to express person, number, case, sex, time and mode.

Syntax is a system of rules for constructing sentences.

Prosody treats of the quantity or rather of the accent of syllables, of poetic feet, and the laws of versification.

The elements of language are articulate sounds. These are represented on paper by letters or characters, which are the elements of *written* language.

A syllable is a simple sound, or a combination or succession of sounds uttered at one breath or impulse of the voice.

A word consists of one syllable or of a combination of syllables.

A sentence consists of a number of words, at the pleasure of the speaker or writer; but forming complete sense.

ENGLISH ALPHABET.

The English Alphabet consists of twenty six letters or characters, viz.: A a—B b—C c—D d—E e—F f—G g—H h—I i—J j—K k—L l—M m—N n—O o—P p—Q q—R r—S s—T t—U u—V v—W w—X x—Y y—Z z.

Of these, three, *a, e, and o*, are always vowels; *i* and *u* are either vowels or diphthongs; and *y* is a vowel, diphthong, or consonant. To these may be added *w*, which is actually a vowel. *H* is an aspirate or mark of breathing, and the rest are consonants, or articulations.

A vowel is a simple sound formed by opening the mouth, in a particular manner. This may be known by the power we have of prolonging the sound, without changing the position of the organs, as in uttering *a, e, and o*. When the position of the organs is necessarily varied, during the utterance, the sound is not simple, but diphthongal; as in uttering *i* and *u*.

The vowel characters in English have each several different sounds. *A* has four sounds; First or long, as in *fate, ale*.

2. Short, as in *at, bat, ban*. This is nearly the fourth sound shortened.

3. Broad, as in *all, fall*, and shortened, as in *what*.

4. Italian, as in *father, calve, ask*.

E has two sounds: First or long, as in *metre, me, meter*.

2. Short, as in *met, bet, pen*. This is nearly the first sound of a shortened *e*.

I has also the sound of a long, as in *prey, vein*; but this is an anomaly.

2. Short, as in *pit, ability*. This is the short sound of *e* long.

O has three sounds; First or long, as in *note, roll*.

2. Short, as in *not, nominal*. This is the short sound of broad *aie*, as in *what, nearant*.

3. The sound of *oo*, or French *ou*, as in *more, tomb, lose*.

U has three sounds; First or long, as in *cube, rude, enumerate*; a diphthongal sound.

2. Short, as in *rub, but, number*.

3. The Italian *u*, as in *bush, bullet*; the short sound of *oo*.

Y has two sounds; the first and long is the same as that of *i* long, as in *defy, rely, try, chyle*.

2. Short, as in *sympom, pity*; the same as the short sound of *i*.

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At the beginning of words, *y* may be considered a consonant, as in *year*.

W is properly a vowel, having the same sound as *oo*, in *wood*, the French *ou*, the Italian, German, and Spanish *u*. It is the same in English as in the Welsh. Thus *duell* is pronounced *doell*. When initial, it has been considered to be a consonant, as in *well, woell, ooill*; but although the position of the organs in uttering this letter at the beginning of words may be a little closer, it can hardly be called an articulation. In this combination, the two vowels are rather diphthongal.

Consonants or articulations are characters that represent the junctions, jointings, or closings of the organs, which precede or follow the vocal sounds. Some of them are close articulations, which wholly intercept the voice. Such are *k, p, and t*, as in the syllables *ck, ep, et*. These are usually called *mutes*, or *pure mutes*. Others admit a short prolongation of sound, as *b, d, and g*, in the syllables *eb, ed, eg*. These are called *impure mutes*.

Others are imperfect articulations, not entirely interrupting the voice, but admitting a kind of hum, a hiss, or a breaching; and for this reason, they are sometimes called *semi-vowels*. Such are *f, l, m, n, r, s, v, and z*, as in the syllables *cf, el, em, en, er, es, ev, ez*.

J and the soft *g* represent a compound sound, or rather a union of sounds, which may be expressed by *edge, or dje*, as in *join, general*.

X represents the sounds of *ks, or gz*.

Th have an aspirated sound, as in *thing, wreath*; or a vocal sound, as in *thus, thou, breathe*.

Sh may be considered as representing a simple sound, as in *esh, she, shall*. This sound, rendered vocal, becomes *esh*, for which we have no character. It is heard in *fusion*, pronounced *fushun*.

The letters *ng* in combination have two sounds; one as in *sing, singer*; the other as in *finger, longer*. The latter requires a closer articulation of the palatal organs, than the former; but the distinction can be communicated only by the ear. The orthoepists attempt to express it by writing *g* after the *ng*, as *finger-ger*. But the peculiar sound of *ng* is expressed, if expressed at all, solely by the first syllable, as will be obvious to any person, who will write *sing-ger* for *singer*; for let *sing* in this word be pronounced as it is by itself, *sing*, and the additional letter makes no difference, unless the speaker pauses at *sing*, and pronounces *ger* by itself.

The articulations in English may all be thus expressed: *eb, ed, ef, eg, ek, el, em, en, ep, er, es, et, ev, ez, eth*, aspirate and vocal, *esh, esh, ing*.

These articulations may be named from the organs whose junctions they represent—Thus

Labials, or letters of the lips, *eb, ef, ev, ep, em*.

Dentals, *ed, et, eth, es, esh, ez, esh, en*.

Palatals, *eg, ek, el, er*.

Nasals, *em, en, ing*.

The letters *s* and *z*, are also called sibilants, or hissing letters—to which may be added, *esh, and esh*.

Q is precisely equivalent to *k*; but it differs from it in being always followed by *u*. It is a useless letter; for *quest* might as well be written *kuest* or *kwest*, in the Dutch manner.

A diphthong is a union of two vowels or simple sounds uttered so rapidly and closely, as to form one syllable only, or what is considered as one syllable; as *oi* and *oy* in *voice* and *joy*, *ou* in *sound*, and *ou* in *war*.

A triphthong is a union of three vowels in one syllable; as in *adieu*.

There are many combinations of vowels in English words, in which one vowel only is sounded: as *ai, ea, ie, ei, oa, ui, oy, ey, &c*. These may be called digraphs. They can be reduced to no rule of pronunciation.

The combinations *au* and *aw* have generally the sound of the broad *a*, as in *fraud* and *law*. The combination *eu* has the sound of *u* long, as in *pew, new, creue*; and sometimes at the beginning of words the sound of *yu*, as in *eucharist, euphony*.

The letters *cl, km*, at the beginning of a word, are pronounced as *tl*, as in *clear*. *Gl* at the beginning of words are pronounced as *dl*, as in *glory*.

DIVISION OF SYLLABLES.

The first and principal rule in dividing syllables, is not to separate letters that belong to the same syllable, except in cases of anomalous pronunciation.