

# BASIC ENGLISH GRAMMAR

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## 1) What is Grammar?

Grammar is the study of language. When we study Grammar, we are studying the rules of our language. We follow these rules when we speak and write. The purpose of Grammar is to help us communicate our ideas effectively.

Grammar includes:

## 2) The Sentence

Whenever we want to express our thoughts, we do so with the help of words. These words must be put together in a certain order. Words which are used without any order will not make any sense.

Read the following sentences (groups) of words :

A. Jumbled words	B. Sentences
1. feathers birds have	1. Birds have feathers.
2. the cot in the is sleeping baby	2. The baby is sleeping in the cot.
3. station all stop trains at this	3. All trains stop at this station.
4. slowly walk people old very	4. Old people walk very slowly.
5. goals four team the easily won by	5. The team won easily by four goals.

Do the words in column A make sense or are they simply groups of jumbled words? No, they do not make sense.

Now look at the same words in column B where the words have now been placed in their proper order.

Do these groups of words make sense?

Yes, they do make complete sense.

A group of words arranged in such a way so as to give complete meaning is called a Sentence

Did you know?

A **sentence** begins with a Capital Letter and ends with a Full Stop or a Question Mark or an Exclamation Mark. A Simple Sentence must have a complete meaning. It must have a Subject and a Verb. The Subject refers to the person or thing that does the action.

### 3) The Phrase

You may have a group of words that make sense but not complete sense; for example:

at the railway station  
into the air

last evening  
in the morning  
in a great hurry

of no use  
of great promise  
at 6 o'clock

**A group of words that makes sense but not complete sense is called a Phrase.**

Did you know?

A Phrase unlike a sentence, does not have a Finite Verb. It has neither a Subject nor a Predicate.

We can turn a Phrase into a Sentence by adding some words to it: for example

1. I *shall wait* for you at the railway station.

2. I *went* to your place last evening.

3. This book *is* of no use to me.

(In each of the above sentences, the Verb has been given in italics)

**EXERCISE 1.** The words below have been jumbled. Put them back in their right order so that they make sentences:

(i) dog / Rahul / with his / Pet / Playing / enjoys.

(ii) to / the company / goods / Vietnam / exports.

(iii) every / delicious / father cooks / evening / Pasta.

(iv) Brother/ an/ wants /be/my/ astronaut /to.

(v) Everything / will / sense / make / perfect / someday.

**Answer:**

(i) Rahul enjoys playing with his pet dog.

(ii) The company exports goods to Vietnam.

(iii) Father cooks delicious pasta every evening.

(iv) My brother wants to be an astronaut.

(v) Someday everything will make perfect sense.

**EXERCISE 2.** Rearrange these words to make meaningful sentences.

- (i) ship / violently / the storm / rocked / the
- (ii) masterpiece / artist / painstakingly / the / his / worked at
- (iii) gift / free / a/Dad / offered / firm/ by the /was.
- (iv) I read / paper / in the / burglar / been / caught / had / the / that.
- (v) nightfall / began / cricketers / the / at / thier piercing calls.
- (vi) wore / a hat/he/ of coconut / made / fiber/his / on / heard.
- (vii) parts / many / coffee / popular in /world/ the / is / very / of.
- (viii) cave / could / explore / not/they/torch /the / without/a.
- (ix) the storm /shed / damaged / the /was / during.
- (x) the dog / James / talking / sat next to / himself to.

**Answer:**

- (i) The storm rocked the ship violently.
- (ii) The artist painstakingly worked at his masterpiece.
- (iii) Dad was offered a free gift by the firm.
- (iv) I read in the paper that the burglar had been caught.
- (v) The cricketers began their piercing calls at nightfall.
- (vi) He wore a hat made of coconut fiber on his head.
- (vii) Coffee is very popular in many parts of the world.
- (viii) They could not explore the cave without a torch.
- (ix) The shed was damaged during the storm.
- (x) James sat next to the dog talking to himself.

## Direct Speech

When we want to describe what someone said, one option is to use **direct speech**. We use direct speech when we simply repeat what someone says, putting the phrase between speech marks:

•Paul came in and said, "I'm really hungry."

It is very common to see direct speech used in books or in a newspaper article.

For example:

•The local MP said, "We plan to make this city a safer place for everyone."

As you can see, with direct speech it is common to use the verb 'to say' ('said' in the past). But you can also find other verbs used to indicate direct speech such as 'ask', 'reply', and 'shout'. For example:

- When Mrs Diaz opened the door, I asked, "Have you seen Lee?"
- She replied, "No, I haven't seen him since lunchtime."
- The boss was angry and shouted, "Why isn't he here? He hasn't finished that report yet!"

## Indirect Speech

When we want to report what someone said without speech marks and without necessarily using exactly the same words, we can use indirect speech (also called reported speech). For example:

- Direct speech: "We're quite cold in here."
- Indirect speech: They say (that) they're cold.

When we report what someone says in the present simple, as in the above sentence, we normally don't change the tense, we simply change the subject. However, when we report things in the past, we usually change the tense by moving it one step back. For example, in the following sentence the present simple becomes the past simple in indirect speech:

- Direct speech: "I have a new car."
- Indirect speech: He said he had a new car.

All the other tenses follow a similar change in indirect speech. Here is an example for all the main tenses:

DIRECT SPEECH	INDIRECT SPEECH
<i>He said, "I <b>live</b> in the city center."</i> (present simple)	<i>He said he <b>lived</b> in the city center.</i>
<i>He said, "I'm <b>going</b> out."</i> (present continuous)	<i>He said he <b>was going</b> out.</i>
<i>He said, "I've <b>finished</b>."</i> (present perfect)	<i>He said he <b>had finished</b>.</i>
<i>He said, "I've <b>been studying</b> a lot."</i> (present perfect continuous)	<i>He said he <b>had been studying</b> a lot.</i>
<i>He said, "I <b>arrived</b> before you."</i> (past simple)	<i>He said he <b>had arrived</b> before you.</i>
<i>He said, "I <b>had</b> already <b>left</b>."</i> (past perfect)	<i>He said he <b>had</b> already <b>left</b>. (remains the same)</i>
<i>He said, "I'll <b>be</b> there at 2pm."</i> (future simple)	<i>He said he <b>would be</b> there at 2pm.</i>
<i>He said, "I'm <b>going to call</b> Alan."</i> (be going to)	<i>He said he <b>was going to call</b> Alan.</i>

DIRECT SPEECH	INDIRECT SPEECH
<i>She said, "I <b>can</b> swim."</i>	<i>She said she <b>could</b> swim.</i>
<i>She said, "I <b>must</b> go."</i>	<i>She said she <b>had</b> to go.</i>
<i>She said, "I <b>may</b> drive there."</i>	<i>She said she <b>might</b> drive there.</i>
<i>She said, "<b>Shall</b> we start?"</i>	<i>She asked if we <b>should</b> start.</i>
<i>She said, "I'll <b>call</b> you."</i>	<i>She said she <b>would</b> call me.</i>

## Using 'say' or 'tell'

As an alternative to using 'say' we can also use 'tell' ('told' in the past) in reported speech, but in this case you need to add the object pronoun. For example:

- He **told me** he was going to call Alan.
- They **told her** they would arrive a little late.
- You **told us** you'd already finished the order.

## Changing Time Expressions

Sometimes it's necessary to change the time expressions when you report speech, especially when you are speaking about the past and the time reference no longer applies. For example:

- Direct speech: "I'm seeing my brother **tomorrow**."
- Indirect speech: She said she was seeing her brother **the following day**.

Here are some other examples:

- Direct speech: "I had a headache **yesterday**."
- Indirect speech: You said you'd had a headache **the day before yesterday**.
- Direct speech: "It's been raining since **this afternoon**."
- Indirect speech: He said it'd been raining since **that afternoon**.
- Direct speech: "I haven't seen them since **last week**."
- Indirect speech: She said she hadn't seen them since **the previous week**.

## Reporting Questions

When you report a question you need to change the interrogative form into an affirmative sentence, putting the verb tense one step back, as with normal reported speech.

There are two types of questions that we can report – questions that have a yes/no response, and questions that begin with a question word like 'what', 'where', 'who' etc. When we report a yes/no question, we use 'if'. For example:

- Direct speech: "Do they live here?"
- Indirect speech: You asked me **if they lived** here.

As you can see, in the reported version of the question, 'do' is eliminated because it is no longer a question, and the verb 'live' becomes 'lived'.

For questions starting with question words like 'what', 'where', 'when', 'who', etc., we report the question using the question word but change the interrogative form to the affirmative form. For example:

- Direct speech: "Where do they live?"
- Indirect speech: You asked me **where they lived**.
- Direct speech: "When are you leaving?"
- Indirect speech: He asked us **when we were leaving**.
- Direct speech: "How will they get here?"
- Indirect speech: She asked me **how they would get** here.

When we report a question we normally use the verb 'ask'. As with the verb 'to tell', the verb 'to ask' is normally followed by an object pronoun, though it is possible to omit it.

## Reporting Orders and Requests

When you give someone an order, you use the imperative form, which means using just the verb without a subject. For example:

- "**Call** me back later."
- "**Have** a seat."
- "**Don't do** that!"

To report an order we use 'tell' and the infinitive of the verb. For example:

- You told me **to call** you back later.
- He told me **to have** a seat.
- She told us **not to do** that.

When you make a request, you normally use words like 'can', 'could', or 'will'.

For example:

- "Could you call me back later?"
- "Will you have a seat?"
- "Can you not do that please?"

To report a request, we use the verb 'to ask' and the infinitive form of the verb.

For example:

- You asked me **to call** you back later.
- He asked me **to have** a seat.
- She asked us **not to do** that.

Now you've seen how we use **direct and indirect speech**, practice using them yourself. An excellent and easy way to see how they are used is by reading a short story in English or a news article online, because stories and articles contain many examples of reported speech.

**EXERCISE 3.** Change the direct speech into reported speech. Use 'she said' at the beginning of each answer. It's the same day, so you don't need to change the time expressions.

- 1) "He works in a bank."
- 2) "We went out last night."
- 3) "I'm coming!"

**Answers :**

She said that he worked in a bank.

He/She said that they had gone out last night.

He/She said that he/she was coming.