

# Syntactic category distribution tests

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## 1 Noun distribution tests

1. Can follow a determiner (like *the, a, this, those, my, etc.*)
  - e.g., *the scavenger helped the droid*
2. Can be negated with *no*
  - e.g., *the scavenger helped no droid*
3. Can be modified by adjectives
  - e.g., *the scavenger helped the orange droid*
4. Cannot take direct object
  - e.g., *\*the scavenger helped the droid the antenna*
  - Note: \* indicates a sentence that a native speaker does NOT ever say. It breaks a descriptive rule.
5. Can often be pluralized
  - e.g., *the scavenger helped the droids*
  - Note: some nouns in English cannot be pluralized (e.g., *\*furnitures, \*attentions*), and some nouns have irregular plural forms (e.g., *sheep, geese*)

## 2 Verb distribution tests

1. Can combine with an auxiliary (like *might*, *will*, *can*, *have*)

- *the droid will zap the thief*

2. Takes -s in 3rd person singular present tense

- *the droid zaps the thief*

3. Negated with *not*

- *the droid will not zap the thief*

4. Takes -ed in past tense, -ing in progressive aspect

- *the droid zapped the thief*
- *the droid is zapping the thief*
- Note: be careful with some adjectives that end in -ed and -ing (e.g., *very exciting*, *very tired*)

5. Can take direct object

- *the droid will zap the thief*
- *the droid will zap them*
- Note: if you're not sure what an object is, try putting the pronoun *it* or *them* right after the word you're testing.

### 3 Adjective distribution tests

1. Can come between determiner and noun

- *the wise creature lives on a swampy planet*

2. Can follow *seem* (and *become*) on its own

- *The creature that lives on the swampy planet seems wise.*
- *The creature that lives on the swampy planet became wise.*

3. Cannot take a direct object

- *\*The wise the creature lives on a swampy planet*
- *\*The wise it lives on a swampy planet*

4. Can often be used in the comparative/superlative

- *The wiser creature lives on a swampy planet*
- *The wisest creature lives on a swampy planet*
- Note: some adjectives take *more/most* in the comparative/superlative (e.g., *more suitable, most suitable*)
- Note; some adjectives cannot be used in the comparative/superlative (e.g., *\*more/most dead, \*more/most non-Methodist*)

5. Can often be modified with *very*

- *The very wise creature lives on a swampy planet*
- Note: some adjectives cannot be modified by *very* (e.g., *\*very dead, \*very non-Methodist*)

## 4 Adverb distribution tests

1. Cannot follow *seem* on its own

- *\*the young leader that threw an angry fit seems occasionally*

2. Can often appear between subject and auxiliary

- *the young leader occasionally would throw an angry fit*
- Note: some adverbs are slightly more awkward in this position (*?he angrily would throw a fit*)

3. Does not take a direct object

- *\*the young leader would occasionally the lightsaber throw an angry fit*
- *\*the young leader would occasionally them throw an angry fit*

4. Often contains *-ly* suffix

- *the young leader would occasionally throw an angry fit*
- Note: be careful with some adjectives that end in *-ly*! (e.g., *a very lovely lightsaber*)

## 5 Preposition distribution tests

### 1. Modified by *right*

- *The pilot made sure that the guards were dead and went right inside*
- Note: some prepositions cannot be modified by *right* (e.g., *\*right without it*, *\*right except it*)

### 2. Cannot follow *become/seem* on its own

- *\*The pilot that made sure that the guards were dead became inside*
- *\*The pilot that made sure that the guards were dead seems inside*

### 3. Can take a direct object

- *The pilot made sure that the guards were dead and went inside the base*
- *The pilot made sure that the guards were dead and went inside it*