



## Phrases

Phrases are comprised of one or more words that form a meaningful grammatical unit. They are one of the most important elements of English grammar.

### What Are Phrases?

A **phrase** consists of one or more words that form a single grammatical unit and act as a unified **part of speech**. If you think of a sentence as a building, phrases are like bricks of that building. They are typically part of a **clause** or a sentence. Phrases can consist of a one or more words.

## Phrases: Structure

A phrase consists of:

1. One **head** (also called **Headword**)
2. Two or more **modifiers**

The **head** of a phrase is the most important word in the phrase and determines its **grammatical function**. For example, a phrase whose head is a noun is called a noun phrase, and a phrase whose head is a verb is called a verb phrase.

The remaining words in a phrase are called the **dependents** of the head. These words **modify** or **complement** the head and provide additional information that helps to clarify the meaning of the phrase. The dependents can include other nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, or other types of words that modify or describe the head.

The **head** is the **essential** part of a phrase, while not every phrase has **dependents**. In other words, some phrases may consist of only a head, without any dependents.

## Phrase vs. Clause

A phrase *does not* contain a **subject** and **verb** and cannot convey a complete idea or meaning. A **clause**, however, *does* contain a subject and verb, and it can convey a complete idea.

Phrases can never stand on their own as sentences, while clauses can be complete sentences (independent clauses) or part of a sentence (dependent clauses). Let's take a look at some examples:

shouts very loudly → **phrase**

That man shouts very loudly → **clause**

\* This example has a subject (the man) and a verb (shouts) and conveys a complete idea.

Clauses contain phrases, and sentences contain clauses.

## Phrases: Types

There are five main types of phrases in English:

1. Noun Phrase (NP) → the cute hamster
2. Verb Phrase (VP) → play piano
3. Prepositional Phrase (PP) → under the table
4. Adjective Phrase (AP) → very delighted
5. Adverb Phrase (AdvP) → too carefully

### Other Types of Phrases

There are other types of phrases apart from the main five types:

- Gerund Phrase
- Infinitive Phrase
- Participial Phrase
- Appositive Phrase

## Noun Phrase

A noun phrase (NP) is a group of words that includes a noun and any **modifiers** that describe or qualify the noun. Noun phrases can be **simple**, consisting of just a noun, or **complex**, consisting of a noun plus one or more modifiers, such as pronouns, adjectives, or prepositional phrases.

Noun phrases can function in various grammatical roles in a sentence, such as the subject, object, or the complement

### Tip

Usually, a noun phrase is just a **noun** or a **pronoun**.



a **boy** with a blue hat

Using a noun phrase

a **boy** with a blue hat

the **girl** standing over there

the **house** that we live in

## Verb Phrase

A verb phrase includes a **main verb** (the head) and any **modal** and/or **auxiliary verbs** that accompany it (the dependents). The main verb is the **central element** of the phrase and expresses the main action or state of being in the sentence.

### Tip

The main verb always appears at the end of the verb phrase.

## Types of Verb Phrases

In English grammar, a verb phrase can be categorized based on the type of verb it contains:

1. **Finite** Verb Phrases
2. **Non-finite** Verb Phrases

### Finite Verb Phrases

A finite verb phrase contains a **finite** verb, which is a verb that indicates tense, person, and number, and it is in the **present** or **past** tense.

I **work** in a bank.

I **went** to school.

### Non-finite Verb Phrases

A non-finite verb phrase contains a **non-finite verb**, which is a verb that does not indicate tense, person, or number. Non-finite verb phrases cannot stand alone as a sentence, but they can function as a **subject or object** in a sentence or as a **modifier** of a noun or verb. Non-finite verb phrases come in three forms: infinitives, gerunds, and participles.

I enjoy **dancing** to my favorite songs.

\* 'Dancing to my favorite songs' is a gerund non-finite verb phrase that functions as the direct object of the verb "enjoy."

**To swim** in the ocean is my favorite summer activity.

\* 'To swim in the ocean' is an infinitive non-finite verb phrase that functions as the subject of the sentence.

She **might have been waiting** for him.

\* 'Might have been waiting' is a participle non-finite verb phrase.

### Prepositional Phrases

A prepositional phrase is a group of words that includes a preposition, its object, and any **modifiers** of that object. The preposition indicates the relationship between the object and the rest of the sentence. The object of the preposition can be a noun, pronoun, or gerund, and it receives the action of the preposition.

I lived **near** the Bakersfield's hospital.

The man **with** the hat is my uncle.

\* In the prepositional phrase 'with the hat', 'with' is the preposition, 'hat' is the object of preposition' and 'the' is the article modifying it.

### Adjective Phrase

An adjective phrase is a group of words that includes an adjective and any **modifiers** that describe or qualify a noun or pronoun. Adjective phrases can be **simple**, consisting of just an adjective, or complex, consisting of an adjective plus one or more modifiers, such as adverbs or prepositional phrases. Take a look at the examples:

You have **gorgeous** eyes.

\* A simple adjective phrase

The statues masterfully **carved** by artists are in the museum.

\* A complex adjective phrase consisting of an adjective (carved) and its modifiers: an adverb (masterfully), and a prepositional phrase (by artists).

### Adverb Phrases

An adverb phrase is a group of words that includes an **adverb** as its head, along with any modifiers of that adverb. Adverb phrases can function as adverbs, modifying verbs, or adjectives in a sentence.

I will come **as soon as possible**.

**Luckily for me**, the bus arrived just in time.

### Tip!

We have two types of phrases:

- Grammatical phrases: function as a unit within a sentence and serve grammatical purposes
- Common phrases: phrases or idioms frequently used in everyday language which have a specific (sometimes metaphorical or figurative) meaning

## Gerund Phrases

Gerund phrases are groups of words that include a **gerund**, which is a verb form ending in -ing that functions as a **noun**. Gerund phrases also include any **modifiers** of the gerund, such as adverbs, prepositional phrases, or adjectives.

Gerund phrases can also function as objects of prepositions, direct objects, or subject complements, just like any other noun.

**Eating healthy food** is essential for your body.

\* The gerund phrase 'eating healthy food' is the subject of the sentence.

We are looking forward to **camping in the wilderness**.

\* The gerund phrase 'camping in the wilderness' is object of preposition.

## Infinitive Phrases

Infinitive phrases are groups of words that include an **infinitive**, which is the base form of a verb preceded by "to." An infinitive phrase may also include any modifiers of the infinitive, such as adverbs, adjectives, or noun phrases. Infinitive phrases can function as direct objects, adjectives, or adverbs in a sentence. Pay attention to the examples:

I wish **to make a complaint**.

\* The infinitive phrase functions as the direct object of the verb.

He works hard **to support his family**.

\* The infinitive phrase 'to support his family' functions as an adverb modifying the verb 'works'.

## Participle Phrases

Participle phrases are groups of words that function as **adjectives** in a sentence. They include a **participle**, which is a verb form that can function as an adjective, and any **modifiers** of the participle. For example:

The continually crying baby was hungry.

The sadly devastated man killed himself.

## Appositive Phrases

Appositive phrases are groups of words that include an [appositive](#) and the **noun** or **pronoun** it renames or describes. Appositive phrases can also function as **explanatory phrases**, providing additional information about a noun or pronoun. Pay attention to the examples:

Mary Lou, my friend, wears glasses.

Center City, a neighborhood in Philadelphia, is a very lovely neighborhood.

## Review

In this article, we have learned about phrases. They are words that are put together with no subjects and verbs. In this case, they cannot have a complete meaning. There are some main phrases and some other ones as follows:

|              |                |                |                         |                     |                  |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| main phrases | 1. noun phrase | 2. verb phrase | 3. prepositional phrase | 4. adjective phrase | 5. adverb phrase |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------------|---------------------|------------------|

|                        |                       |                          |                      |
|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| other types of phrases | 1. conjunctive phrase | 3. interjectional phrase | 5. gerund phrase     |
|                        | 2. participial phrase | 4. infinitive phrase     | 6. appositive phrase |

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## Recommend :



### Noun Phrases

When a group of nouns come together, they form a noun phrase. To know what is a noun phrase and how short or how long a noun phrase can be, start here!

