

How to Speak and Write Correctly

By Joseph Devlin

Presented by

AUTHORAMA

Public Domain Books

Chapter II

ESSENTIALS OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR

Divisions of Grammar—Definitions—Etymology.

In order to speak and write the English language correctly, it is imperative that the fundamental principles of the Grammar be mastered, for no matter how much we may read of the best authors, no matter how much we may associate with and imitate the best speakers, if we do not know the underlying principles of the correct formation of sentences and the relation of words to one another, we will be to a great extent like the parrot, that merely repeats what it hears without understanding the import of what is said. Of course the parrot, being a creature without reason, cannot comprehend; it can simply repeat what is said to it, and as it utters phrases and sentences of profanity with as much facility as those of virtue, so by like analogy, when we do not understand the grammar of the language, we may be making egregious blunders while thinking we are speaking with the utmost accuracy.

Divisions of Grammar

There are four great divisions of Grammar, viz.:

Orthography, Etymology, Syntax, and Prosody.

Orthography treats of letters and the mode of combining them into words.

Etymology treats of the various classes of words and the changes they undergo.

Syntax treats of the connection and arrangement of words in sentences.

Prosody treats of the manner of speaking and reading and the different kinds of verse.

The three first mentioned concern us most.

Letters

A *letter* is a mark or character used to represent an articulate sound. Letters are divided into *vowels* and *consonants*. A vowel is a letter which makes a distinct sound by itself. Consonants cannot be sounded without the aid of vowels. The vowels are *a, e, i, o, u*, and sometimes *w* and *y* when they do not begin a word or syllable.

Syllables and Words

A syllable is a distinct sound produced by a single effort of [Transcriber's note: 1-2 words illegible] shall, pig, dog. In every syllable there must be at least one vowel.

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

Many rules are given for the dividing of words into syllables, but the best is to follow as closely as possible the divisions made by the organs of speech in properly pronouncing them.

The Parts of Speech

ARTICLE

An *Article* is a word placed before a noun to show whether the noun is used in a particular or general sense.

There are two articles, *a* or *an* and *the*. *A* or *an* is called the indefinite article because it does not point put any particular person or thing but indicates the noun in its widest sense; thus, *a* man means any man whatsoever of the species or race.

The is called the definite article because it points out some particular person or thing; thus, *the* man means some particular individual.

Noun

A *noun* is the name of any person, place or thing as *John*, *London*, *book*. Nouns are proper and common.

Proper nouns are names applied to *particular* persons or places.

Common nouns are names applied to a whole kind or species.

Nouns are inflected by *number*, *gender* and *case*.

Number is that inflection of the noun by which we indicate whether it represents one or more than one.

Gender is that inflection by which we signify whether the noun is the name of a male, a female, of an inanimate object or something which has no distinction of sex.

Case is that inflection of the noun which denotes the state of the person, place or thing represented, as the subject of an affirmation or question, the owner or possessor of something mentioned, or the object of an action or of a relation.

Thus in the example, "John tore the leaves of Sarah's book," the distinction between *book* which represents only one object and *leaves* which represent two or more objects of the same kind is called *Number*; the distinction of sex between *John*, a male, and *Sarah*, a female, and *book* and *leaves*, things which are inanimate and neither male nor female, is called *Gender*; and the distinction of state between *John*, the person who tore the book, and the subject of the affirmation, *Mary*, the owner of the book, *leaves* the objects torn, and *book* the object related to leaves, as the whole of which they were a part, is called *Case*.

Adjective

An *adjective* is a word which qualifies a noun, that is, shows or points out some distinguishing mark or feature of the noun; as, A *black* dog.

Adjectives have three forms called degrees of comparison, the *positive*, the *comparative* and the *superlative*.

The *positive* is the simple form of the adjective without expressing increase or diminution of the original quality: *nice*.

The *comparative* is that form of the adjective which expresses increase or diminution of the quality: *nicer*.

The *superlative* is that form which expresses the greatest increase or diminution of the quality: *nicest*.

or An adjective is in the positive form when it does not express comparison; as, "A *rich* man."

An adjective is in the comparative form when it expresses comparison between two or between one and a number taken collectively, as, "John is *richer* than James"; "he is *richer* than all the men in Boston."

An adjective is in the superlative form when it expresses a comparison between one and a number of individuals taken separately; as, "John is the *richest* man in Boston."

Adjectives expressive of properties or circumstances which cannot be increased have only the positive form; as, A *circular* road; the *chief*end; an *extreme* measure.

Adjectives are compared in two ways, either by adding *er* to the positive to form the comparative and *est* to the positive to form the superlative, or by prefixing *more* to the positive for the comparative and *most* to the positive for the superlative; as, *handsome*, *handsomer*, *handsomest* or *handsome*, *more handsome*, *most handsome*.

Adjectives of two or more syllables are generally compared by prefixing more and most.

Many adjectives are irregular in comparison; as, Bad, worse, worst; Good, better, best.

Pronoun

A *pronoun* is a word used in place of a noun; as, "John gave his pen to James and *he* lent it to Jane to write *her* copy with *it*." Without the pronouns we would have to write this sentence,— "John gave John's pen to James and James lent the pen to Jane to write Jane's copy with the pen."

There are three kinds of pronouns—Personal, Relative and Adjective Pronouns.

Personal Pronouns are so called because they are used instead of the names of persons, places and things. The Personal Pronouns are *I*, *Thou*, *He*, *She*, and *It*, with their plurals, *We*, *Ye* or *You* and *They*.

I is the pronoun of the first person because it represents the person speaking.

Thou is the pronoun of the second person because it represents the person spoken to.

He, *She*, *It* are the pronouns of the third person because they represent the persons or things of whom we are speaking.

Like nouns, the Personal Pronouns have number, gender and case. The gender of the first and second person is obvious, as they represent the person or persons speaking and those who are addressed. The personal pronouns are thus declined:

First Person.		
M. or F.		
	Sing.	Plural.
N.	I	We
P.	Mine	Ours
O.	Me	Us
Second Person.		
M. or F.		
	Sing.	Plural.
N.	Thou	You
P.	Thine	Yours
O.	Thee	You
Third Person.		
M.		
	Sing.	Plural.
N.	He	They
P.	His	Theirs
O.	Him	Them

	Third Person. F.	
	Sing.	Plural.
N.	She	They
P.	Hers	Theirs
O.	Her	Them
	Third Person. Neuter.	
	Sing.	Plural.
N.	It	They
P.	Its	Theirs
O.	It	Them

N. B.—In colloquial language and ordinary writing Thou, Thine and Thee are seldom used, except by the Society of Friends. The Plural form You is used for both the nominative and objective singular in the second person and Yours is generally used in the possessive in place of Thine.

The *Relative* Pronouns are so called because they relate to some word or phrase going before; as, “The boy *who* told the truth;” “He has done well, *which* gives me great pleasure.”

Here *who* and *which* are not only used in place of other words, but *who* refers immediately to boy, and *which* to the circumstance of his having done well.

The word or clause to which a relative pronoun refers is called the *Antecedent*.

The Relative Pronouns are *who*, *which*, *that* and *what*.

Who is applied to persons only; as, “The man *who* was here.”

Which is applied to the lower animals and things without life; as, “The horse *which* I sold.” “The hat *which* I bought.”

That is applied to both persons and things; as, “The friend *that* helps.” “The bird *that* sings.” “The knife *that* cuts.”

What is a compound relative, including both the antecedent and the relative and is equivalent to *that which*; as, “I did what he desired,” i. e. “I did *that which* he desired.”

Relative pronouns have the singular and plural alike.

Who is either masculine or feminine; *which* and *that* are masculine, feminine or neuter; *what* as a relative pronoun is always neuter.

That and *what* are not inflected.

Who and *which* are thus declined:

Sing. and Plural Sing. and Plural

N.	Who	N.	Which
P.	Whose	P.	Whose
O.	Whom	O.	Which

Who, *which* and *what* when used to ask questions are called *Interrogative Pronouns*.

Adjective Pronouns partake of the nature of adjectives and pronouns and are subdivided as follows:

Demonstrative Adjective Pronouns which directly point out the person or object. They are *this*, *that* with their plurals *these*, *those*, and *yon*, *same* and *selfsame*.

Distributive Adjective Pronouns used distributively. They are *each, every, either, neither*.

Indefinite Adjective Pronouns used more or less indefinitely. They are *any, all, few, some, several, one, other, another, none*.

Possessive Adjective Pronouns denoting possession. They are *my, thy, his, her, its, our, your, their*.

N. B.—(The possessive adjective pronouns differ from the possessive case of the personal pronouns in that the latter can stand *alone* while the former *cannot*. “Who owns that book?” “It is *mine*.” You cannot say “it is *my*,”—the word book must be repeated.)

The Verb

A *verb* is a word which implies action or the doing of something, or it may be defined as a word which affirms, commands or asks a question.

Thus, the words *John the table*, contain no assertion, but when the word *strikes* is introduced, something is affirmed, hence the word *strikes* is a verb and gives completeness and meaning to the group.

The simple form of the verb without inflection is called the *root* of the verb; *e. g. love* is the root of the verb,—“To Love.”

Verbs are *regular* or *irregular, transitive* or *intransitive*.

A verb is said to be *regular* when it forms the past tense by adding *ed* to the present or *d* if the verb ends in *e*. When its past tense does not end in *ed* it is said to be *irregular*.

A *transitive* verb is one the action of which passes over to or affects some object; as “I struck the table.” Here the action of striking affected the object table, hence struck is a transitive verb.

An *intransitive* verb is one in which the action remains with the subject; as “*I walk*,” “*I sit*,” “*I run*.” Many intransitive verbs, however, can be used transitively; thus, “*I walk the horse*,” *walk* is here transitive.

Verbs are inflected by *number, person, tense* and *mood*.

Number and *person* as applied to the verb really belong to the subject; they are used with the verb to denote whether the assertion is made regarding one or more than one and whether it is made in reference to the person speaking, the person spoken to or the person or thing spoken about.

Tense

In their tenses verbs follow the divisions of time. They have *present tense, past tense* and *future tense* with their variations to express the exact time of action as to an event happening, having happened or yet to happen.

Mood

There are four simple moods,—the *Infinitive*, the *Indicative*, the *Imperative* and the *Subjunctive*.

The Mood of a verb denotes the mode or manner in which it is used. Thus if it is used in its widest sense without reference to person or number, time or place, it is in the *Infinitive* Mood; as “To run.” Here we are not told who does the running, when it is done, where it is done or anything about it.

When a verb is used to indicate or declare or ask a simple question or make any direct statement, it is in the *Indicative* Mood. “The boy loves his book.” Here a direct statement is made concerning the boy. “Have you a pin?” Here a simple question is asked which calls for an answer.

When the verb is used to express a command or entreaty it is in the *Imperative* Mood as, “Go away.” “Give me a penny.”

When the verb is used to express doubt, supposition or uncertainty or when some future action depends upon a contingency, it is in the subjunctive mood; as, "If I come, he shall remain."

Many grammarians include a fifth mood called the *potential* to express *power, possibility, liberty, necessity, will* or *duty*. It is formed by means of the auxiliaries *may, can, ought* and *must*, but in all cases it can be resolved into the indicative or subjunctive. Thus, in "I may write if I choose," "may write" is by some classified as in the potential mood, but in reality the phrase *I may write* is an indicative one while the second clause, *if I choose*, is the expression of a condition upon which, not my liberty to write, depends, but my actual writing.

Verbs have two participles, the present or imperfect, sometimes called the *active* ending in *ing* and the past or perfect, often called the *passive*, ending in *ed* or *d*.

The *infinitive* expresses the sense of the verb in a substantive form, the participles in an adjective form; as "To rise early is healthful." "An early rising man." "The newly risen sun."

The participle in *ing* is frequently used as a substantive and consequently is equivalent to an infinitive; thus, "To rise early is healthful" and "Rising early is healthful" are the same.

The principal parts of a verb are the Present Indicative, Past Indicative and Past Participle; as:

Love Loved Loved

Sometimes one or more of these parts are wanting, and then the verb is said to be defective.

Present Past Passive Participle

Can	Could	(Wanting)
May	Might	"
Shall	Should	"
Will	Would	"
Ought	Ought	"

Verbs may also be divided into *principal* and *auxiliary*. A *principal* verb is that without which a sentence or clause can contain no assertion or affirmation. An *auxiliary* is a verb joined to the root or participles of a principal verb to express time and manner with greater precision than can be done by the tenses and moods in their simple form. Thus, the sentence, "I am writing an exercise; when I shall have finished it I shall read it to the class." has no meaning without the principal verbs *writing, finished read*; but the meaning is rendered more definite, especially with regard to time, by the auxiliary verbs *am, have, shall*.

There are nine auxiliary or helping verbs, viz., *Be, have, do, shall, will, may, can, ought*, and *must*. They are called helping verbs, because it is by their aid the compound tenses are formed.

To Be

The verb *To Be* is the most important of the auxiliary verbs. It has eleven parts, viz., *am, art, is, are, was, wast, were, wert; be, being* and *been*.

Voice

The *active voice* is that form of the verb which shows the Subject not being acted upon but acting; as, "The cat catches mice." "Charity covers a multitude of sins."

The *passive voice*: When the action signified by a transitive verb is thrown back upon the agent, that is to say, when the subject of the verb denotes the recipient of the action, the verb is said to be in the passive voice. "John was loved by his neighbors." Here John the subject is also the object affected by the loving, the action of the verb is thrown back on him, hence the compound verb *was loved* is said to be in the *passive voice*. The passive voice is formed by putting the perfect participle of any *transitive* verb with any of the eleven parts of the verb *To Be*.

Conjugation

The *conjugation* of a verb is its orderly arrangement in voices, moods, tenses, persons and numbers.

Here is the complete conjugation of the verb “Love”–Active Voice.

Principal Parts

Present	Past	Past Participle
Love	Loved	Loved

Infinitive Mood

To Love

Indicative Mood PRESENT TENSE

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	I love	We love
2nd person	You love	You love
3rd person	He loves	They love

Past Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	I loved	We loved
2nd person	You loved	You loved
3rd person	He loved	They loved

Future Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	I shall love	They will love
2nd person	You will love	You will love
3rd person	He will love	We shall love

Present Perfect Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	I have loved	We have loved
2nd person	You have loved	You have loved
3rd person	He has loved	They have loved

Past Perfect Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	I had loved	We had loved
2nd person	You had loved	You had loved
3rd person	He had loved	They had loved

Future Perfect Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	I shall have loved	We shall have loved
2nd person	You will have loved	You will have loved
3rd person	He will have loved	They will have loved

Imperative Mood (PRESENT TENSE ONLY)

	Sing.	Plural
2nd person	Love (you)	Love (you)

Subjunctive Mood
PRESENT TENSE

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	If I love	If we love
2nd person	If you love	If you love
3rd person	If he love	If they love

Past Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	If I loved	If we loved
2nd person	If you loved	If you loved
3rd person	If he loved	If they loved

Present Perfect Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	If I have loved	If we have loved
2nd person	If you have loved	If you have loved
3rd person	If he has loved	If they have loved

Past Perfect Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	If I had loved	If we had loved
2nd person	If you had loved	If you had loved
3rd person	If he had loved	If they had loved

Infinitives

Present	Perfect
To love	To have loved

Participles

Present	Past	Perfect
Loving	Loved	Having loved

CONJUGATION OF "To Love"
Passive Voice
Indicative Mood

Present Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	I am loved	We are loved
2nd person	You are loved	You are loved
3rd person	He is loved	They are loved

Past Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	I was loved	We were loved
2nd person	You were loved	You were loved
3rd person	He was loved	They were loved

Future Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	I shall be loved	We shall be loved
2nd person	You will be loved	You will be loved
3rd person	He will be loved	They will be loved

Present Perfect Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	I have been loved	We have been loved
2nd person	You have been loved	You have been loved
3rd person	He has been loved	They have been loved

Past Perfect Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	I had been loved	We had been loved
2nd person	You had been loved	You had been loved
3rd person	He had been loved	They had been loved

Future Perfect Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	I shall have been loved	We shall have been loved
2nd person	You will have been loved	You will have been loved
3rd person	He will have been loved	They will have been loved

Imperative Mood (PRESENT TENSE ONLY)

	Sing.	Plural
2nd person	Be (you) loved	Be (you) loved

Subjunctive Mood PRESENT TENSE

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	If I be loved	If we be loved
2nd person	If you be loved	If you be loved
3rd person	If he be loved	If they be loved

Past Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	If I were loved	If they were loved
2nd person	If you were loved	If you were loved
3rd person	If he were loved	If we were loved

Present Perfect Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	If I have been loved	If we have been loved
2nd person	If you have been loved	If you have been loved
3rd person	If he has been loved	If they have been loved

Past Perfect Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	If I had been loved	If we had been loved
2nd person	If you had been loved	If you had been loved
3rd person	If he had been loved	If they had been loved

Infinitives

Present
To be loved

Perfect
To have been loved

Participles

Present
Being loved

Past
Been loved

Perfect
Having been loved

(N. B.—Note that the plural form of the personal pronoun, *you*, is used in the second person singular throughout. The old form *thou*, except in the conjugation of the verb “To Be,” may be said to be obsolete. In the third person singular he is representative of the three personal pronouns of the third person, *He*, *She* and *It*.)

Adverb

An *adverb* is a word which modifies a verb, an adjective or another adverb. Thus, in the example—“He writes *well*,” the adverb shows the manner in which the writing is performed; in the examples—“He is remarkably diligent” and “He works very faithfully,” the adverbs modify the adjective *diligent* and the other adverb *faithfully* by expressing the degree of diligence and faithfulness.

Adverbs are chiefly used to express in one word what would otherwise require two or more words; thus, *There* signifies in that place; *whence*, from what place; *usefully*, in a useful manner.

Adverbs, like adjectives, are sometimes varied in their terminations to express comparison and different degrees of quality.

Some adverbs form the comparative and superlative by adding *er* and *est*; as, *soon*, *sooner*, *soonest*.

Adverbs which end in *ly* are compared by prefixing *more* and *most*; as, *nobly*, *more nobly*, *most nobly*.

A few adverbs are irregular in the formation of the comparative and superlative; as, *well*, *better*, *best*.

Preposition

A *preposition* connects words, clauses, and sentences together and shows the relation between them. “My hand is on the table” shows relation between hand and table.

Prepositions are so called because they are generally placed *before* the words whose connection or relation with other words they point out.

Conjunction

A *conjunction* joins words, clauses and sentences; as “John *and* James.” “My father and mother have come, *but* I have not seen them.”

The conjunctions in most general use are *and*, *also*; *either*, *or*; *neither*, *nor*; *though*, *yet*; *but*, *however*; *for*, *that*; *because*, *since*; *therefore*, *wherefore*, *then*; *if*, *unless*, *lest*.

Interjection

An *interjection* is a word used to express some sudden emotion of the mind. Thus in the examples,—“Ah! there he comes; alas! what shall I do?” *ah*, expresses surprise, and *alas*, distress.

Nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs become interjections when they are uttered as exclamations, as, *nonsense!* *strange!* *hail!* *away!* etc.

We have now enumerated the parts of speech and as briefly as possible stated the functions of each. As they all belong to the same family they are related to one another but some are in closer affinity than others. To point out

the exact relationship and the dependency of one word on another is called *parsing* and in order that every etymological connection may be distinctly understood a brief resume of the foregoing essentials is here given:

The signification of the noun is *limited* to *one*, but to any *one* of the kind, by the *indefinite* article, and to some *particular* one, or some particular *number*, by the *definite* article.

Nouns, in one form, represent *one* of a kind, and in another, *any number* more than one; they are the *names of males*, or *females*, or of objects which are neither male nor female; and they represent the *subject* of an affirmation, a command or a question,—the *owner* or *possessor* of a thing,—or the *object* of an action, or of a relation expressed by a preposition.

Adjectives express the *qualities* which distinguish one person or thing from another; in one form they express quality *without comparison*; in another, they express comparison *between two*, or between *one* and a number taken collectively,—and in a third they express comparison between *one* and a *number* of others taken separately.

Pronouns are used in place of nouns; one class of them is used merely as the *substitutes of names*; the pronouns of another class have a peculiar *reference* to some *preceding words* in the *sentence*, of which they are the substitutes,—and those of a third class refer adjectively to the persons or things they represent. Some pronouns are used for both the *name* and the *substitute*; and several are frequently employed in *asking questions*.

Affirmations and *commands* are expressed by the verb; and different inflections of the verb express *number*, *person*, *time* and *manner*. With regard to *time*, an affirmation may be *present* or *past* or *future*; with regard to manner, an affirmation may be *positive* or *conditional*, it being doubtful whether the condition is fulfilled or not, or it being implied that it is not fulfilled;—the verb may express *command* or *entreaty*; or the sense of the verb may be expressed *without affirming* or *commanding*. The verb also expresses that an action or state *is* or *was* going on, by a form which is also used sometimes as a noun, and sometimes to qualify nouns.

Affirmations are *modified by adverbs*, some of which can be inflected to express different degrees of modification.

Words are joined together by *conjunctions*; and the various *relations* which one thing bears to another are expressed by '*prepositions*'. *Sudden emotions* of the mind, and *exclamations* are expressed by *interjections*.

Some words according to meaning belong sometimes to one part of speech, sometimes to another. Thus, in "After a storm comes a *calm*," *calm* is a noun; in "It is a *calm* evening," *calm* is an adjective; and in "*Calm* your fears," *calm* is a verb.

The following sentence containing all the parts of speech is parsed etymologically:

"*I now see the old man coming, but, alas, he has walked with much difficulty.*" *I*, a personal pronoun, first person singular, masculine or feminine gender, nominative case, subject of the verb *see*.

now, an adverb of time modifying the verb *see*.

see, an irregular, transitive verb, indicative mood, present tense, first person singular to agree with its nominative or subject *I*.

the, the definite article particularizing the noun man.

old, an adjective, positive degree, qualifying the noun man.

man, a common noun, 3rd person singular, masculine gender, objective case governed by the transitive verb *see*.

coming, the present or imperfect participle of the verb "to come" referring to the noun man.

but, a conjunction.

alas, an interjection, expressing pity or sorrow.

he, a personal pronoun, 3rd person singular, masculine gender, nominative case, subject of verb has walked.

has walked, a regular, intransitive verb, indicative mood, perfect tense, 3rd person singular to agree with its nominative or subject *he*.

with, a preposition, governing the noun difficulty.

much, an adjective, positive degree, qualifying the noun difficulty.

difficulty, a common noun, 3rd person singular, neuter gender, objective case governed by the preposition *with*.

N.B.—Much is generally an adverb. As an adjective it is thus compared:

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
much	more	most