

Glossary

active

In an active clause or active sentence, the grammatical subject is the person or thing that performs the action given in the verb (e.g. Geoff wrote the book). Compare **PASSIVE**.

adjective

A word that describes a noun (e.g. an *interesting* book) or a pronoun (e.g. a *red* one). **Gradable** adjectives can be used to say that a person or thing has more or less of this quality (e.g. She's very *happy*), while **non-gradable** adjectives can't (e.g. It's *impossible*. We can't say 'It's very impossible'). **Classifying** adjectives say that something is of a particular type (e.g. *atomic*, *initial*). **Emphasising** adjectives stress how strongly we feel about something (e.g. *complete* nonsense). **Qualitative** adjectives say what qualities a person or thing has (e.g. *big*, *rich*). See also **grading ADVERBS** and **non-grading ADVERBS**.

adjective phrase

A group of words where the main word is an adjective (e.g. it's *extremely important*; it wasn't *strong enough*).

adverb

A word that describes or gives more information (when, how, where, etc.) about a verb (e.g. He ran *quickly*), adjective (e.g. an *extremely* expensive car), another adverb (e.g. She did it *very* easily), or phrase (e.g. They live *just* across the road.). Types of adverb include: **adverbs of manner** (e.g. *slowly*, *violently*) which we use to say how something is done; **connecting adverbs** (e.g. *consequently*, *similarly*); **time adverbs** (e.g. *tomorrow*, *already*); **place adverbs** (e.g. *upstairs*, *outside*); **direction adverbs** (e.g. *backwards*, *through*); **comment adverbs** (e.g. *apparently*, *personally*) which we use to make a comment on what we are saying; **viewpoint adverbs** (e.g. *financially*, *politically*) which we use to make clear from what point of view we are speaking; **adverbs of indefinite frequency** (e.g. *always*, *never*); **degree adverbs** (e.g. *completely*, *quite*) which give information about the extent or degree of something; **focus adverbs** (e.g. *just*, *even*) which we use to focus on a particular word or phrase. **Grading adverbs** (e.g. *extremely*, *very*) are used with **gradable ADJECTIVES**. **Non-grading adverbs** (e.g. *completely*, *mainly*) are used with **non-gradable ADJECTIVES**.

adverbial

A word or group of words that says when, how, where, etc. something happens. They may consist of an **ADVERB** (e.g. *quietly*), a **PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE** (e.g. *through the door*), a **NOUN PHRASE** (e.g. *next week*), or an **ADVERBIAL CLAUSE** (e.g. *after she left*).

adverbial clause

A type of **subordinate CLAUSE** that says when, how, where, etc. something happens (e.g. *Before I went to school this morning*, I did my homework).

affirmative sentence

A statement (i.e. not a question) that is positive, not negative.

agent

The person or thing that performs the action described in a verb. Usually it is the subject in an active clause and comes after 'by...' in a passive clause.

article

The word *the* is the **definite article** and the word *a* (*an* before vowels) is the **indefinite article**. When there is no article before a noun we refer to this as the **zero article**.

auxiliary verbs

The verbs *be*, *have* and *do* when they are used with a main verb to form questions, negatives, tenses, passive forms, etc. **MODAL VERBS** are also auxiliary verbs.

clause

A group of words that contains a verb. A clause may be a complete sentence or a part of a sentence. A main clause can exist as a separate sentence, while a subordinate clause cannot (e.g. *If I see Tony at work* [= subordinate clause], *I'll invite him over this evening* [= main clause]). Types of clause include: **since-clause** (e.g. I haven't seen him *since we left school*); **that-clause** (e.g. She said *that she was thirsty*); **wh-clause** (e.g. I asked Sandra *where she was going*); **it-clause** (e.g. *It's not surprising that you're feeling cold*); **what-clause** (e.g. *What I want to do* is buy a better computer); **if-clause** (e.g. *If you leave now*, you'll be home by 10.00); **whether-clause** (e.g. You have to take the exam *whether you want to or not*); **to-infinitive clause** (e.g. *To become a doctor* takes years of study); **present participle (-ing) clause** (e.g. *Feeling hungry*, I went into the kitchen); **past participle (-ed) clause** (e.g. *Built during the 1950s*, the building is now in need of repair); **being + past participle (-ed) clause** (e.g. *Being unemployed*, Tom had a lot of time on his hands); **having + past participle (-ed) clause** (e.g. *Having seen the doctor*, I went straight home). See also **CONDITIONAL CLAUSE**, **NON-FINITE CLAUSE**, **RELATIVE CLAUSE**.

cleft sentence

A sentence in which focus is given to either the subject or object using a pattern beginning 'It...' (e.g. *It was my brother who lent me the money*) or 'What...' (e.g. *What you need is a holiday*).

complement

A word or phrase that follows a **LINKING VERB** and describes the **SUBJECT** (e.g. Linda is a *lawyer*) or **OBJECT** (e.g. I found the food *inedible*). A complement may also be an **ADVERBIAL** or **PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE** which completes the meaning of a verb. Some verbs need a complement (e.g. The disease originated *in Britain*; 'The disease originated' would be incomplete).

compound

A **compound noun** consists of two or more words together used as a noun (e.g. a *language school*). A **compound adjective** consists of two or more words together used as an adjective (e.g. They were *well-behaved*).

conditional

A **conditional clause** usually starts with 'if', but other patterns are possible (e.g. *Had it not rained*, England would have won). A **conditional sentence** contains a conditional clause. A distinction can be made between **real conditionals**, which suggest that the situation is or was true, or may have been or may become true (e.g. *If she makes a promise*, she keeps it) and **unreal conditionals**, which suggest that the situation is imaginary or untrue (e.g. *If you had asked me*, I would have helped).

conjunction

A word such as *and*, *but*, *if*, *while*, *after*, *because* which connects words, phrases, or clauses in a sentence. Compare **SENTENCE CONNECTOR**.

countable

A **countable noun** can be both singular and plural (e.g. *cup/cups*). An **uncountable noun** doesn't have a plural form (e.g. *electricity*, but not 'electricities').

declarative sentence

A declarative sentence is a statement. In a declarative sentence the subject is followed by the verb.

determiner

A word that goes in front of a noun to identify what the noun refers to (e.g. *this*, *some*, *the*, *alan*, *each*, *all*, *my*). Possessive determiners (also called possessive adjectives) are words such as *my*, *your* and *their*.

direct speech

Speech that is written using the exact words of the speaker, without any changes. Compare **REPORTED SPEECH**.

dynamic verb

A verb that describes an action (e.g. *walk, throw*). Compare STATE VERB.

imperative

An imperative clause uses the bare INFINITIVE form of a verb for such things as giving orders and making suggestions (e.g. *Go to bed!*).

infinitive

The form of a verb that usually goes after 'to'. The form can be either the to-infinitive (e.g. *to sing, to eat*) or the bare infinitive (e.g. *sing, eat*).

intransitive verb

A verb that doesn't take an object (e.g. *She smiled*). Compare TRANSITIVE VERB.

inversion

Changing the usual word order so that the verb comes before the subject (e.g. *Up went the balloon*).

linking verb

A verb (e.g. *be, become, appear*) that connects a SUBJECT with its COMPLEMENT.

modal verbs

A group of verbs (*can, could, may, might, must, ought to, shall, should, will, would*) that give information about such things as possibility, necessity, and obligation. Semi-modal verbs (*used to, need, dare, had better, have (got) to, be able to*) have similar meanings to modal verbs.

non-affirmative

Referring to a lack of positive, affirmative meaning; for example, in most questions and negatives. However, questions which expect a positive reply are affirmative. The terms 'non-assertive' and 'assertive' are sometimes used for 'non-affirmative' and 'affirmative'.

non-finite clause

A clause with a non-finite VERB; either a to-infinitive form (e.g. *I want to leave soon*), an -ing (present participle) form (e.g. *I caught him stealing my camera*), or -ed (past participle) form (e.g. *We cleared up the mess left after the party*).

noun

A word that refers to a person, place, thing, quality, etc. A collective noun refers to a group of people or things (e.g. *audience, crowd, herd*). See also COUNTABLE NOUN.

noun phrase

A group of words where the main word is a noun (e.g. *I've been talking to the woman across the road; We spoke to several small children*).

object

The direct object is the person or thing affected by the action of the verb (e.g. *I put the book [= direct object] back on the shelf*). The indirect object is the person or thing who benefits from the action or who receives something (e.g. *I gave my mother [= indirect object] some flowers [= direct object]*). Compare SUBJECT.

participle

The present participle is the -ing form of a verb (e.g. *walking, singing, eating*) used, for example, in continuous tenses. The past participle is the -ed form of a verb (e.g. *walked, sang, eaten*) used, for example, in perfect tenses. A participle adjective is one formed from the present or past participle of a verb (e.g. *the candidates applying, a broken plate*). A participle clause has a present participle or past participle verb form (e.g. *Feeling unwell, he went to bed; The person appointed to the post will have a difficult job to do*).

particle

An adverb or preposition that follows a verb in TWO-WORD VERBS and THREE-WORD VERBS (e.g. What time did you *get in*? [*in* = adverb]; I *flicked through* the magazine [*through* = preposition]; She *looks up to* her mother [*up* = adverb, *to* = preposition]).

passive

In a passive clause or passive sentence, the grammatical subject is the person or thing that experiences the effect of the action given in the verb (e.g. The book was written by Geoff). Compare ACTIVE.

performative

A performative is a verb which states the action that is performed when a speaker uses the verb (e.g. I *promise* I'll do it tomorrow; I *apologise*).

phrasal verb

A verb together with a following adverb and/or a preposition that has a single meaning (e.g. *set off*, *look up to*). Compare 'I *ran across* Tanya at the concert' (= met unexpectedly; a phrasal verb) and 'She *ran across* the road' (= a PREPOSITIONAL VERB).

possessive

The possessive form of a noun ends in either -'s (e.g. *Mark's* car) or -s' (e.g. the *girls'* changing room).

preposition

A word such as *in*, *on*, or *by* that comes before a noun, pronoun, noun phrase or -ing form (e.g. *in* March, *above* my uncle's head, *by* investing).

prepositional phrase

A group of words that consists of a PREPOSITION and its prepositional object (a noun, pronoun, noun phrase or -ing form) (e.g. *behind our house*, *across it*).

prepositional verb

A verb and a following preposition (e.g. *believe in*, *consist of*, *look after*). Compare PHRASAL VERB.

pronoun

A word that is used instead of a noun or noun phrase. Pronouns include personal pronouns (e.g. *I*, *she*, *me*), reflexive pronouns (e.g. *myself*, *herself*), possessive pronouns (e.g. *my*, *mine*, *your*, *yours*), and RELATIVE PRONOUNS (e.g. *who*, *which*).

quantifier

A word or phrase that goes before a noun or noun phrase to talk about the quantity of something (e.g. *a little* water, *many of* the women in the room).

question

A *wh*-question begins with a WH-WORD (e.g. *Where are you going?*). A *yes/no* question is one that can be answered with 'yes' or 'no' (e.g. *Do you like coffee?*). An *echo* question repeats part of a previous utterance and asks for a repetition of all or part of it (e.g. 'I'm moving to Alaska.' 'You're moving *where?*'). We can ask an *indirect question* by putting it into a *subordinate* CLAUSE beginning with a WH-WORD or with *if* or *whether* (e.g. Can you tell me *where you live?*).

relative clause

A kind of *subordinate* CLAUSE that describes a noun that comes before it in a *main* CLAUSE. A *defining relative clause* says which person or thing is being talked about (e.g. A friend *who lives in London* is getting married). A *non-defining relative clause* gives more information about the noun (e.g. My bicycle, *which I've left outside your house*, is over 20 years old). A *nominal relative clause* begins with a WH-WORD or *whatever*, *whenever*, etc. and functions as a NOUN PHRASE in a sentence (e.g. *What I need now* is a long, hot bath). A *reduced relative clause* usually begins with an -ing (present participle) or -ed (past participle) form and has a similar meaning to a relative clause (e.g. I met the people *living in our old house* [= ...who live in our old house], The new rules only affect people *born before 1950* [= ...who were born before 1950]).

relative pronoun

A pronoun such as *who*, *which*, or *that* which is used at the beginning of a relative clause.

relative word

Words including RELATIVE PRONOUNS and others (e.g. *whereby*, *why*) that can begin a RELATIVE CLAUSE.

reported speech

Speech that is reported without using the exact words of the speaker. Sometimes called 'indirect speech'.

reporting clause & reported clause

A statement that reports what people think or say is often divided into a **reporting clause** and a **reported clause** (e.g. *She said* [= reporting clause] *that the building was unsafe* [= reported clause]).

reporting verb

A verb used in a REPORTING CLAUSE that describes what people say or think (e.g. *ask*, *claim*, *say*).

sentence connector

A word or phrase that shows a connection between two separate sentences (e.g. *My car isn't very comfortable. However, it's very cheap to run.*; *The house is large and has a beautiful garden. What's more, it's very close to the station.*). Compare CONJUNCTION.

simple sentence

A sentence consisting of one clause.

state verb

A verb that is used to describe a state (e.g. *believe*, *think*) rather than an action. Compare DYNAMIC VERB.

subject

The person or thing that does the action of the verb (e.g. *Tommy went home*). Compare OBJECT.

subjunctive

The subjunctive is a set of verb forms used mainly in rather formal English to talk about possibilities rather than facts. The **present subjunctive** uses the base form of the verb (e.g. *We suggest that she leave immediately*) and the **past subjunctive** uses *were* (e.g. *If I were you, I'd go home now*).

transitive verb

A verb that takes an object (e.g. *She was holding a bunch of flowers*). Compare INTRANSITIVE VERB.

two-word verbs & three-word verbs

Verbs that are commonly used with a particular PARTICLE (adverb or preposition) are referred to here as **two-word verbs** (e.g. *She looked after her elderly parents*). Verbs that are commonly used with two particular particles (adverb + preposition) are referred to here as **three-word verbs** (e.g. *He looked up to his older brothers*). See also PREPOSITIONAL VERB and PHRASAL VERB.

verb

A finite verb has a tense (e.g. *She waited*; *She is waiting for you*). Non-finite verb forms are INFINITIVE (e.g. *He came to see me*) and PARTICIPLE forms (e.g. *Shouting loudly, I was able to make myself heard*; *Built in 1980, the tower is still the tallest construction in Europe*).

verb phrase

A group of words consisting of one or more verbs (e.g. *gives*, *is giving*, *has been giving*).

wh-words

A group of words (*who*, *whom*, *whose*, *where*, *when*, *why*, *how*) that are used in **wh-QUESTIONS**.