

Grammar Glossary

Grammatical term	Grammatical definition	Example
active voice	A verb in the active voice has its usual pattern of subject and object – contrast passive voice	During the afternoon, the children will follow the nature trail and learn about the trees, flowers and wildlife in this interesting habitat.
adjective	<p>E.g. <i>big, extensive, vertical</i></p> <p>Adjectives are sometimes called 'describing words' because they pick out single characteristics such as size or colour, but this can be confusing, because verbs, nouns and adverbs can do the same.</p> <p>Instead it is better to identify adjectives by their uses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Either before a noun (e.g. <i>big box</i>) to modify the noun ☐ Or after the verb be (e.g. <i>is big</i>) as its complement 	<p>The centre has extensive grounds in which a nature trail has been designed.</p> <p>[The grounds are extensive.]</p> <p>(Compare:</p> <p>The lamp glowed. [verb]</p> <p>It was such a bright red! [noun]</p> <p>He walked clumsily. [adverb])</p>
adverb	<p>E.g. <i>quickly, soon, very</i></p> <p>Adverbs are often said to describe manner or time, but prepositions, nouns and subordinate clauses can also do this.</p> <p>Instead, it is better to identify adverbs by their uses: they modify the meaning of a verb (or any other word-class except nouns).</p>	<p>Usha went upstairs to play on her computer.</p> <p>(compare:</p> <p>Usha went up the stairs. [preposition]</p> <p>She arrived this evening. [noun]</p> <p>She arrived when we expected her. [subordinate clause])</p>
adverbial	An adverbial is part of a clause that behaves like an adverb in modifying the verb, and which may itself be an adverb, but may instead be a preposition or a subordinate clause	<p>...leaving school at 9.30 am</p> <p>Usha went upstairs to play on her computer.</p>
apostrophe	<p>An apostrophe shows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Either the place of omitted letter (e.g. I'm for I am) • Or possession (e.g. Usha's mother) 	<p>I'm going out, Usha, and I won't be long.</p> <p>Usha's mother went out and she was in charge.</p>
clause	<p>A clause is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Either a complete sentence • Or part of a sentence that could be used, with small changes, as a complete sentence. 	<p>Usha's mother went out and she was in charge.</p> <p>Usha's mother went out and she was in charge.</p> <p>Usha went upstairs to play on her computer.</p> <p>Usha went upstairs to play on her computer</p>

	In traditional grammar a clause had to have a finite verb, but modern grammarians generally recognise non-finite clauses as well.	The centre has extensive grounds in which a nature trail has been designed
cohesion	A text has cohesion if its meaning is coherent – i.e. if it is clear how the meanings of its parts fit together. It may contain repeated references to the same person or thing, as shown by the different underlined styles in the example; and the logical relations (e.g. time and cause) between the parts are clear.	A visit has been arranged for the Year 6 class, to Mountain Peaks Field Study Centre, on July 18 th , leaving school at 9.30 am. This is an overnight visit. The centre has extensive grounds in which a nature trail has been designed. During the afternoon, the children will follow the nature trail.
cohesive	Cohesive devices are words that make clear how a text's parts are related to one another. Some words such as determiners and pronouns are especially important for building cohesion because they refer back to earlier words. Other words such as prepositions, conjunctions and adverbs (connectives) make relations clear.	A visit has been arranged for the Year 6 class, to Mountain Peaks Field Study Centre, on July 18 th , leaving school at 9.30 am. This is an overnight visit. The centre has extensive grounds in which a nature trail has been designed. During the afternoon, the children will follow the nature trail.
complement	A verb's complement (or 'predicative complement') 'completes' the verb's meaning by adding more information about the verb's subject (or, in some cases, its object). Unlike the verb's object, its complement may be an adjective. The verb <i>be</i> normally has a complement.	This is an overnight visit. [You make me happy.] It was Wednesday. ...she was in charge
conjunction	E.g. and, or, although, if A conjunction links a word or phrase to some other part of the sentence Either in coordination (e.g. ... and...) Or as a subordinate clause (e.g.....although...)	She got herself two biscuits and a cake that she had bought yesterday. She waved to her mother and watched her as she disappeared in the fog at the bottom of the street. We walk before we run. [conjunction] We walk before the age of two. [preposition]
connective	'Connective' is an informal name for words whose main function is to connect the ideas expressed in different clauses; such words may be prepositions, conjunctions or adverbs.	It rained on sports day so we had to compete without worrying about getting wet, but it was great fun because we got muddy.

continuous	The continuous (also known as the "progressive") form of a verb generally expresses action in progress at a specific time. It is formed by taking the <i>-ing</i> form of the verb (e.g. <i>doing, singing, reading</i>) and adding the verb <i>be</i> before it (e.g. <i>he was reading</i>). It can also be combined with the perfect (e.g. <i>he has been reading</i>). The past continuous form (e.g. <i>he was playing</i>) is sometimes called the "imperfect".	James is studying, so I won't disturb him. She was playing basketball at lunchtime. Usha had been preparing for her play for two hours when her mother called.
coordination	If words or phrases are coordinated, they are linked as equals by means of a conjunction such as <i>and</i> . (Contrast subordination).	Susan and Amra met in a café. They talked and laughed for an hour. When they went home, Susan got a bus but Amra walked.
determiner	E.g. <i>the, a, this, any, my</i> A determiner stands before a noun and any other words that modify the noun. A singular noun such as boy or number (but not coffee or beauty) requires a determiner, so we can say with the boy but not: with boy (see also possessive.)	This is an overnight visit. Your child will be travelling by coach and will be accompanied by Mrs Talib, the class teacher, and her teaching assistant, Mrs Medway.
elision	Elision (or ellipsis) is the omission of a word or phrase which is expected and predictable.	She waved to her mother and [she] watched her as she disappeared in the fog at the bottom of the street. She did it because she wanted to [do it]
etymology	A word's etymology is its history: its origins in earlier forms of English or other languages, and how its form and meaning have changed.	The word <i>school</i> was borrowed from a Greek work (<i>skhole</i>) meaning 'leisure'.
finite verb	A finite verb is limited ('finite') in terms of both its tense and its subject. Finite verbs are important because a written sentence normally needs at least one clause that contains a finite verb, and a finite verb must have an explicit subject.	Mum said she wasn't going to be long. The centre has extensive grounds in which a nature trail has been designed.
fronted	A word that would normally follow the verb may be 'fronted' to the start of the clause; for instance, a fronted adverbial is an adverbial which has been put at the front of a clause.	During the afternoon, the children will follow the nature trail.

future tense	English has no 'future tense' comparable with its present and past tenses. Reference to future time can be marked in a number of different ways, all of which include a present-tense verb.	It will leave tomorrow. It leaves tomorrow. It may leave tomorrow. It is going to leave tomorrow.
homophone	Two words are homophones if they have the same pronunciation.	<i>hear, here</i>
inflection	Inflection is a change ('bending') of morphology which signals a special grammatical classification of the word.	<i>dogs</i> is the plural inflection of <i>dog</i> . <i>went</i> is the past-tense inflection of <i>go</i> .
modal verb	The main modal verbs are <i>will, would, can, could, may, might, shall, should, must</i> and <i>ought</i> . A modal verb only has finite forms and has no suffix –s in the present tense even when its subject is singular. They are important for expressing degrees of certainty, or ability and obligation.	Your children will be travelling by coach. Not: Your child wills be... Nor: Your child is pleased to will be travelling You will/must/might be happy. You will/must/could work harder.
modify	If one word modifies another, the modifying word stands as near as possible to the modified word and makes the latter's meaning more specific.	In <i>class teacher, teacher</i> is modified by <i>class</i> so it means 'class teacher' (a kind of teacher).
morphology	A word's morphology is its internal make-up defined in terms of a root word, with changes such as the addition of prefixes or suffixes.	<i>dogs</i> has the morphological make-up: <i>dog + s</i> .
noun	E.g. <i>cat, person, arrival, purpose</i> . Nouns – the largest word-class of all – are sometimes called 'naming words' because they name people, places and 'things'; but many 'things' can also be named by other word groups such as verbs and prepositions. Instead, it is better to identify nouns by their possible grammatical uses, as the subject or object of a verb.	A visit has been arranged for the Year 6 class, to Mountain Peaks Field Study Centre, on July 18 th , leaving school at 9.30am. He arrived at last, but his late arrival spoilt everything.
object	A verb's object is normally a noun or pronoun which is found immediately after the verb, and which we expect to find there.	They designed a nature trail. (Compare: A nature trail was designed) Not: they designed pretty.

	Unlike complements, objects can be turned into the subject of a passive verb, and cannot be adjectives.	
passive voice	<p>A passive verb (a verb 'in the passive voice' – contrast 'active voice') normally has a suffix <i>ed</i>, follows the verb <i>be</i>, and has its normal ('active') object and subject reversed so that the active object is used as the passive subject, and the active subject appears as an optional <i>by</i> phrase.</p> <p>A verb is not 'passive' just because it has a 'passive' meaning – it must be the passive version of an active verb.</p>	<p>A visit was arranged by the school.</p> <p>A visit was arranged. (Compare the active: The school arranged a visit.)</p>
past tense	<p>A past-tense verb ('a verb in the past tense') normally has a suffix <i>ed</i>, names an event or state in the past and is a finite verb.</p> <p>Some verbs have irregular morphology (e.g. <i>was</i>, <i>came</i>). Past tense can also have other meanings.</p>	<p>She waved to her mother and watched as she disappeared in the fog at the bottom of the street.</p> <p>I knew that it was Sunday.</p> <p>If he understood you, he would trust you.</p>
perfect	<p>The perfect form of a verb generally calls attention to the consequences of a prior situation. It is formed by taking the past participle of the verb (e.g. <i>shown</i>, <i>taken</i>, <i>helped</i>) and adding the verb <i>have</i> before it (e.g. <i>she has helped</i>). It can be combined with the continuous (e.g. <i>he has been reading</i>).</p>	<p>She has recorded some popular songs for us to listen to.</p> <p>I had eaten lunch by the time you came to visit yesterday.</p> <p>Tariq will have been doing his homework all day by the time he finishes.</p>
phrase	<p>A phrase is a group of words containing one word which all the other words help to modify. (One possible notation double-underlines the rest of the phrase.) A phrase whose modified word is a verb is a clause or sentence.</p>	<p>She waved to her mother.</p> <p>She waved to her mother.</p> <p>She waved to her mother.</p>
plural	<p>A plural noun normally has a suffix <i>s</i> and means more than one example of the noun's basic meaning. There are a few nouns with irregular morphology (e.g. <i>mice</i>, <i>formulae</i>) or irregular meanings.</p>	<p>The children will follow the nature trail and learn about the trees, flowers and wildlife.</p> <p>The centre has extensive grounds. (but not: ... a ground)</p>

prefix	A prefix is added at the beginning of a word in order to turn it into another word. (Contrast suffix.)	overnight, disappeared
preposition	E.g. <i>in, of, at, with, by, between</i> A preposition links a following noun or pronoun to some other word in the sentence. Unlike conjunctions, they cannot link clauses.	She waved to her mother and watched her as she disappeared in the fog at the bottom of the street.
present tense	A present-tense verb ('a verb in the present tense') normally names a situation that is true now. It normally has either no suffix or <i>-s</i> (depending on the subject), and is a finite verb.	The centre has extensive grounds. He can swim. When he arrives, he will unpack his bag. Your father tells me that you're not happy.
possessive	A possessive is normally either a noun followed by an apostrophe and <i>-s</i> , or a possessive pronoun, and names the owner ('possessor') of the noun that it modifies. A possessive acts as a determiner, and must be replaced by an ordinary determiner if it is turned into an <i>of</i> phrase.	Tariq's book (the book of Tariq, i.e. that Tariq owns) Somebody else's book (the book of somebody else)
pronoun	E.g. <i>me, him, he, his, himself, who, what, that</i> A pronoun functions like a noun except that it is harder to modify and grammatically more specialised.	She waved to her mother and watched her as she disappeared in the fog at the bottom of the street. This is an overnight visit. The centre has extensive grounds in which a nature trail has been designed.
punctuation	Punctuation includes any conventional features of written presentation other than spelling and general layout: the standard punctuation marks (. , ; : ? ! - -- () " '), and also word-space, capital letters, apostrophes, paragraph breaks and bullet points. One of the roles of punctuation is to indicate sentence boundaries.	"I'm going out, Usha, and I won't be long," Mum said.
root word	A root word is a word which does not contain any smaller root words or prefixes or suffixes.	<i>Play, compute</i> , as in: So she played on the computer
relative clause	A relative clause is a subordinate clause that modifies a noun by including it	The centre has extensive grounds in which a nature trail has been designed.

	in the clause; for instance, <i>cake that she had left yesterday</i> means 'cake like this: she had left it yesterday'.	She got herself a cake that she had bought yesterday.
sentence	All the words in a sentence are held together by purely grammatical links, rather than merely by links of cohesion. A sentence is defined by its grammar, but signalled by its punctuation.	Correct punctuation: A visit has been arranged for the Year 6 class, to Mountain Peaks Field Study Centre, on July 18 th , leaving school at 9.30am. This is an overnight visit. Incorrect punctuation: She loved her computer, she got it for Christmas
subject	A verb's subject is normally the noun or pronoun which names the 'do-er' or 'be-er'. Unlike the verb's object and complement, the subject normally stands just before it and decides whether or not a present-tense verb takes a suffix s. In a question, the subject follows the verb.	The children will use the nature trail. Usha's mother went out. Will the children follow? Whether it's going to rain is uncertain. A visit has [not: have] been arranged.
subjunctive	The subjunctive form of a verb is occasionally used in very formal contexts to indicate unreality, uncertainty, wish, emotion, judgement, or necessity. Its inflection is complicated, because it does not always differ from non-subjunctive forms. It has a distinguishable form in the following cases: ☐ The third person singular of any verb in the present tense does not have its usual –s ending ☐ The verb <i>be</i> in the present tense is always "be" (not "am", "are" or "is") ☐ The verb <i>be</i> in the past tense is always "were" (not "was") ☐ The negatives of verbs in the present tense are formed differently ☐ Some modal verbs have a different form.	I insist that he come to visit every week. (He doesn't actually come to visit, but I would like him to.) (Compare: I insist that he comes to visit every week. [I am insisting that it's actually the case that he does visit, not simply that I would like him to.]) The school requires that all pupils be honest. (It's possible for pupils not to be honest, but the school would like them to be.) If she were the President, things would be much better. (But she isn't the President.) Father demanded that we not go to the forest. I wish you would stop! (not "will stop")
subordinate clause	A subordinate clause is subordinate to some word outside itself: it may modify this word (e.g. as a relative clause or as an adverbial), or it may be used as a verb's subject	The centre has extensive grounds in which a nature trail has been designed. He watched her as she disappeared in the fog at the bottom of the street.

	<p>or object. How a subordinate clause fits into the larger sentence is normally marked grammatically, either, by a special introductory word such as a conjunction, or by special non-finite forms of the verb. However:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Some subordinate clauses have no marking ☑ Clauses that are directly quoted as 'direct speech' are not subordinate clauses. 	<p>A visit has been arranged for the Year 6 class, leaving school at 9.30am. Usha went upstairs to play on her computer. She saw an hour had passed (this subordinate clause has no marking).</p>
subordination	<p>Most words in a sentence are linked in the unequal relation of subordination (rather than the equality of coordination). For example, a modifier is subordinate to the word it modifies, and a verb's subject, object and complement are all subordinate to the verb. In each case, the subordinate word makes the other word's meaning more precise. See also subordinate clause.</p>	<p>A big car swept past. (<i>big</i> is subordinate to <i>car</i>; <i>car</i> and <i>past</i> are subordinate to <i>swept</i>)</p>
suffix	<p>A suffix is an 'ending', something added at the end of one word to turn it into another word. (Contrast prefix.)</p>	<p>has, leaving, accompanied, teacher, assistant</p>
tense	<p>The choice between present and past. (English has no future tense.)</p>	<p>He likes it. He liked it.</p>
verb	<p>E.g. <i>be, take, arrive, imagine</i> Verbs are sometimes called 'doing words' because they often name an action that someone does; but this can be confusing, because they also name events (where things simply happen) or states (where nothing changes). Instead, it is better to identify verbs by their ability to have a tense – either present or past (see also future tense).</p>	<p>He looked out of the window. A nature trail has been designed. Your child will be travelling by coach. Yusuf is tired. It rained all day. (Compare: The journey will take an hour. [noun] His tiredness was easy to understand. [noun])</p>
word	<p>A word is a unit of grammar that can be selected and moved around relatively independently of other such units. In punctuation, words are normally separated by word spaces.</p>	<p>Headteacher or head teacher (can be written with or without a space) Primary-school teacher (normally written with a hyphen) English teacher (written with a space)</p>

	<p>But there are challenging complexities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When word-divisions are unclear we may be able to show this uncertainty by using hyphens. • Apostrophes for omitted letters show where two words are treated as one. 	<p>I'm going out... ...at 9.30am. The time was 8.10pm.</p>
<p>word family</p>	<p>The words in a word family are normally related to each other by a combination of form, grammar and meaning.</p>	<p>Teacher – teach Extensive – extend - extent</p>