

## GLOSSARY

**adjectives:** a word category that denotes a state or quality of a noun. Adjectives are said to modify or describe a noun.

**adverbs:** a word class that modifies verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. Many, but not all, are constructed from adjectives plus the suffix *-ly*.

- *I slept well.*
- *It was strangely silent after the snowstorm.*
- *The children interpreted the passage very dramatically.*

**affixes:** a group of letters added to the beginning or end of a root or base word.

**appositive:** a noun or pronoun that follows another noun or pronoun to clarify or identify it. Appositives and appositive phrases are usually set off by commas unless there is only one word in apposition and it is closely related to the preceding word.

- *Miss Stephenson, my trainer, still sits on my shoulder and gives me advice.*
- *Phyllis, my colleague from California, has written a thought-provoking book.*
- *My son Kevin lives in Los Angeles.*

**articles:** a part of speech (debatable) that indicates one of a general group (*an, a*); or one that is known, a particular one.

**auxiliary (helping) verb:** is used to form a verb phrase, or a compound tense with a principal verb. There are 23 in English: *am, are, is, was, were, be, being, been, do, does, did, have, has, had, may, must, might, can, could, would, should, shall, will.*

**base word:** an independent word stripped of any affixes.

**clause:** a word group used as part of a sentence, which contains a verb and its subject.

- **independent (main or principal) clause:** expresses a complete thought and could stand on its own.
- **subordinate (dependent) clause:** does not express a complete thought and could not stand independently.
- **restrictive (essential) clause:** does not need commas to set it apart; it is essential to the meaning of the sentence. *Dancers waiting for their entrance sat behind the curtain.*

- **nonrestrictive clause:** not essential to the meaning of the sentence; uses commas to set it apart. *Esther, who wants to be a dancer, orders a salad.*

**conjugation:** a listing of a verb according to tense, relative to person and number.

**conjunctions:** a category of words that join words or groups of words.

- **coordinating:** join the same kinds of items (nouns, adjectives, prepositional phrases, clauses of equal value), *and, or, but, nor, for, yet.*
- **correlative:** also join items of the same kind, but are used in pairs (*either...or, both...and, not only...but also*).
- **subordinating:** introduce adverb clauses (*after, although, before, because, unless, when, where, and others*)

**determiners:** a word class that ‘determines’ the way to consider the noun. Determiners include the words *a, an, the, this, that, some, any, each, every, either, neither,* and possessives and numerals. These are words that quantify or qualify nouns but do not describe them. (Sources differ on exactly which words are classified as determiners.)

**direct object:** a noun or pronoun that receives the action of the verb or shows the result of the action.

**gerund:** a verb form (or verbal) that functions as a noun. It is formed by adding *-ing* to the plain form of the verb. Gerunds can be used like nouns in different parts of a sentence: as subjects, direct objects, predicate nominatives, or objects of prepositions.

- *Dancing will keep us young.*
- *Debby enjoys dancing.*
- *Dancing is Debby’s passion.*
- *Debby wears special shoes for dancing.*

Like nouns, gerunds can be modified by adjectives and adjective phrases.

- *We all watched Debby’s energetic dancing to the rhythm of the drums.*

Like verbs, gerunds can be modified by adverbs and adverb phrases.

- *Dancing serenely in the moonlight is a meditation for Debbie.*

**grammar:** the system of a language’s structure, which includes how words are formed and how they combine to create meaning.

- **descriptive grammar:** commentary on current state of usage.

- **prescriptive grammar:** (according to Ben Yagoda), 'correct' grammar is *prescribed*: it must follow certain rules.

**Indirect object:** a noun or pronoun that precedes a direct object in a sentence and identifies *to whom/what, for whom/what* the action of the verb is intended, without employing the prepositions *to* or *for*. (If they are present, we have a prepositional phrase; not an indirect object.)

**infinitive:** a verb form (verbal) usually preceded by *to*. Infinitives can be used as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs.

- *I like to knit in the evening.*
- *The children to observe are in the kitchen.*
- *Most people eat to live; I live to eat.*

Sometimes the word *to* is not used (for example, after verbs *see, hear, feel, watch, help, know, dare, need, make, let, please*).

- *Did you see the children present their timeline?*
- *I can help you look for your bracelet.*

**inflection:** indicates the relationship among words in a sentence through word endings and is used in many languages. *L: homo amat puellam (the man loves the girl). Puella amat hominem (the girl loves the man).* We see how the endings of girl and man change to indicate when used as a subject or a direct object. With that in mind, we can understand these sentences: *puellam homo amat; amat puellam homo; puellam amat homo.* They all mean *the man loves the girl*. Old English was inflected and we still have remnants: plurals, possessives, third person singular in verbs, past tense in verbs, *-ing* for present participles; comparison of adjectives; forms of pronouns depending on their use in a sentence.

**Interjections:** a category of exclamatory words that express surprise, disgust, extreme emotion. These words are not grammatically related to other words in the sentence, and are usually set off from them with an exclamation point.

**lexicon:** the vocabulary, or *word bank* of a language. From Greek *lexis*, meaning *word*. Some estimate the English lexicon to be more than 1,000,000 words.

**linguistics:** the scientific study of language including phonetics (sounds), morphology (how words are put together), syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (contextual clues to meaning).

**modal verb:** a type of auxiliary verb that expresses possibility, necessity, intent, or ability. Among them are *can, could, should, would, may, may, will, must*.

**mood:** designates the speaker's or writer's intention. In English there are three moods.

- **indicative:** straightforward – makes a statement or asks a question.
- **imperative:** used for requests, commands, mandates, directions. It uses the plain form of the verb.
- **subjunctive:** conveys unreality, determination, suggestion, command, or request: *Bob would play baseball if he were a younger man. I insisted that he meet me at the bakery. The suggestion is that he go home immediately.*

**morpheme:** a basic unit of meaning in linguistics; a part of a word that cannot be broken down to anything smaller, thus contributing to structure and meaning. For example: *foolish* has two morphemes: *fool + ish*. Some morphemes, such as *fool* have independent meaning; others, such as *-ish* have meaning only when bound to another morpheme.

**noun:** a naming word; identifies a solid entity or a more abstract concept.

**participle:** a verb form (verbal) used as an adjective. Participles are constructed from verbs but do not stand alone as verbs. They can be used with an auxiliary (or helping) verb to form a verb phrase. In this case they are considered part of the verb, not as an adjective.

- **present participle:** constructed from the plain verb form plus the suffix *-ing*.
  - *The dancing child smiled at her mother.*
  - *Jumping with joy, the boy ran to his new puppy.*
  - *The child was smiling at her mother.*
  - *The boy had been jumping with joy.*
- **past participle:** in most cases is constructed from the plain verb form plus the suffix *-d* or *-ed*. Irregular (or strong) verbs form the past participle in other ways.
  - *A baked ham and mashed potatoes will be added to our holiday menu.*
  - *Your broken pencil can no longer be used.*
  - *The painting was finished by the end of the day.*
  - *They will have burst all the balloons by the end of the party.*

**parts of speech:** the grammatical classification of words that began with Latin and Greek and was adapted to English. There are either eight or nine parts of speech in English, depending on the grammarian you consult.

**parts of the sentence**

- **predicate:** one of the two main parts of a sentence. It is a verb or a verb phrase that completes a clause. It is the part of the sentence that says something about the subject.
  - **complete predicate:** *Cats (were roaming the alley). My sister and I (cooked dinner). (In the tree sat) the Cheshire Cat.* In these sentences, the complete predicate is in parentheses.
  - **simple predicate:** The simple predicate is the verb or verb phrase within the complete predicate. *The cat (perched precariously on the windowsill for her afternoon nap). Perched* is the simple predicate within the complete predicate.
- **subject:** one of the two main parts of a sentence. It is a noun or a pronoun and any words that modify it.
  - **complete subject:** *(Three cups of whole-wheat flour) are needed for the recipe.*
  - **simple subject:** *Three (cups) of whole-wheat flour are needed for the recipe.*

**phoneme:** a basic unit of sound. The English language utilizes 44 phonemes in the construction of words.

**phrase:** a group of related words functioning as one unit of information / one part of speech. It does not contain a verb and its subject.

- **verb phrase:** no subject – *have been singing*
- **prepositional phrase:** begins with a preposition and ends with a noun or pronoun, which is identified as the object of the preposition – *in the lovely garden; after the storm.*
  - **adjective phrase:** a prepositional phrase used as an adjective – *Children from the Montessori school walked to the park. We saw a movie about a young wizard.*
  - **adverb phrase:** a prepositional phrase used as an adverb (with verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) – *The children jumped on the trampoline. We devoured the sandwiches with great gusto. The kitten is comfortable on the pillow. We will look for you tomorrow after breakfast.*

**pragmatics:** the study of choices we make in usage; what they are, the reasons for them, and the effects of these choices.

**prefix:** affixed to the beginning of a word; changes the meaning of the word. Prefixes can change the meaning in three ways: 1) negation (*unhappy*), 2) intensification (*overload*), 3) direction (*inside*).

**prepositions:** a class of words that indicate relationships between nouns and pronouns to other nouns and pronouns, to verbs, or to modifiers. Many words in this group can also be classified as adverbs, so it is important to analyze carefully to determine relationship and function.

**pronouns:** words that can be used in place of one or more than one noun/naming word.

- **personal pronouns:** refers to pronouns in first, second, third person and if they are singular or plural. They are used as subjects, objects, or to show possession.
- **reflexive pronouns:** these are the *-self, -selves* form of personal pronouns.
- **relative pronouns:** used to introduce adjective clauses: *who, whom, whose, which, that*.
- **interrogative pronouns:** used in questions: *who? Whom? Whose? Which? What?*
- **demonstrative pronouns:** indicate specificity: *this, that, these, those*.
- **Indefinite pronouns:** refer to a 'non'-definite person or thing. There are several: *all, each, more, one, another, either, most, other, any, some, none...*

**root word:** a base word (often non-recognizable in modern English) that has a consistent meaning with the addition of affixes. For example: *dictation*, from Latin *dict, to say*.

**semantics:** the study of meaning; how language is used and understood; how words represent objects and concepts.

**sentence:** a group of words expressing a complete thought.

- **types**
  - **declarative:** makes a statement.
  - **imperative:** makes a request or gives a command.
  - **interrogative:** asks a question.
  - **exclamatory:** expresses strong feeling or emotion.

**complexity**

- **simple:** one independent clause, no subordinate clauses, one subject and one verb (although they may be compound).
- **compound:** two or more independent clauses, no subordinate clauses. The clauses have equal value. They are joined by a comma and coordinating conjunction, or by a semi-colon.
- **complex:** one independent clause and at least one subordinate clause.
- **compound-complex:** two or more independent clauses and at least one subordinate clause.

**subject complement:** a noun, pronoun, or adjective that modifies the subject of the sentence; it follows a linking verb.

- **predicate nominative:** the complement is a noun or pronoun. *The artist is a talented woman. This contestant is one of many.*

- **predicate adjective:** the complement is an adjective. *The artist seems quite talented.*

**syntax:** the meaningful arrangement of words.

**suffix:** affixed to the end of the root or base word; changes the meaning and/or part of speech: *horses* (plural); *friendly* (noun to adjective). According to the OED: *A verbal element attached to the end of a word to form an entirely new word (e.g. short, short-age, short-en, short-er, short-est, short-ish, short-ly, short-ness) or as an inflectional formative (e.g. ox, ox-en).*

**tense:** is an indication of grammatical time. Tense indicates when the action takes place relative to the present, past, or future time. Tense indicates if there is a completion of the event, a projected completion, or if it is ongoing. There are six main tenses in English (simple and perfect), as well as progressive and intensive (also referred to as continuous and emphatic) tenses.

**verbs:** express action, energy, state of being. There can be no statement or complete thought without a verb.

- **regular:** a verb that forms past tense and past participle by adding *-d* or *-ed*. Another name for regular verbs is **weak verbs**.
  - *play, played, (have) played*
  - *close, closed, (have) closed*
- **Irregular:** a verb that forms past tense and past participle through an internal change (or in some cases, without change). Another name for irregular verbs is **strong verbs**.
  - *speak, spoke, (have) spoken*
  - *burst, burst, (have) burst*
- **transitive:** action transfers from the subject to a receiver, a direct object.
- **Intransitive:** action is expressed without reference to a receiver.
  - Some verbs can function as either, depending on the context of the sentence.
- **linking verb:** 'links' the subject of the sentence to other words in the sentence. A linking verb does not indicate action; nor is it followed by a direct object. It is a *statement-of-being*. The most common are forms of the verb *to be*. Others are: *seem, taste, appear, grow, look, remain, sound, smell, feel, become, turn*. The words that follow (usually an adjective or noun) complete the meaning of the verb. Some verbs function as linking verbs and as action verbs. *The soup tastes delicious. The chef tasted the soup.*

**verbal:** a verb form that is used as another part of speech. There are three different kinds of verbals in English: **infinitives, participles, and gerunds**.

**verb (or verbal) phrase:** a main verb preceded by one or more helping verbs.

**voice:** expresses the action or situation relative to the subject.

- **active voice:** A verb is in the *active voice* when the subject of the sentence performs the action. *My husband washed the car.*
- **passive voice:** A verb is in the *passive voice* when the action of the sentence is performed to or upon the subject. *The car was washed by my husband.* In a passive construction, the verb phrase will always have a form of the verb *to be* and the past participle of the principal verb. There may or not be a prepositional phrase: *My sandwich has been taken by someone.* *My sandwich has been taken.*

**word classes:** a term preferred by some grammarians over ‘parts of speech’ because nouns, verbs, and the rest of the tribes are used in writing as well. Function takes precedence over strict adherence to Latin grammar classifications that may not have counterparts in other languages.