Word level: the parts of speech

Nouns

A noun is the name of a person, place, thing or idea.

Australia is a noun. **Fun** is a noun.

There are many kinds of nouns. The four main ones are: *common nouns, proper nouns, abstract nouns* and *collective nouns*.

Common noun

A common noun is the name of any ordinary thing you can see and touch.

Here are some examples of common nouns:

dog	hat	ball
water	apple	car

The toy **dog** is made of metal.
Common noun

Proper noun

A proper noun is the special name of a person, place or thing. Proper nouns start with capital letters.

Here are some examples of proper nouns:

Mia	Canberra	Sydney Opera House
Captain Cook	China	

The **Sydney Opera House** is big.
Proper noun

Collective nouns

A collective noun is the name given to a group of persons or things.

Here are some examples of collective nouns:

team	herd	swarm
litter	bunch	flock

A **litter** of puppies.
Collective noun

Other types of nouns

Abstract nouns

An abstract noun is the name of something you feel, or something that could exist in your mind. You cannot see or touch an abstract noun.

Here are some examples of abstract nouns:

hope	sadness	joy	truth
love	kindness	greed	idea

Concrete nouns

A concrete noun is a noun that you can see or touch, like tree, hat or nose. It is the opposite of an abstract noun.

Here are some examples of concrete nouns:

floor	man	hill
ocean	ball	head

A concrete noun is a type of common noun.

Technical nouns

A technical noun is a noun that is used in a specific area of study. We only tend to use technical nouns when we are speaking or writing about particular topics.

Here are some examples of technical nouns:

fraction	oxygen	galaxy	triceratops

Non-technical nouns are also called *everyday nouns.*

A bear is a large **mammal**.
Technical noun

Terms-of-address nouns

A term-of-address noun is a noun we use when we are talking or writing to someone. It is a special type of proper noun.

Here are some examples of terms-of-address nouns:

Mrs Chin	Alex	Your Honour	Sir

Count or countable nouns

A count or countable noun is a noun that can be counted, such as *apple, leg* or *dog.*

We saw three **dolphins**.

I like **apples**.

Mass or non-countable nouns

A mass or non-countable noun is a noun that cannot be counted, such as fun, traffic or homework. For example:

You might say: The teacher gave us **more homework**. ✓

But you would never say: The teacher gave me ~~**three homeworks**~~. ✗

What heavy **traffic**!
Mass or non-countable noun

Verbal nouns (Gerunds)

Sometimes, a word can have more than one 'job'. A verbal noun, or gerund, is a verb ending in *-ing* that is used as a noun. In other words, it is an action word that is used to name something. (See Verbs, pp. 17–29.)

REMEMBER

A verb is a doing, being or having word!

Running is good exercise.	In this sentence, **running** is a verbal noun. It looks like the verb *to run*, but acts like a noun. It is the subject of the verb *is*.
I like **eating**.	In this sentence, **eating** is a verbal noun. It looks like the verb *to eat*, but acts like a noun. It is the object of the verb *like*.

I am good at **dancing**.	In this sentence, **dancing** is a verbal noun. It looks like the verb *to dance*, but acts like a noun. It is the object of the preposition *at*.
I went on a **walking** tour.	In this sentence, **walking** is a participle. It acts as an adjective, describing the noun *tour*.

Modal nouns

A modal noun shows a degree of possibility, certainty or obligation. That is, something that is possible, certain, or that you should do.

Here are some examples of modal nouns:

probability certainty necessity chance

Compound nouns

A compound noun is made up of two or more words. These words may be joined together, as in *teabag* or *snowman*; or hyphenated, as in *self-control* or *brother-in-law*.

These are compound nouns:

bookshelf	thumbnail	goldfish
knife-edge	half-brother	sister-in-law

Sometimes when a group of words has a special meaning, we call them compound nouns, even though they are not joined together and do not have a hyphen. *Baked beans* and *human being* are compound nouns.

Noun group

A noun group is a word or a number of words based around a noun. It can consist of a single noun, a single pronoun, or a single noun with words built around the noun. A noun group can also include a clause. (See Groups, p. 38, Clauses, p. 42.)

In the following sentences, the noun groups are highlighted:

REMEMBER

A pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun. Pronouns include words like **he**, **she**, **I**, **me**, **you**, **they**, **them**.

Dogs bark.

They bark.

Those dogs bark.

Those big dogs bark.

Those big dogs that live next door bark.

Noun groups are sometimes called *nominal groups* or *noun phrases*.

Noun phrase

A noun phrase is a phrase that does the work of a noun. (See Phrases, p. 38.)

These are noun phrases:

eating apples

going fishing

playing tennis

Playing tennis is fun!
Noun phrase

Noun clause

A noun clause is a subordinate clause that does the work of a noun. It can be either the subject or the object of a verb. A noun clause contains a subject and a verb of its own, but does not make sense by itself. (See Clauses, p. 42, Finite verbs, p. 20, Subject and object, p. 6.)

REMEMBER

A principal clause is a group of words that makes sense on its own. A subordinate clause is a group of words that gives meaning to the main clause of a sentence, but it cannot stand on its own.

What I saw at the movies was scary.	In this sentence, **What I saw at the movies** is a noun clause. It contains a subject (**I**) and a verb (**saw**), but it does not make sense on its own.
You must see **the game that is on TV tonight**.	In this sentence, **the game that is on TV tonight** is a noun clause. It contains a subject (**the game**) and a verb (**is**), but it does not make sense on its own.

More about nouns

Person

Nouns and pronouns have person. There are three types of person:
first person, *second person* and *third person*.

- **First person** refers to the person who is speaking: *I*, *me*, *mine,* etc.
- **Second person** refers to the person who is being spoken to: *You*, *yours*, etc.
- **Third person** refers to the person being spoken about: *he*, *she*, *it*, *mum*, *dad*, *Tom*, etc.

The superhero is flying.
Third person

All nouns are in the third person. They are always 'spoken about'. (See More about Pronouns, p. 11.)

Number

A noun has number. It can be *singular* or *plural*. Singular means one. Plural means more than one.

apple **singular** apples **plural**

Forming the plural

In English spelling, the plural is formed in different ways. Always use your dictionary to check, if you are not sure.

Many singular nouns add ***-s*** to make the plural:

boy → boy**s** girl → girl**s** toy → toy**s**

Others add *-es*:

beach → beach**es** fox → fox**es** church → church**es**

If a noun ends in *y* and has a consonant before the *y*, the plural drops *-y* and adds *-ies*:

baby → bab**ies** lady → lad**ies** ruby → rub**ies**

Nouns ending in *-f* or *-fe* make the plural in two ways.

- They add *-s*:
  chief → chief**s** roof → roof**s**
- They change *-f* to *-v* and add *-es*:
  knife → kni**ves** loaf → loa**ves**

In some cases, both plural forms are acceptable:

handkerchief → handkerchief**s** → handkerchie**ves**

hoof → hoof**s** → hoo**ves**

Nouns ending in *-o* form the plural in two ways.

- They add *-s*:
  piano → piano**s** merino → merino**s**
- They add *-es*:
  potato → potato**es** tomato → tomato**es**

Compound nouns form the plural in two ways.

- They add *-s* to the end of the compound:
  spoonful → spoonful**s**
- They add *-s* to the first part of the compound.
  sister-in-law → sister**s**-in-law

Some singular nouns that come from foreign words change their endings altogether:

crisis → cris**es** plateau → plateau**x**

Some singular nouns change their vowels to form the plural:

woman → wom**e**n man → m**e**n

Sometimes they change their consonants as well:

mouse → m**i**c**e** louse → l**i**c**e**

Some singular nouns do not change to form the plural at all:

deer → deer sheep → sheep

Gender

Nouns can be *masculine* (male) or *feminine* (female).

Some nouns are neither masculine nor feminine. These are called *neuter*. Masculine, feminine and neuter are a noun's gender.

Some nouns can be either masculine *or* feminine. These nouns are said to be *common gender*.

EXAMPLES OF NOUNS AND THEIR GENDER

Masculine	Feminine	Common gender	Neuter
boy	girl	child	rock
man	woman	human	tree
father	mother	parent	drink

Nominalisation

Nominalisation is the process of making nouns from other parts of speech. For example, the verb *lose* becomes *loss*; the adjective *high* becomes *height*; the verb *dwell* becomes *dwelling*.

Some words can be nouns or verbs, depending on what their job is in a sentence. For example, the word *jump* can mean 'a jump' (noun) or 'to jump' (verb).

I did a huge **jump** on a trampoline. **Noun**	I like **to jump** on a trampoline. **Verb**

Case

Nouns and pronouns have case. Case refers to the relationship between nouns (or pronouns) and verbs. (See Pronouns, below.)

There are three main cases:

- The *subjective case* refers to the subject of a verb. The subjective case is sometimes called the *nominative case*.
- The *objective case* refers to the object of a verb or preposition. The objective case is sometimes called the *accusative case*.
- The *possessive case* shows ownership of something.

Ahmed borrowed Stephen's book.	In this sentence, **Ahmed** is in the subjective case. It is the subject of the verb *borrowed*. **Book** is in the objective case. It is the object of the verb *borrowed*. **Stephen's** is in the possessive case. It tells us who owns the book.

REMEMBER

The subject is the person or thing who performs the action of the verb.
The object is the person or thing who has the action of the verb done to them.

How do we find the case of a noun?

Subjective case	Ask **who** or **what** in front of the verb. ***Who*** *borrowed the book?* *Answer: Ahmed*
Objective case	Ask **who** or **what** after the verb. *Borrowed* ***what****?* *Answer: the book*
Possessive case	Ask **whose**. **Whose** *book was it?* *Answer: Stephen's*

Pronouns

A pronoun is a word that is used instead of a noun.

Maria is my friend. **She** will be having a birthday party on Saturday.	In the first sentence, Maria is a noun. In the second sentence, the word **she** is used instead of Maria. **She** is a pronoun.

There are many different types of pronouns.

	Pronoun	Type of pronoun
She is having a party.	she	personal pronoun
It is quite simple.	it	personal pronoun
The book is **mine**.	mine	possessive pronoun
I knew the boy **who** was hurt.	who	relative pronoun
That is my dog.	that	demonstrative pronoun
What is the time?	what	interrogative pronoun
He hit **himself** with the bat.	himself	reflexive pronoun
The Captain, **herself**, spoke.	herself	emphatic pronoun
Anyone can play.	anyone	indefinite pronoun
Each of us has a bike.	each	distributive pronoun

Personal pronouns

Personal pronouns are used instead of the nouns that name people, places, things and ideas.

Like the nouns they represent, personal pronouns may be the *subject* or *part of the subject* of a clause or sentence. They can also be the *object* or *part of the object* of a clause or sentence.

Personal pronouns have a lot in common with nouns:

- They have case—*subjective, objective* or *possessive*.
- They can be singular or plural.
- They have person—*first person*, *second person* or *third person*.

Personal pronouns: subjective case

The personal pronouns in the subjective case are the *subjects* of a clause.
The subjective case is also called the *nominative case.*

He found the book. — In this sentence **he** is a personal pronoun and is the subject of the verb **found**. As the subject, it is **subjective case**.

REMEMBER

To find the subjective case, find the subject! Ask *who* or *what* in front of the verb.

The personal pronouns in the subjective case are:

	First person	Second person	Third person
Singular	I	you	he, she, it
Plural	we	you	they

The pronoun *you* can be singular or plural!

Personal pronouns: objective case

The personal pronouns in the objective case are the *objects* of a clause.

He found the book and gave **it** to **her**. — **It** is a personal pronoun and is the object of the verb *give*. As the object, it is objective case. **Her** is a personal pronoun and is governed by the preposition *to*. Because of the preposition, it is objective case.

The personal pronouns in the objective case are:

	First person	Second person	Third person
Singular	me	you	him, her, it
Plural	us	you	them

REMEMBER

To find the objective case, find the object! Ask *who* or *what* after the verb.

The cats were sleeping.
The dog saw **them**.
Personal pronoun, objective case, third person

A personal pronoun can be an indirect object. In some sentences, there is more than one object. There's the person or thing that has the action done to them, and there can also be another person or thing that can be affected by that action.

Ali gave **me** the book.

This sentence really means, *Ali gave the book to me*. So, the direct object is *book*, because it is the thing that has the action done to it. The indirect object—the person affected by the action—is **me**.

A personal pronoun can be the object of a preposition.
(See Prepositions, p. 33.)

The teacher gave the pencils to **her**.

In this sentence, the personal pronoun **her** is the object of the preposition *to*.

Personal pronouns: possessive case

The personal pronouns in the possessive case are:

	First person	Second person	Third person
Singular	mine	yours	his, hers, its
Plural	ours	yours	theirs

Personal pronouns in the possessive case are also called *possessive pronouns*.

REMEMBER

Possession tells us about ownership. To find the possessive case ask **whose**.

Possessive adjectives

There are some words that seem like pronouns, but are only used with nouns. They are called *possessive adjectives*. (See Possessive adjectives, p. 13.)

That dog is **mine**.
Personal pronoun, possessive case, first person.

This is **my** dog.
Possessive adjective

Relative pronouns

A relative pronoun is a pronoun that is used to link a subordinate clause to a noun or personal pronoun. This noun or pronoun is called an *antecedent*.

REMEMBER

A principal clause is a group of words that makes sense on its own. A subordinate clause is a group of words that gives meaning to the main clause of a sentence, but it cannot stand on its own.

The relative pronoun has to agree with the antecedent in person and number. If the antecedent is first person, singular, the relative pronoun must also be first person, singular. If the antecedent is third person, plural, the relative pronoun must also be third person, plural.

David, **who** is eight years old, is playing in a band.	In this sentence, **who** is the relative pronoun and *David* is the antecedent. *David* is third person, singular, so **who** must also be third person, singular.

Here are some common relative pronouns:

who whom which that

Who and whom

We use the relative pronouns *who* and *whom* when we refer to people.

- *Who* is used for the subjective (or nominative) case.

The girl **who** lives next door came over to play.	The relative pronoun **who** is in the subjective case because it is the subject of the verb *lives*.

- *Whom* is used for the objective case.

I like the team captain **whom** you chose.	The relative pronoun **whom** is in the objective case because it is the object of the verb *chose*.

- *Whom* is also used when it is the object of a preposition.

With **whom** did you play in the tennis match?	The relative pronoun **whom** is the objective case because it is the object of the preposition *with*.

When we speak, we often replace *whom* with *who*. Writing is usually more formal, however, so we should use *who* and *whom* correctly.

Which and that

We use the relative pronouns *which* and *that* when we refer to animals, places or things. But be careful—they don't always mean the same thing!

You can catch the train, **which** goes every ten minutes.
You can catch the train **that** goes in ten minutes.

In the sentences above, w*hich* and *that* both refer to the word *train,* which is the antecedent. But the sentences have different meanings. The first sentence refers to a train that goes every ten minutes. The second sentence refers to a particular train that goes in ten minutes' time. (Hurry or you'll miss it!)

Interrogative pronouns

An interrogative pronoun is a pronoun that is used to ask a question. Interrogative pronouns are sometimes called *question pronouns*.

The interrogative pronouns are:

who whom whose which what

If one of these words is followed by a noun, it becomes an *interrogative adjective* or a *pronominal adjective*.

REMEMBER

An adjective is a word that modifies or gives us information about a noun.

Which book is the best?
Interrogative adjective

Demonstrative pronouns

A demonstrative pronoun is a pronoun that refers to a specific noun. Demonstrative pronouns are often used when we can point to the people or things we are talking about.

The demonstrative pronouns are:

that this those these

If one of these words is followed by a noun, it becomes a *demonstrative adjective* or a *pronominal adjective*.

Reflexive and emphatic pronouns

Reflexive and emphatic pronouns are made by adding *-self* (singular) and *-selves* (plural) to the end of a personal pronoun.

Reflexive pronouns are often used when the subject and object are the same. In other words, when a noun or pronoun does something *to itself*.

He hurt **himself**.	In this sentence, **himself** is a reflexive pronoun because it refers back to the *he* who is the subject of the sentence. The subject and object are the same person.

Emphatic pronouns are used to emphasise, or draw attention to, the noun. They are often used to demonstrate that something interesting or important has happened—or that it has been done by someone important!

The premier **herself** visited our school yesterday.	In this sentence, **herself** is an emphatic pronoun because it draws attention to the noun *premier*. It tells us that *the premier* is an important person.

Indefinite pronouns

Indefinite pronouns are pronouns that we use when we don't want to refer to any particular person, place or thing.

No one is to blame for this mess.

Indefinite pronouns that end with *-one* or *-body* refer to persons, while those ending in *-thing* refer to places or things.

Here are some examples of indefinite pronouns:

one	none	anyone	someone
no one	nobody	anything	nothing

Indefinite pronouns are usually followed by a singular verb.

Distributive pronouns

A distributive pronoun is a pronoun that refers to individual members of a group separately, rather than to the group as a whole.

Each had a carrot.
Distributive pronoun

The distributive pronouns are:

each every either neither

If these words are followed by a noun, they become *distributive adjectives* or *pronominal adjectives*. (See Distributive adjectives, p. 14.)

Each lamb had its wool clipped. **Distributive adjective**

More about pronouns

Person

A pronoun has different forms depending on its person. There are three persons: *first person, second person* and *third person*.

- **First person:** This refers to the person who is speaking.

  I am an athlete.

  We all run in the City to Surf.

  It is **mine**.

- **Second person:** This refers to the person being spoken to.

  You will be late, Tom.

  You will be late, children.

  You have won the prize, Jo. It is **yours.**

  You have won the prize, children. It is **yours**.

- **Third person:** This refers to the person being spoken about.

  I wouldn't trust **him**.

  Theirs are in the wash.

  I wouldn't trust **them**.

Number

Pronouns have number. Some are singular and some are plural.

If the noun it refers to (the *antecedent*) is singular, the pronoun is also singular. If the noun it refers to is plural, the pronoun is plural.

In the examples that follow, the nouns/antecedents are highlighted in bold, with an **S** for singular or a **P** for plural placed above each.

S I have a new **bike**. **It** is made of metal.	The noun **bike** is singular, so the pronoun **It** is also singular.
P The **kids** can't wait for the school term to end. **They** love holidays!	The noun **kids** is plural, so the pronoun **They** is also plural.

Here are some more examples:

Personal pronouns: **The footballers** trained hard. ➔ **They** trained hard.

Possessive pronouns: That is **John's**. ➔ That is **his**.

Demonstrative pronouns: **The answers** are correct. ➔ **These** are correct.

Gender

In English, there are four genders. They are:

- masculine (male)
- feminine (female)
- common gender (can be either male or female)
- neuter (neither male nor female) (See Gender, p. 5.)

Examples of pronouns and their gender

Masculine	Feminine	Common gender	Neuter
he him	she her	he or she him or her	it

Nouns have gender, and so do pronouns. A pronoun has the same gender as its *antecedent*, the noun it replaces.

In the examples that follow, the antecedent is in brackets following the pronoun. It has an **M** for masculine gender, **F** for feminine gender, **N** for neuter gender and **C** for common gender written above it.

F M **She** (a girl) sat next to **him** (a boy).	**She** is feminine and **him** is masculine.
N **It** (a building) will have to be demolished.	**It** is neuter.
M N **I** (Fred) have **nothing** (money) left to give.	**I** is masculine and **nothing** is neuter.
C **Anyone** (man and woman) who knows him C will join **us** (men and women) today.	**Anyone** and **us** are common gender.

Pronouns and the very special verb *to be*

The verb *to be* is special because it has its own rule relating to case and pronouns:

The verb *to be* takes the same case after it as before it.

This is because *to be* links a subject to a **complement**, which is something that is needed to complete the meaning. The verb *to be*, in its many forms, is sometimes called a **linking** or **relating verb**.

The rule means that the subjective case form of the pronoun is used before and after the verb.

It is she who was lost. — **It** is the subject of the sentence and **she** is the complement. **Is** is part of the verb *to be*.

In the sentence above, you might expect that *her* would be correct, because *her* is the normal objective form of the pronoun. But *she* is correct because it is the complement of the verb *is*.

Here are some more examples:

It is they who need to pull up their socks.

It was she who did most of the work.

It is I who baked the cake.

REMEMBER

A complement is a word that is needed to give meaning. Prepositions such as *with* and *under*, and verbs such as *be* and *feel* need a complement to make sense: **with** *me*, **under** *it*, **be** *happy*, **feel** *hungry*.

This rule is gradually changing, because many people feel that it is very old-fashioned. However, it is still important in formal writing.

Adjectives

An adjective is a describing word. It describes or adds meaning to a noun or pronoun.

In each of the following phrases, the adjective describes a noun:

a **tall** building — **Tall** is an adjective. It describes the noun *building*.

a **hungry** cat — **Hungry** is an adjective. It describes the noun *cat*.

In the following sentence, the adjective describes a pronoun:

She is **funny**. — **Funny** is an adjective. It describes the pronoun *she*.

(See Adjectival phrases, p. 39 and Adjectival clauses, p. 44.)

There are many types of adjectives. They all describe nouns or pronouns.

a **strong** boy
descriptive adjective

Descriptive or describing adjectives

These are the most common types of adjectives. *Big*, *small* and *happy* are descriptive adjectives. They tell us about the qualities of a person or thing. Descriptive adjectives can be divided into *factual adjectives* and *classifying adjectives*. Factual adjectives tell us about the qualities of a person or thing, as in *kind person* or *big ship*. Classifying adjectives place something into a group or type, as in *Siamese cat* or *Australian history*.

Possessive adjectives

A possessive adjective shows possession.

This is **my** bike.
Possessive adjective

Possessive adjectives have to match the person and number of the nouns and pronouns that they modify.

	Singular	Plural
First person	my	our
Second person	your	your
Third person	his, her, its	their

Possessive adjectives *must* be followed by a noun. Possessive adjectives are sometimes called *pronoun adjectives* or *pronominal adjectives*.

Numeral or numbering adjectives

A numeral adjective describes the number or numerical order of nouns or pronouns.

two geese
numeral adjective

There are two different kinds of numeral adjectives: *cardinal adjectives* and *ordinal adjectives*.

- Cardinal adjectives tell us the number of things: *ten* toes, *eleven* players, *one* cake, etc.
- Ordinal adjectives tell us the order of things in a numerical sequence: *first* runner, *third* song, *tenth* biscuit, etc.

Numerical adjectives are sometimes called *quantity adjectives*.

Demonstrative adjectives

A demonstrative adjective is an adjective that demonstrates or points out a specific noun.

In the following sentences, the demonstrative adjectives point out a noun:

This hat is mine.	**This** points out the noun *hat*.
That hat is yours.	**That** points out the noun *hat*.
These shoes are mine.	**These** points out the noun *shoes*.
Those shoes are yours.	**Those** points out the noun *shoes*.

Demonstrative adjectives are sometimes called *pointing adjectives* or *determiners*.

Distributive adjectives

A distributive adjective is an adjective that refers to individual members of a group separately, rather than to the group as a whole.

Each cat was howling.
Distributive adjective

The distributive adjectives are:

each every either neither

Remember that distributive adjectives refer to individual things, so each is singular in number and requires a singular verb.

Neither Bill nor Jane **is** here.

Each bird **catches** a worm.

Interrogative adjectives

An interrogative adjective is an adjective that asks a question. In the following sentences, the interrogative adjectives are highlighted:

Which animal made that sound?

What make of plane is that?

Whose friend is waiting?

Interrogative adjective or interrogative pronoun?

In some sentences, the question words ***which***, ***what*** and ***whose*** are used as interrogative adjectives. In other sentences, they are used as interrogative pronouns.
How can we tell the difference?
If the question word is followed by a noun, it is an interrogative adjective:
Which horse finished last?
If the question word is not followed by a noun, it is an interrogative pronoun:
Which finished last?

Modal adjectives

A modal adjective shows an amount of probability or certainty.

a **possible** event

a **definite** result

Words like **certain**, **likely**, **unlikely** and **probable** are modal adjectives.

Indefinite adjectives

Indefinite adjectives refer to number but do not give the exact number.

Some, *few*, *many* and *most* are examples of indefinite adjectives in the following sentences, because each modifies a noun:

Some people are very kind.

Few parents would come to the show.

Many children are swimming.

Most cars are shiny.

When an indefinite adjective is not followed by a noun, it is called an *indefinite pronoun*.
(See Indefinite pronouns, p. 10.)

More about adjectives

Adjectives and degree

Most adjectives show degree. Degree is used to compare things. It tells how much more or less.

There are three degrees: *positive*, *comparative* and *superlative*.

- Positive is the first degree. It describes a particular quality of something: *My dog is* **strong**.
- Comparative is the second degree. It compares a particular quality of two things: *My dog is* **stronger** *than Rory's dog.*
- Superlative is the third, and highest, degree of comparison. It compares a particular quality of more than two things: *My dog is the* **strongest** *dog in the world!*

REMEMBER

There is no degree between the comparative and the superlative. We should never say that something is 'more bigger' or 'more stronger'!

Many adjectives take the endings *-er* for the comparative and *-est* for the superlative. Here are some examples:

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
big	bigg**er**	bigg**est**
soft	soft**er**	soft**est**
ugly	ugli**er**	ugli**est**
small	small**er**	small**est**

Sometimes, the spelling of the adjective changes when *-er* and *-est* are added. Always check your dictionary if you are unsure!

Some adjectives seem clumsy if you add *-er* or *-est*. They form their comparative and superlative forms with the adverbs *more* or *most* instead. Here are some examples:

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
beautiful	**more** beautiful	**most** beautiful
delicate	**more** delicate	**most** delicate
reliable	**more** reliable	**most** reliable
horrible	**more** horrible	**most** horrible

REMEMBER

The superlative is the highest degree of comparison. We should never say that something is 'the most biggest' or the 'most beautifullest'!

Some adjectives have irregular forms:

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
good	better	best
many	more	most
little	less	least
bad	worse	worst

Absolute words

Some adjectives do not have a comparative or superlative degree. They are sometimes called *absolute words*. For example, if something is **empty**, it cannot be more or less empty. (See Making sense, p. 121.)

Here are some absolute words:

full dead correct perfect whole equal

Fewer and less

The adjectives *fewer* and *less* are often confused, but they are used in different ways. (See Count/countable nouns, p. 2.)

- *Fewer* refers to numbers of things. It is used with *countable nouns*:

  Fewer people crossed the bridge.

- *Less* refers to quantities. It is used with *non-countable nouns*:

  Less butter is needed in the cake.

Fewer is always followed by a plural noun. This means that any verb that follows the noun will also be plural.

Fewer apples were on the tree. **Apples** is plural, so the verb *were* is also plural.

Less is followed by a singular noun:

Less water was on the road. **Water** is singular, so the verb *was* is also singular.

Verbal adjectives (participles)

A verbal adjective, or participle, is a verb ending in *-ing* that is used as an adjective. In other words, it is an action word that is used to describe a noun. (See Participles, p. 20; Gerunds, p. 2.)

REMEMBER

A verb is a doing, being or having word!

He went on a **walking** tour.	In this sentence, the word **walking** is an adjective because it describes the noun *tour*. But it also acts as a verb because it refers to an action—something someone does.
He is **walking** down the street.	In this sentence, the word **walking** is part of the verb *is walking*. It is the present participle.
Walking is good exercise.	In this sentence, the word **walking** is a verbal noun. It is the subject of the verb *is*.

Here are some more examples of verbal adjectives:

a **falling** rock a **swimming** lesson a **performing** seal

Verbs

A verb is a doing, being or having word.

Here are some examples of verbs:

scratched was have

My cat **was** angry.
Verb

Verbs are different kinds of processes, that is, they are things that are going on. Verbs tell us what is happening.

There are many kinds of verbs. In the following sentences, the verbs are highlighted:

I **like** ice cream.

You **won't like** it.

My sister **walked** home.

Dad **should cook** tonight.

The movie **will be** good!

I **have read** that book.

Doing verbs

There are four different types of *doing* verbs: *action verbs*, *saying verbs*, *sensing verbs* and *relating verbs*.

The bird **flew**!
Verb

- Action verbs involve an action—something that is done.
  Run, jump and *flew* are action verbs.
- Saying verbs involve speech—something that is said.
  Shout, whisper and *scream* are saying verbs.
- Sensing verbs involve thought and feelings—something that is sensed or felt.
  Love, remember and *imagine* are sensing verbs.
- Relating verbs involves linking or relating—how pieces of information are linked.
  Be, have and *become* are relating verbs.

Action verbs

In the following poem, the action verbs are highlighted:

Me—Moving

I **dart** and **dash**,
I **jig** and **jump**,
I **scamper**,
skate and **scramble**.
I **strut** and **stride**,
I **slip** and **slide**,
And frequently I **amble**.

I **leap** and **lurch**,
I **crawl** and **creep**,
I **rove** and **romp**
and **ramble**.

I **turn** and **trip**,
I **skid** and **skip**,
And now and then—
I **gambol**.

Gordon Winch

Saying verbs

Here are some examples of saying verbs:

ask	demand	explain	agree	suggest
reply	shout	whisper	murmur	say

Sensing verbs

Here are some examples of sensing verbs:

Thinking	Feeling	Perceiving
reflect	love	know
recall	hate	notice
forget	like	observe
wonder	fear	see

Relating verbs

Some verbs do not show actions, thoughts or feelings. These verbs simply link pieces of information in the text. They tell us how one piece of information relates to another. That is why they are called *relating* or *linking verbs*.

Here are some examples of sensing verbs:

Being	am	is	mean
Having	has	possess	include

Other types of verbs

Auxiliary verbs

An auxiliary verb is a verb that 'helps' another verb or participle to make a complete verb. For example:

I **have read** all of my books!	In this sentence, **have** is the auxiliary verb and **read** is the verb that it helps.
I **am going** for a walk.	In this sentence, **am** is the auxiliary verb and **going** is the participle that it helps.

Auxiliary verbs are very important, because they make it possible for us to give a clear sense of time. We use auxiliary verbs to form the different tenses of verbs. (See Tense, pp. 24–6.)

Here are some examples:

Past tense:	I **was** hungry.
Present tense:	I **am** singing.
Future:	I **will** go to the shops tomorrow.

The main auxiliary verbs are *to be, to have, to do* and *will*:

to be:	am, are, is, was, were, been
to have:	have, has, had
to do:	do, does, did

The verb *will* has no other forms. It is always *will*.

REMEMBER

An auxiliary verb is a verb that is used with other verbs or participles to complete a verb. For example, 'I **have** seen that movie'. Auxiliary verbs are also called **helping verbs**.

Modal verbs

Modal verbs give us information about the amount of possibility or certainty being expressed. They are usually auxiliary verbs.

- Some modal verbs express low modality or certainty—things that **might** happen.
- Some modal verbs express medium modality or certainty— things that **can** or **should** happen.
- Other modal verbs express high modality or certainty— things that **will** or **must** happen.

Here are some examples of modal verbs:

Low modality	Medium modality	High modality
may	should	must
might	can	will
could	need to	have to

Modality

Modality can be expressed with other parts of speech, not just with verbs.

Modal nouns	Modal adjectives	Modal adverbs
possibility	possible	possibly
probability	probable	probably
necessity	necessary	necessarily

Negative forms of verbs

So far we have talked about verbs in the positive form, but we can also make verbs negative. We do this in two ways.

- If there is an auxiliary verb, we add the word **not**:

Positive form	Negative form
I **have** worked hard.	I **have not** worked hard.

- If there is no auxiliary verb, we add **do not** or **does not:**

Positive form	Negative form
I **play** football.	I **do not play** football.
He **plays** football.	He **does not play** football.

Negatives can also be *contracted*, or made shorter.

I **have not** worked hard. → I **haven't** worked hard.

I **do not play** football. → I **don't play** football.

He **does not play** football. → He **doesn't play** football.

Finite verbs

Verbs can be *finite* or *non-finite*.

A finite verb has a subject, and can stand alone in a clause or sentence. It does not need another verb to make sense. Every clause or sentence must have a finite verb.

The tree **crashed** to the ground.	In this sentence, **crashed** is the finite verb and *the tree* is the subject.

To find the subject of a finite verb, you ask *Who?* or *What?* before the verb.

Question: *What crashed?*

Answer: *The tree*. So *tree* is the subject and *crashed* is a finite verb.

REMEMBER

A sentence must have a finite verb and a complete meaning!

Non-finite verbs

A non-finite verb cannot stand alone as the main verb in a sentence. It needs another verb to make sense. (See Sentences, p. 46, Clauses, p. 42.)

to see the movie	This phrase does not make sense. **To see** is not a finite verb. We need to add a subject and a finite verb to turn this phrase into a sentence.
We went to see the movie.	This is a complete sentence, because it has a subject and a finite verb.

There are two kinds of non-finite verbs: infinitives and participles.

Infinitives

The infinitive is the basic form of a verb. It has no subject, and is usually preceded by the word *to*.

Here are some examples:

to dance to eat to hear to walk to swim to stay

An infinitive can appear without the word *to:*

I did not dare **ask**.	In this sentence, **ask** is in the infinitive form. It is a much less clumsy way of saying *I did not dare* **to ask.**

Participles

There are two kinds of participles: *present participles* and *past participles*.

Present participles

The present participle of a verb is made by adding the ending *-ing* to the infinitive. It combines with an auxiliary verb to make a complete verb.
(See Compound and Auxiliary Verbs, p. 18.)

I **am walking** on the footpath.	The complete verb is **am walking**. The auxiliary verb is **am** (a part of the verb *to be*) and the present participle is **walking**.

Infinitive	Present participle
(to) dance	danc**ing**
(to) move	mov**ing**
(to) stay	stay**ing**
(to) try	try**ing**
(to) walk	walk**ing**

Past participles

The past participle of a verb is usually made by adding the ending *-ed* to the infinitive. It combines with an auxiliary verb to make a complete verb.

I **had walked** on the footpath.	The complete verb is **had walked**. The auxiliary verb is **had** and the past participle is **walked**.

Infinitive	Past participle
(to) dance	danc**ed**
(to) move	mov**ed**
(to) stay	stay**ed**
(to) try	tri**ed**
(to) walk	walk**ed**

A number of irregular verbs form their past participles in different ways.
Here are some examples:

Infinitive	Past participle
(to) be	been
(to) see	seen
(to) do	done
(to) drink	drunk
(to) fly	flown

We have **flown** over the mountain.
Irregular past participle

Transitive and intransitive verbs

A transitive verb has an object. The word *transitive* means *to pass over*. The action 'passes over' from the verb to the object.

The man **sailed** the yacht.	In this sentence, the action passes over from the verb, **sailed**, to the object, *yacht*.

To find out if a verb has an object, ask *Who?* or *What?* after the verb.

Question: *Sailed what?*

Answer: *The yacht*. So *yacht* is the object and *sailed* is a transitive verb.

An intransitive verb does not have an object.

The rain **stopped**.	This sentence has no object, because the action does not pass over from the verb, **stopped**, to something else.

Question: *Stopped what?*
Answer: There is no answer, because there is no object.
So the verb *stopped* in this sentence is intransitive.

Agreement in person and number

Finite verbs are limited by, or tied to, the subject. They must agree with the subject in *person* and *number*.

Person

Pronouns have three persons:

First person:	**I** like ice cream.
Second person:	**You** like ice cream.
Third person:	**He** likes ice cream.

Nouns are always in the third person.

Ciara likes ice cream.

Children like ice cream.

Verbs must change in order to agree with the 'person' of the subject.

First person:	I **like** ice cream.
Second person:	You **like** ice cream.
Third person:	Ciara **likes** ice cream.

Irregular verbs, like the verb *to be*, have more changes.

First person:	I **am** on holidays.
Second person:	You **are** my friend.
Third person:	He **is** my brother.

(See Nouns pp. 1–6, Pronouns pp. 6–13, Agreement, p. 42.)

Number

Nouns and pronouns have number. They can be *singular* (one) or *plural* (more than one).

If the subject of a clause or sentence is singular, the verb must be singular.

If the subject is plural, the verb must be plural. That is, the verb must agree with the subject in number. (See Clauses, p. 42.)

Here are some examples:

This horse jumps fences.

Singular subject	Singular verb	Object
This horse	jumps	fences.

These horses jump fences.

Plural subject	Plural verb	Object
These horses	jump	fences.

Singular or plural?

Sometimes, it can be difficult to work out whether the subject of a verb is singular or plural.

Here are some common situations that often cause confusion:

- When using words that end in *-s* but are singular:
  The news **is** good.
  Maths **is** easy for some people.
- When using words that look singular but are plural:
  The police **work** hard to protect the community.
  Cattle **are** herbivores.
- When using subjects with *and*:
  - ➔ The verb is plural if there are two persons or things:
    My sister and brother **are** good fun.
  - ➔ The verb is singular if the subject refers to one person or thing:
    Lemon and lime **is** my favourite flavour.
- When using *either ... or*; *neither ... nor*:
  - ➔ If both parts of the subject are singular, use a singular verb:
    Neither he nor I **is** going.
    She or I **is** playing.
    Either of my friends **is** invited.
    Neither of my parents **likes** rock music.
  - ➔ If one subject is singular and one is plural, the verb agrees with the nearer subject:
    Neither John nor they **are** going.
    Neither they nor John **is** going.
- When using a collective noun subject:
  Collective noun subjects, such as *team*, *class*, *herd* or *gang*, are singular or plural depending on the meaning of the sentence.
  The team **is** arriving today. (The team as a whole—singular)
  The team **are** putting on their shorts. (The team as individuals—plural)
- When using the subjunctive:
  If you are expressing something that you imagine might happen—that could happen, that might happen or that is just in your imagination—you must use the subjunctive mood of the verb:
  If I **were** there …
  If he **were** on our team …

Tricky?! Never mind, there aren't many of these cases!

The subjunctive mood requires you to change the usual rules of subject/verb agreement in terms of number (singular or plural) with subjects that are in the singular. You would usually say *I was…* or *He was…* (See Subjunctive mood, p. 26.)

More about verbs

Tense

Tense refers to time. It tells us when the process or action is taking place. There are three main tenses: the *past tense*, the *present tense* and the *future tense*.

- The past tense tells us that the action has already taken place:
  My mother **liked** school.
- The present tense tells us that the action is taking place now:
  I **like** school.
- The future tense tells us that the action will take place some time in the future:
  My baby sister **will like** school.

Each of these tenses has a number of different forms. These are:

- the simple form
- the continuous form
- the perfect form
- the perfect continuous form.

The simple form

The simple form consists of short forms of the present, past and future tenses.

Simple present tense:	I **walk** to the beach.
Simple past tense:	I **walked** to the beach.
Simple future tense:	I **will walk** to the beach.

The timeless present

The timeless present tense is another form of the present tense. It refers to actions that do not change. They keep going on, at the same time, always. They are part of the scheme of things.
Bears hibernate all winter.
Flowers bloom in the spring.
The timeless present looks like the simple present, but there is a difference. The simple present tense talks about things that are happening right now, and things that happen regularly.
'I **fly** really high.' (happening now)
I **have** an egg for breakfast every Sunday. (happens regularly)

The continuous form

The continuous form tells us that the action or process *is*, *was* or *will be continuing*. The continuous tenses use the verb *to be* with the present participle.

Present continuous tense:	I **am helping** my mum today.
Past continuous tense:	I **was helping** my mum last weekend.
Future continuous tense:	I **will be helping** my mum this weekend.

The perfect form

The perfect form tells us that the event, action or process *is complete, was completed* or *will be completed*. The perfect tenses use the verb *to have* with the past participle.

Present perfect tense:	He **has helped** a lot of people.
Past perfect tense:	He **had helped** a lot of people.
Future perfect tense	He **will have helped** a lot of people this year.

The perfect continuous form

The perfect continuous form combines the *perfect* and the *continuous* forms in the present, past and future tenses. It uses the verbs *to have* and *to be* with the present participle.

Present perfect continuous tense:	She **has been helping** many people.
Past perfect continuous tense:	She **had been helping** many people.
Future perfect continuous tense:	She **will have been helping** many people.

REMEMBER

The verb must agree with the subject in person and number!

TENSES

Simple	Continuous	Perfect	Perfect continuous
Present			
I jump	I am jumping	I have jumped	I have been jumping
You jump	You are jumping	You have jumped	You have been jumping
He/she/it jumps	He/she/it is jumping	He/she/it has jumped	He/she/it has been jumping
We jump	We are jumping	We have jumped	We have been jumping
You jump	You are jumping	You have jumped	You have been jumping
They jump	They are jumping	They have jumped	They have been jumping
Past			
I jumped	I was jumping	I had jumped	I had been jumping
You jumped	You were jumping	You had jumped	You had been jumping
He/she/it jumped	He/she/it was jumping	He/she/it had jumped	He/she/it had been jumping
We jumped	We were jumping	We had jumped	We had been jumping
You jumped	You were jumping	You had jumped	You had been jumping
They jumped	They were jumping	They had jumped	They had been jumping
Future			
I will jump	I will be jumping	I will have jumped	I will have been jumping
You will jump	You will be jumping	You will have jumped	You will have been jumping
He/she/it will jump	He/she/it will be jumping	He/she/it will have jumped	He/she/it will have been jumping
We will jump	We will be jumping	We will have jumped	We will have been jumping
You will jump	You will be jumping	You will have jumped	You will have been jumping
They will jump	They will be jumping	They will have jumped	They will have been jumping

Shall and *will* in common usage

Today, most people form the future tense by adding the verb ***will*** before the verb. Traditionally, people also used the verb ***shall***.

Shall and will were used in different situations:

- ***Shall*** was used for the first person personal pronoun, singular and plural:
  I shall *be helping.*
  We shall *be helping.*
- ***Will*** was used for the second and third person personal pronouns, singular and plural:
  He will *go shopping on Saturday.*
  They will *go to the beach on Sunday.*

To show emphasis, however, ***will*** was used for the first person and ***shall*** for the second and third person:

I will *win this race.*
They shall *be caught.*

Nowadays, most writers don't make this distinction, and ***shall*** is seldom used.

Mood

Mood refers to the way the process or action is expressed by the verb. There are three moods: *the indicative mood*, *the imperative mood* and *the subjunctive mood*.

The indicative mood

This is the mood of sentences that give facts.

The dog **broke** the vase.

The imperative mood

The imperative mood is a command. Commands are always in the second person, because we are speaking directly to the person we want to carry out the command. To give a command, we simply use the *infinitive*, which is the basic form of the verb. We usually don't include the subject, because it is understood.

Come inside and **eat** your dinner!

Give me that CD!

Stop making noise!

Commands can also be negative. To give a negative command, we add *do not* or *don't*:

Don't do that!

Do not go into the haunted house!

The subjunctive mood

This expresses some action as a doubt, possibility or wish. It is often used with the word *if* before the verb, and *would*, *could* or *should* after it.

If I **were** you, I **wouldn't** miss that concert!

If your cousin **should** come, he **would** be welcome.

If I **were** a superhero, I **could** fly home from school!

In the examples above, you will see that the verb *were* is plural, even when the subject is singular. This is because the subjunctive mood changes the usual rules about subject/verb agreement.

I wish I **were** a movie star.

Voice

Voice tells us who is doing the action. Usually, the subject is the person or thing doing the action of the verb, but sometimes the subject actually has the action done to it.

There are two voices: *active* and *passive*.

- **Active voice**
  In the active voice, the subject does something to some person or thing.

John **climbed** the fence.	**Climbed** is a verb in the active voice because the subject (*John*) did something (**climbed**) to something (*the fence*).

- **Passive voice**
  In the passive voice, the subject receives the action. The passive voice is made up of a form of the verb *to be* plus the past participle of the main verb.

The fence **was climbed** by John.	**Was climbed** is a verb in the passive voice because the subject (*the fence*) had something done to it (**was climbed**) by someone (*John).* It is the subject, (*the fence)*, that receives the action.

Verb phrase

A verb phrase is a group of words that contains a verb and any *auxiliary*, or helping, words, that it might have. It can be described as an *expanded verb*. A verb phrase can consist of a single word or number of words, such as *run* or *has been running*. (See Phrases, p. 38.)

Another type of verb phrase is a *phrasal verb*, which includes another word called a *particle*, such as *on* or *up*. The phrasal verb could be *jump on* or *catch up*.

Remember that verb phrases are still verbs. They tell us what is happening.

Verb group

A verb group is a word, or number of words, that does the job of a verb. Like noun groups, verb groups can be expanded.

In the following sentences, the verb groups are highlighted:

Jodie **runs**.

She **is running**.

Pierre **has not been running**.

They **could not have been running** .

The terms *verb groups* and *verb phrases* are sometimes combined under the term *group/phrase*. (See Groups, p. 38.)

The verb *to be*

The verb *to be* is a special verb. It has a number of meanings of its own (*to exist*, *to take place*, *to stay in the same place or condition*, etc.). It is also a very important *auxiliary,* or *helping*, verb.

The verb *to be* can show present, past and future tenses. It has more forms than any other verb in the English language.

Forms of the verb *to be*:

	Singular	Plural	Participle
Present	I **am** you **are** he/she/it **is**	we/you/they **are**	**being**
Past	I **was** you **were** he/she/it **was**	we/you/they **were**	**been**
Future	I **will be** you **will be** he/she/it **will be**	we/you/they **will be**	____

The verb *to be* can be an auxiliary verb, combining with other verbs to form the *continuous tenses.*

Present continuous tense: I **am riding** my bike.

Past continuous tense: He **was eating** his lunch.

Future continuous tense: She **will be going** home soon.

Compound and auxiliary verbs

Compound verbs are verbs that are made up of more than one word. They are made up from *auxiliary verbs* and *non-finite verbs* (infinitives or participles). They are also known as *verb phrases* or *verb groups*.

They **are going** to the movies.

John **had been helping** for some weeks.

Some auxiliary verbs that are used to show tense are:

have: I **have seen** a lion.

be: He **is looking for** his bag.

shall/will: I **will be finishing** work soon.

do: I **do not see** it that way.

I **have seen** a lion.
Auxiliary verb: have

Regular and irregular verbs

Most verbs form their tenses in a regular, or predictable, way.

Forms of the verb *to kick*:

	Singular	Plural	Participle
Present	I **kick** you **kick** he/she/it **kicks**	we/you/they **kick**	**kicking**
Past	I **kicked** you **kicked** he/she/it **kicked**	we/you/they **kicked**	**kicked**
Future	I **will kick** you **will kick** he/she/it **will kick**	we/you/they **will kick**	____

The important thing to remember is that the past tense and the past participle usually add the ending *-ed* to the infinitive. This ending may sometimes be shortened to *-d* or *-t*:

Infinitive	Past tense	Past participle
(to) learn	learned	learnt

Sometimes the past tense of the verb is the same as the past participle:

Infinitive	Past tense	Past participle
(to) spread	spread	spread

Where this occurs, the verb is said to be a *weak verb*.

Irregular verbs

Some verbs change their spelling in the past tense and past participle. These are called irregular verbs, because they do not follow the normal pattern. Irregular verbs are also called *strong verbs*.

Infinitive	Past tense	Past participle
(to) ring	rang	rung
(to) see	saw	seen
(to) do	did	done

Here are some common irregular verbs:

Infinitive	Past tense	Past participle
arise	arose	arisen
become	became	become
choose	chose	chosen
do	did	done
eat	ate	eaten
fly	flew	flown
give	gave	given
go	went	gone
know	knew	known
lie	lay	lain
ring	rang	rung
speak	spoke	spoken
take	took	taken
wear	wore	worn
write	wrote	written

REMEMBER

Don't confuse the past tense with the past participle! It's easy to get it right because the past participle is preceded by a part of another verb, usually the verb *to have*.

Past tense: *The bells* **rang** *last Sunday.*
Auxiliary plus past participle: *The bells* **have rung** *every Sunday this month.*
Do NOT say: *The bells ~~have rang~~.*
Say: ✓ *I saw the movie* OR *I have seen the movie.*
Don't say: ✗ *I ~~seen~~ the movie!*
Say: ✓ *I did it* OR *I have done it.*
Don't say: ✗ *I ~~done~~ it!*

Adverbs

An adverb adds meaning to, or modifies, verbs, adjectives and other adverbs.

An adverb is also called a *circumstance*, or part of a circumstance.

In the following sentences, the adverbs are highlighted:

I ran **quickly**.	**Quickly** is an adverb. It adds meaning to the verb *ran*—it tells *how* I ran.
I am a **very** fast runner.	In this sentence, **very** is an adverb. It adds meaning to the adjective *fast*—it tells *how fast* a runner I am.
You run **too** quickly for me.	In this sentence, **too** is an adverb. It adds meaning to the adverb *quickly*—it tells *how quickly* you run.

Types of adverbs

There are four main types of adverbs: *adverbs of manner*, *adverbs of time*, *adverbs of place* and *adverbs of reason.*

- Adverbs of manner tell *how* something is done:
  I walked **slowly.**
- Adverbs of time tell *when* something is done:
  I ran **yesterday**.
- Adverbs of place tell *where* something is done:
  I ran **there**.
- Adverbs of reason tell *why* something is done:
  Therefore I argue …

REMEMBER

Adverbs tell how, when, where and why.

There are other types of adverbs, too. It is important to learn how to recognise them.

- **Interrogative adverbs**
  An interrogative adverb is an adverb that asks a question. In the following sentences, the interrogative adverbs are highlighted:

  When did you get here?

  How are you?

  Where did she come from?

  Why are you laughing?

- **Negative adverbs**
  Negative adverbs are adverbs that make sentences negative. In the following sentences, the negative adverbs are highlighted:

  I do **not** agree.

  I will **not** do it!

  Never do that again!

Negative adverbs are often expressed as *contractions*. (See Apostrophes, p. 54.) The verb and the negative adverb are joined to make one shorter word:

do not → don't

will not → won't

is not → isn't

have not → haven't

- **Modal adverbs**

A modal adverb is an adverb that shows the amount of probability, certainty, ability or obligation in a sentence.

We will **probably** fly to the beach.
Modal adverb

Yes, probably, possibly, certainly and *definitely* are examples of modal adverbs. They are used to agree or to express doubt.
(See also Modal adjectives p. 15 and Modal verbs p. 19.)

- **Numerical adverbs**

  Numerical adverbs tell how often something took place:

  He called her **twice.**

- **Adverbs of degree**

  An adverb of degree tells us *to what extent* something happens:

  The train **almost** crashed.

  The plane flew **extremely** fast.

Words like *almost*, *hardly*, *enough* and *extremely* are adverbs of degree. They also tell us *how*, so they can be called *adverbs of manner*, too.

REMEMBER

Adverbs add meaning to verbs, adjectives and other adverbs. They do not add meaning to nouns.

Adverbs and the *-ly* ending

Many adverbs end in *-ly*.

I can **hardly** see. She is **nearly** ten.

Remember, though, that some *-ly* words can also be adjectives:

He was a **kindly** man.	In this sentence, **kindly** is an adjective, because it adds meaning to the noun *man*.
The **early** bird catches the worm.	In this sentence, **early** is an adjective, because it adds meaning to the noun *bird*.

You will always be able to tell the difference between adverbs and adjectives. Adverbs add meaning to verbs, adjectives and other adverbs. Adjectives only add meaning to nouns and pronouns.

More about adverbs

Adverbs and degree

Like adjectives, adverbs have three degrees of comparison: *positive*, *comparative* and *superlative*.

Adverbs with the *-ly* ending don't change their spelling to form the comparative and superlative, they simply add the adverbs *more* and *most*.

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
quietly	more quietly	most quietly
loudly	more loudly	most loudly
softly	more softly	most softly
clearly	more clearly	most clearly

Positive: The dog howled **loudly**.
Comparative: The wolf howled **more loudly**.
Superlative: The dog howled **most loudly**!

Not all adverbs have the *-ly* ending. In fact, many look like adjectives. Some even form their comparative and superlative in the same way as adjectives—by adding the *-er* and *-est* endings.

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
hard	harder	hardest
long	longer	longest
early	earlier	earliest

REMEMBER

Some words can be adverbs and adjectives—it just depends on the job that they do in the sentence!

A few adverbs form degrees of comparison in an irregular way.

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
good	better	best
much	more	most
badly	worse	worst
good	better	best
big	bigger	biggest

Prepositions

A preposition is a positioning word, such as **in**, **on**, and **near**. It tells you the position of something.

Prepositions are usually found in front of nouns or pronouns to form a phrase:

on the table **near** him

Phrases like the ones above are called *prepositional phrases*. The preposition has a close relationship with the noun or pronoun that follows it.

on the table	The preposition **on** is related to the noun *table*.
near him	The preposition **near** is related to the pronoun *him*.

A preposition in a phrase governs the noun or pronoun in the *objective case*. This means that when a preposition is followed by a pronoun, the pronoun must be in the objective case: *me, him, her, us, them* or *whom*.

I gave the skateboard **to him**.	The preposition **to** is followed by the pronoun **him. Him** is in the objective case.
Dad shared the lollies **between** Mark and **me**.	The preposition **between** is followed by the noun *Mark* and the preposition **me**. **Me** is in the objective case.

Be careful with prepositional phrases involving the pronoun *me*. A lot of people make the mistake of saying or writing *I* when they should say or write *me*.

Don't say: ✗ Mum gave the toys to Sarah and I.

Say: ✓ Mum gave the toys to Sarah and **me**.

In the sentence above, the pronoun *me* is the object of the preposition *to*.

A good way to work out whether to use *I* or *me* is to take out the other people involved. If we take out *Sarah and,* we are left with:

Mum gave the toys to [Sarah and] me.

Prepositions are usually short words, although some, like **underneath**, are long.

Here are some common prepositions. There are many more.

across	beneath	into	over	before
after	between	like	past	in
among	during	near	to	on
around	from	of	up	with

More about prepositions

Special prepositions

Some prepositions are always used with certain nouns, adjectives, or verbs, or in certain phrases.

✓ We say: The team ran **onto** the pitch.

✗ Not: The team ran ~~**into**~~ the pitch.

You know which preposition to use in most cases because it sounds right when you say it. *We are pleased* **with** *things*; *we rely* **on** *things* and *we bring things* **under** *control.*

Some special prepositions need special attention.

We say:

✓ different **from** ✓ **between** two ✓ **among** three (or more)

Not:

✗ different ~~**to**~~ ✗ ~~**among**~~ two ✗ ~~**between**~~ three (or more)

✗ different ~~**than**~~

Prepositions and adverbs

It is important not to confuse adverbs with prepositions. They may look exactly the same. You will know the difference because of the way the word is used.

I fell **down**.	In this sentence, **down** is an adverb of place; it tells *where* I fell.
I rowed **down** the river.	In this sentence, **down** is a preposition. It governs the noun **river**.

Another useful point to remember is that the preposition usually has a noun or pronoun after it.

I jumped **up**.	In this sentence, **up** is an adverb. It is not followed by a noun or preposition.
I ran **up** the hill.	In this sentence, **up** is a preposition. It is followed by the noun *hill*.

Note that the whole phrase, *up the hill*, does the job of an adverb and is called an *adverbial phrase.* It contains the preposition *up.*

Conjunctions

A conjunction is a joining word. Conjunctions help to hold texts together.

In the following sentences, the conjunctions are highlighted:

The bat hit the ball **and** the ball hit me.

I ate a sandwich **when** I got home from school.

Conjunctions help to link different parts of a sentence. They make the different parts *cohere*, or hold together. (See Cohesion, p. 60, Connectives, p. 61.)

There are two main types of conjunctions: *coordinating conjunctions* and *subordinating conjunctions*.

Coordinating conjunctions

A coordinating conjunction is a conjunction that links words, phrases or clauses that are grammatically 'equal'. That is, they are equally important to the meaning of a sentence.

I wore a hat **and** scarf to the snow.

I went skiing **but** didn't go tobogganing.

Coordinating conjunctions usually join the same or similar parts of a text together:

wet **and** cold tired **but** happy apple **or** pear

Coordinating conjunctions also join compound words and phrases:

Mary Jones **and** Pablo Lopes on the beach **and** in the water

Coordinating conjunctions can also join separate sentences into a single sentence:

Without a conjunction: This is his book. That is her book.

With a conjunction: This is his book **and** that is her book.

Here are some common coordinating conjunctions:

and	but	for	nor
or	so	yet	

My aunt gave me a shirt **but** I didn't like it.
Coordinating conjunction

Subordinating conjunctions

Some conjunctions join parts of sentences called *clauses*. A subordinating conjunction is a conjunction that introduces a *subordinate clause*. (See Clauses, p. 42.)

A subordinate clause is dependent upon the main clause. It cannot exist without it.

I want to be a pilot **when** I grow up.

This sentence contains two clauses, *I want to be a pilot* and *when I grow up*.

The clause *when I grow up* is subordinate to, or dependent on, the clause *I want to be a pilot*. *When I grow up* doesn't make sense by itself. The word that joins the two clauses is *when.* This is called a subordinating conjunction.

Here are some common subordinating conjunctions:

after	before	though
whenever	although	once
unless	where	as
since	until	because
than	when	while

REMEMBER

A clause is a group of words that contains a finite verb and its subject. There can be more than one clause in a sentence.

More examples of subordinating conjunctions:

I'm all right **once** I get started.

I can't get into the house **until** Mum comes home.

This is the place **where** I go to school.

Correlative conjunctions

Some conjunctions exist in pairs. These conjunctions are called correlative conjunctions.

The most common correlative conjunctions are:

both … and	either … or
neither … nor	not only … but also
whether … or	not … but
as … as	

The batsman was **not only** stumped **but also** caught.

Neither Alberto **nor** Maria is in my class.

Articles

An article describes a noun and is a special kind of adjective.

There are only three articles:

the a an

The is called *the definite article*. ***A*** and ***an*** are called *indefinite articles*. (See Demonstrative adjectives, p. 14.)

The Pacific Ocean	**A** river	**An** ocean
Definite article	**Indefinite article**	**Indefinite article**

Definite article

The is the definite article. It is called definite because it refers to a particular thing or things.

The video game is really hard to complete!

I would like **the** steamed dumplings, please.

Indefinite article

A and **an** are indefinite articles. These articles refer to general, rather than particular, things.

Wear **a** coat, as it is very cold.

An owl is in the tree.

A coat refers to any coat, not a particular or special one. *An* refers to any owl, not a particular or special one.

A is used in front of a consonant:	**a** coat
An is used in front of a vowel.	**an** owl

Interjections

An interjection is a word that is 'thrown in' to interrupt the flow of conversation or writing. Interjections usually express a strong feeling about something.

Ouch! That hurt.

Eek! What was that noise?

Ugh! I don't like tomato.

Interjection

Interjections are usually followed by an exclamation mark and, therefore, are types of exclamations.

Here are some examples of interjections:

Oh!	Oops!	Wow!
Ah!	Ouch!	Phew!

Parsing

Parsing means to break down a sentence into each of its separate parts.

The word *parsing* comes from the Latin word *pars* meaning 'part'. When you parse a sentence, you identify the name and function of each word. That is, you state the job that each word is doing.

Here is an example of parsing:

The hungry tiger watched them closely.

1. Start by naming each part of speech in the sentence:

The	hungry	tiger	watched	them	closely.
article	**adjective**	**noun**	**verb**	**pronoun**	**adverb**

2. Then, say what you know about each part of speech:

The	definite article
hungry	descriptive adjective modifying the noun *tiger*
tiger	common noun, third person; singular number; common gender (masculine or feminine); subjective case, subject of the verb *watched*
watched	transitive, finite verb; third person, singular number to agree with its subject, *tiger*; past tense, indicative mood, active voice
them	personal pronoun; third person; plural number; common gender; objective case after the verb *watched*
closely	adverb of manner modifying the verb *watched*

Today, we are more interested in the functions of words in a text as a whole, and how texts work in real-life situations.