

English Grammar Terms

Active Voice

In the active voice, the subject of the verb does the action (eg They killed the President). See also Passive Voice.

Adjective

A word like big, red, easy, French etc. An adjective describes a noun or pronoun.

Adverb

A word like slowly, quietly, well, often etc. An adverb modifies a verb.

Article

The "indefinite" articles are a and an. The "definite article" is the.

Auxiliary Verb

A verb that is used with a main verb. Be, do and have are auxiliary verbs. Can, may, must etc are modal auxiliary verbs.

Clause

A group of words containing a subject and its verb (for example: It was late when he arrived).

Conjunction

A word used to connect words, phrases and clauses (for example: and, but, if).

Infinitive

The basic form of a verb as in to work or work.

Interjection

An exclamation inserted into an utterance without grammatical connection (for example: oh!, ah!, ouch!, well!).

Modal Verb

An auxiliary verb like can, may, must etc that modifies the main verb and expresses possibility, probability etc. It is also called "modal auxiliary verb".

Noun

A word like table, dog, teacher, America etc. A noun is the name of an object, concept, person or place. A "concrete noun" is something you can see or touch like a person or car.

An "abstract noun" is something that you cannot see or touch like a decision or happiness. A "countable noun" is something that you can count (for example: bottle, song, dollar). An "uncountable noun" is something that you cannot count (for example: water, music, money).

Object

In the active voice, a noun or its equivalent that receives the action of the verb. In the passive voice, a noun or its equivalent that does the action of the verb.

Participle

The -ing and -ed forms of verbs. The -ing form is called the "present participle". The -ed form is called the "past participle" (for irregular verbs, this is column 3).

Part Of Speech

One of the eight classes of word in English - noun, verb, adjective, adverb, pronoun, preposition, conjunction and interjection.

Passive Voice

In the passive voice, the subject receives the action of the verb (eg The President was killed). See also Active Voice.

Phrase

A group of words not containing a subject and its verb (eg on the table, the girl in a red dress).

Predicate

Each sentence contains (or implies) two parts: a subject and a predicate. The predicate is what is said about the subject.

Preposition

A word like at, to, in, over etc. Prepositions usually come before a noun and give information about things like time, place and direction.

Pronoun

A word like I, me, you, he, him, it etc. A pronoun replaces a noun.

Sentence

A group of words that express a thought. A sentence conveys a statement, question, exclamation or command. A sentence contains or implies a subject and a predicate. In simple terms, a sentence must contain a verb and (usually) a subject. A sentence starts with a capital letter and ends with a full stop (.), question mark (?) or exclamation mark (!).

Subject

Every sentence contains (or implies) two parts: a subject and a predicate. The subject is the main noun (or equivalent) in a sentence about which something is said.

Tense

The form of a verb that shows us when the action or state happens (past, present or future). Note that the name of a tense is not always a guide to when the action happens. The "present continuous tense", for example, can be used to talk about the present or the future.

Verb

A word like (to) work, (to) love, (to) begin. A verb describes an action or state.
