

100 Key Grammatical Terms

Abstract Noun to Exclamatory Sentence (page one, below)

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1. **Abstract Noun**

A noun (such as *courage* or *freedom*) that names an idea, event, quality, or concept. Contrast with [concrete noun](#).

2. **Active Voice**

The verb form or voice in which the subject of the sentence performs or causes the action expressed by the verb. Contrast with [passive voice](#).

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4. **Adjective**

The part of speech (or word class) that modifies a noun or a pronoun. Adjective forms: [positive](#), [comparative](#), [superlative](#). Adjective: *adjectival*.

5. **Adverb**

The part of speech (or word class) that is primarily used to modify a verb, adjective, or other adverb. Adverbs can also modify [prepositional phrases](#), [subordinate clauses](#), and complete [sentences](#).

6. **Affix**

A [prefix](#), [suffix](#), or [infix](#): a word element (or [morpheme](#)) that can be attached to a [base](#) or [root](#) to form a new word. Noun: *affixation*. Adjective: *affixable*.

7. **Agreement**

The correspondence of a verb with its [subject](#) in [person](#) and [number](#), and of a pronoun with its [antecedent](#) in person, number, and [gender](#).

8. **Appositive**

A noun, [noun phrase](#), or series of nouns used to identify or rename another noun, noun phrase, or pronoun.

9. **Article**

A type of [determiner](#) that precedes a noun: *a*, *an*, or *the*.

10. **Attributive**

An adjective that usually comes *before* the noun it modifies without a [linking verb](#). Contrast with [predicative adjective](#).

11. **Auxiliary**

A verb that determines the [mood](#) or [tense](#) of another verb in a [verb phrase](#). Also known as a [helping verb](#). Contrast with [lexical verb](#).

12. **Base**

The form of a word to which [prefixes](#) and [suffixes](#) are added to create new words.

13. **Capital Letter**

The form of an alphabetical letter (such as *A*, *B*, *C*) used to begin a sentence or [proper noun](#); an uppercase letter, in contrast to [lower case](#). Verb: *capitalize*.

14. **Case**

A characteristic of nouns and certain pronouns that expresses their relationship to other words in a sentence. Pronouns have three case distinctions: [subjective](#), [possessive](#), and [objective](#). In English, nouns have only one case [inflection](#), the possessive. The case of nouns other than the possessive is sometimes called the *common case*.

15. **Clause**

A group of words that contains a [subject](#) and a [predicate](#). A clause may be either a sentence (an [independent clause](#)) or a sentence-like construction within a sentence (a [dependent clause](#)).

16. **Common Noun**

A noun that can be preceded by the [definite article](#) and that represents one or all of the members of a class. As a general rule, a common noun does not begin with a [capital letter](#) unless it appears at the start of a sentence. Common nouns can be subcategorized as [count nouns](#) and [mass nouns](#). Semantically, common nouns can be classified as [abstract nouns](#) and [concrete nouns](#). Contrast with [proper noun](#).

17. **Comparative**

The form of an adjective or adverb involving a comparison of more or less, greater or lesser.

18. **Complement**

A word or word group that completes the [predicate](#) in a sentence. The two kinds of complements are *subject complements* (which follow the verb *be* and other [linking verbs](#)) and *object complements* (which follow a [direct object](#)). If it identifies the subject, the complement is a noun or pronoun; if it describes the subject, the complement is an adjective.

19. **Complex Sentence**

A sentence that contains at least one [independent clause](#) and one [dependent clause](#).

20. **Compound-Complex Sentence**

A sentence that contains two or more [independent clauses](#) and at least one [dependent clause](#).

21. **Compound Sentence**

A sentence that contains at least two [independent clauses](#).

22. **Conditional Clause**

A type of [adverbial clause](#) that states a hypothesis or condition, real or imagined. A conditional clause may be introduced by the [subordinating conjunction](#) *if* or another conjunction, such as *unless* or *in case of*.

23. **Conjunction**

The part of speech (or word class) that serves to connect words, phrases, clauses, or sentences. The two main types of conjunction are [coordinating conjunctions](#) and [subordinating conjunctions](#).

24. **Contraction**

A shortened form of a word or group of words (such as *doesn't* and *won't*), with the missing letters usually marked by an [apostrophe](#).

25. **Coordination**

The grammatical connection of two or more ideas to give them equal emphasis and importance. Contrast with [subordination](#).

26. **Count Noun**

A noun that refers to an object or idea that can form a [plural](#) or occur in a [noun phrase](#) with an [indefinite article](#) or with numerals. Contrast with [mass noun](#) (or noncount noun).

27. **Declarative Sentence**

A sentence in the form of a statement (in contrast to a [command](#), a [question](#), or an [exclamation](#)).

28. **Definite Article**

In English, the definite article *the* is a [determiner](#) that refers to particular nouns. Compare to [indefinite article](#).

29. **Demonstrative**

A [determiner](#) that points to a particular noun or to the noun it replaces. The demonstratives are *this*, *that*, *these*, and *those*. A *demonstrative pronoun* distinguishes its [antecedent](#) from similar things. When the word precedes a noun, it is sometimes called *a demonstrative adjective*.

30. **Dependent Clause**

A group of words that has both a [subject](#) and a [verb](#) but (unlike an [independent clause](#)) cannot stand alone as a sentence. Also known as a *subordinate clause*.

31. **Determiner**

A word or a group of words that introduces a noun. Determiners include [articles](#), [demonstratives](#), and [possessive pronouns](#).

32. **Direct Object**

A noun or pronoun in a sentence that receives the action of a [transitive verb](#). Compare to [indirect object](#).

33. **Ellipsis**

The omission of one or more words, which must be supplied by the listener or reader. Adjective: *elliptical* or *elliptic*. Plural, ellipses.

34. **Exclamatory Sentence**

A sentence that expresses strong feelings by making an [exclamation](#). (Compare with sentences that make a [statement](#), express a [command](#), or ask a [question](#).)

35.34. **Future Tense**

A verb form indicating action that has not yet begun. The simple future is usually formed by adding the [auxiliary](#) *will* or *shall* to the [base form of a verb](#).

36.35. **Gender**

A grammatical classification which in English applies primarily to the third-person singular [personal pronouns](#): *he, she, him, her, his, hers*.

37.36. **Gerund**

A [verbal](#) that ends in *-ing* and functions as a noun.

38.37. **Grammar**

The set of rules and examples dealing with the [syntax](#) and word structures of a language.

39.38. **Head**

The key word that determines the nature of a [phrase](#). For example, in a [noun phrase](#), the head is a noun or pronoun.

40.39. **Idiom**

A set expression of two or more words that means something other than the literal meanings of its individual words.

41.40. **Imperative Mood**

The form of the verb that makes direct commands and requests.

42.41. **Imperative Sentence**

A sentence that gives advice or instructions or that expresses a request or command.

43.. **Indefinite Article**

The [determiner](#) *a* or *an*, which marks an unspecified [count noun](#). *A* is used before a word that starts with a [consonant](#) sound ("a bat," "a unicorn"). *An* is used before a word that starts with a [vowel](#) sound ("an uncle," "an hour").

44.43. **Independent Clause**

A group of words made up of a [subject](#) and a [predicate](#). An independent clause

(unlike a [dependent clause](#)) can stand alone as a [sentence](#). Also known as a *main clause*.

45.44. [Indicative Mood](#)

The [mood](#) of the verb used in ordinary statements: stating a fact, expressing an opinion, asking a question.

46.45. [Indirect Object](#)

A noun or pronoun that indicates to whom or for whom the action of a verb in a sentence is performed.

47.46. [Indirect Question](#)

A sentence that reports a [question](#) and ends with a [period](#) rather than a [question mark](#).

48.47. [Infinitive](#)

A [verbal](#)--usually preceded by the [particle](#) *to*--that can function as a noun, an adjective, or an adverb.

49.48. [Inflection](#)

A process of word formation in which items are added to the [base](#) form of a word to express grammatical meanings.

50.49. [-ing Form](#)

A contemporary linguistic term for the [present participle](#) and [gerund](#): any verb form that ends in *-ing*.

51.50. [Intensifier](#)

A word that emphasizes another word or phrase. Intensifying adjectives modify nouns; intensifying adverbs commonly modify verbs, [gradable](#) adjectives, and other adverbs.

52.51. [Interjection](#)

The part of speech that usually expresses emotion and is capable of standing alone.

53.52. [Interrogative Sentence](#)

A sentence that asks a question. (Compare with sentences that make a [statement](#), deliver a [command](#), or express an [exclamation](#).)

54.53. [Interrupting Phrase](#)

A word group (a statement, question, or exclamation) that interrupts the flow of a sentence and is usually set off by commas, dashes, or parentheses.

55.54. [Intransitive Verb](#)

A verb that does not take a [direct object](#). Contrast with [transitive verb](#).

56.55. **Irregular Verb**

A verb that does not follow the usual rules for verb forms. Verbs in English are irregular if they do not have a conventional *-ed* form.

57.56. **Linking Verb**

A verb, such as a form of *be* or *seem*, that joins the subject of a sentence to a complement. Also known as a copula.

58.57. **Mass Noun**

A noun (such as *advice*, *bread*, *knowledge*) that names things which cannot be counted. A mass noun (also known as a *noncount noun*) is used only in the singular. Contrast with count noun.

59.58. **Modal**

A verb that combines with another verb to indicate mood or tense.

60.59. **Modifier**

A word, phrase, or clause that functions as an adjective or adverb to limit or qualify the meaning of another word or word group (called the head).

61.60. **Mood**

The quality of a verb that conveys the writer's attitude toward a subject. In English, the indicative mood is used to make factual statements or pose questions, the imperative mood to express a request or command, and the (rarely used) subjunctive mood to show a wish, doubt, or anything else contrary to fact.

62.61. **Negation**

A grammatical construction that contradicts (or negates) part or all of a sentence's meaning. Such constructions commonly include the negative particle *not* or the contracted negative *n't*.

63.62. **Noun**

The part of speech (or word class) that is used to name or identify a person, place, thing, quality, or action. Most nouns have both a singular and plural form, can be preceded by an article and/or one or more adjectives, and can serve as the head of a noun phrase.

64.63. **Number**

The grammatical contrast between singular and plural forms of nouns, pronouns, determiners, and verbs.

65.64. **Object**

A noun, pronoun, or noun phrase that receives or is affected by the action of a verb in a sentence.

66.65. **Objective Case**

The case or function of a pronoun when it is the direct or indirect object of a verb

or verbal, the object of a preposition, the subject of an infinitive, or an appositive to an object. The objective (or *accusative*) forms of English pronouns are *me, us, you, him, her, it, them, whom, and whomever*.

67.66. **Participle**

A verb form that functions as an adjective. Present participles end in *-ing*; past participles of regular verbs end in *-ed*.

68.67. **Particle**

A word that does not change its form through inflection and does not easily fit into the established system of parts of speech.

69.68. **Parts of Speech**

Traditional term for the categories into which words are classified according to their functions in sentences.

70.69. **Passive Voice**

A verb form in which the subject receives the verb's action. Contrast with active voice.

71.70. **Past Tense**

A verb tense (the second principal part of a verb) indicating action that occurred in the past and which does not extend into the present.

72.71. **Perfect Aspect**

A verb construction that describes events occurring in the past but linked to a later time, usually the present.

73.72. **Person**

The relationship between a subject and its verb, showing whether the subject is speaking about itself (first person--*I* or *we*); being spoken to (second person--*you*); or being spoken about (third person--*he, she, it, or they*).

74.73. **Personal Pronoun**

A pronoun that refers to a particular person, group, or thing.

75.74. **Phrase**

Any small group of words within a sentence or a clause.

76.75. **Plural**

The form of a noun that typically denotes more than one person, thing, or instance.

77.76. **Possessive Case**

The inflected form of nouns and pronouns usually indicating ownership, measurement, or source. Also known as *genitive case*.

78.77. **Predicate**

One of the two main parts of a sentence or clause, modifying the subject and including the verb, objects, or phrases governed by the verb.

79.78. **Predicative Adjective**

An adjective that usually comes after a linking verb and not before a noun. Contrast with [attributive adjective](#).

80.79. **Prefix**

A letter or group of letters attached to the beginning of a word that partly indicates its meaning.

81.80. **Prepositional Phrase**

A group of words made up of a [preposition](#), its [object](#), and any of the object's [modifiers](#).

82.81. **Present Tense**

A verb tense that expresses action in the present time, indicates habitual actions, or expresses general truths.

83.82. **Progressive Aspect**

A verb phrase made with a form of *be* plus *-ing* that indicates an action or condition continuing in the [present](#), [past](#), or [future](#).

84.83. **Pronoun**

A word (one of the traditional parts of speech) that takes the place of a noun, noun phrase, or noun clause.

85.84. **Proper Noun**

A noun belonging to the class of words used as names for unique individuals, events, or places.

86.85. **Quotation**

The reproduction of the words of a writer or speaker. In a [direct quotation](#), the words are reprinted exactly and placed in [quotation marks](#). In an [indirect quotation](#), the words are [paraphrased](#) and not put in quotation marks.

87.86. **Regular Verb**

A verb that forms its past tense and past participle by adding *-d* or *-ed* (or in some cases *-t*) to the [base form](#). Contrast with [irregular verb](#).

88.87. **Relative Clause**

A [clause](#) introduced by a [relative pronoun](#) (*which*, *that*, *who*, *whom*, or *whose*) or a [relative adverb](#) (*where*, *when*, or *why*).

89.88. **Sentence**

The largest independent unit of grammar: it begins with a capital letter and ends with a period, question mark, or exclamation point. A sentence is traditionally

(and inadequately) defined as a word or group of words that expresses a complete idea and that includes a subject and a verb.

90.89. **Singular**

The simplest form of a noun (the form that appears in a dictionary): a category of [number](#) denoting one person, thing, or instance.

91.90. **Subject**

The part of a sentence or clause that indicates what it is about.

92.91. **Subjective Case**

The case of a pronoun when it is the subject of a clause, a subject complement, or an appositive to a subject or a subject complement. The subjective (or *nominative*) forms of English pronouns are *I, you, he, she, it, we, they, who* and *whoever*.

93.92. **Subjunctive Mood**

The mood of a verb expressing wishes, stipulating demands, or making statements contrary to fact.

94.93. **Suffix**

A letter or group of letters added to the end of a word or stem, serving to form a new word or functioning as an inflectional ending.

95.94. **Superlative**

The form of an adjective that suggests the most or the least of something.

96.95. **Tense**

The time of a verb's action or state of being, such as past, present, and future.

97.96. **Transitive Verb**

A verb that takes a [direct object](#). Contrast with [intransitive verb](#).

98.97. **Verb**

The part of speech (or word class) that describes an action or occurrence or indicates a state of being.

99.98. **Verbal**

A verb form that functions in a sentence as a noun or a modifier rather than as a verb.

100. 99. **Word**

A sound or a combination of sounds, or its representation in writing, that symbolizes and communicates a meaning and may consist of a single [morpheme](#) or a combination of morphemes.

101. 100. **Word Class**

A set of words that display the same formal properties, especially

their [inflections](#) and distribution. Similar to (but not synonymous with) the more traditional term [part of speech](#).