

Grammar Terms Explained

In the 2014 National Curriculum children are expected to understand and use these terms:

Year 1 - letter, capital letter, word, singular, plural, sentence, punctuation, full stop, question mark, exclamation mark

Year 2 - noun, noun phrase, statement, question, exclamation, command, compound, suffix, adjective, adverb, verb, tense (past, present), apostrophe, comma

Year 3 - preposition conjunction, word family, prefix, clause, subordinate clause, direct speech, consonant, consonant letter vowel, vowel letter, inverted commas (or 'speech marks')

Year 4 - determiner, pronoun, possessive pronoun, adverbial

Year 5 - modal verb, relative pronoun, relative clause, parenthesis, bracket, dash, cohesion, ambiguity

Year 6 - subject, object, active, passive, synonym, antonym, ellipsis, hyphen, colon, semi-colon, bullet points

Please find below examples of these terms:

Adjective Adjectives give us more information about nouns.

For example: A tall giraffe. The weather grew cold.

Adverb Most adverbs, as their name suggests, tell us more about verbs. Adverbs like these are often formed by adding '-ly' to an adjective. *For example: The troll ate ravenously. The adverb 'ravenously' tells you how the troll was eating.*

A few adverbs modify adjectives. *For example: The map is very old. The adverb 'very' tells you how old it is.*

Apostrophe eg ' Apostrophes have two uses:

- to indicate a missing letter or letters in a shortened word. *For example: didn't (did not); we'd (we would).*
- to show what someone or something owns or possesses. There is no apostrophe in ordinary plurals like tomatoes and videos. *For example: the extra-terrestrial's toenails (the toenails of the extra-terrestrial)*

When the noun is plural and already ends in s, you add an apostrophe by itself. *For example: the cities' cathedrals; in three weeks' time.*

When a person's name ends in s, you add an apostrophe followed by s if you normally say an extra s in speaking. But you just add an apostrophe by itself when you do not normally say the s in speaking. *For example: St Thomas's Hospital; Achilles' armour.*

Clause A clause is a part of a sentence that has its own verb.

Main clause A sentence can contain one or more main clauses, linked by a conjunction such as and, but, or, or yet, or by a semicolon. *For example: We approached cautiously; the lioness was beginning to stir.*

Subordinate clause A subordinate clause begins with a subordinating conjunction such as because, if, or when, and it can come before or after the main clause. *For example: Because they eat aphids, ladybirds are useful in the garden.*

Relative clause A relative clause explains or describes something that has just been mentioned, and is introduced by that, which, who, whom, whose, when, or where. A relative clause can either restrict meaning: *For example: Of all Tolkien's books, the one which I prefer is The Hobbit.*

Or it can simply add further information, in which case you put a comma before it: *For example: The book, which Tolkien wrote for his children, was an instant success.*

Comma eg , Commas are used:

- to mark a pause in a sentence, especially to separate a subordinate clause from the main clause. *For example: When the howling stopped, we ventured out from the cave.*
- to separate items in a list or series. *For example: I've packed a bikini, flippers, snorkel, and a periscope.*
- in pairs before and after the name of someone who is being introduced or described. *For example: The author, Roald Dahl, once lived here.*

- to mark a pause in a compound sentence. *For example: The film is rated 15, but it's not that scary.*

Command A command or exclamation is a sentence ending with an exclamation mark. *For example: Come and see the ice beginning to thaw!*

Conjunction Conjunctions are used to join words, phrases, or clauses in a sentence. *For example: and, but, for, or, neither, nor, yet, although, because, if, until, unless, when, where, while, whereas.*

Coordinating conjunctions Coordinating conjunctions join words or clauses which are of equal importance in a sentence. They form compound sentences. *For example: and, but, for, or, neither, nor, yet (Would you prefer tea and biscuits, or coffee and cake?)*

Subordinating conjunctions Subordinating conjunctions are used to link a main and a dependent clause. They are used to form complex sentences. *For example: although, because, if, until, unless, when, where, while, whereas (Mira felt brave because she had her lucky pebble.)*

Connective Connectives are used to link ideas in a piece of writing. They often occur at the start of a sentence and connect it with a previous sentence or paragraph. *For example: moreover, nevertheless, finally, furthermore, and, thus*

(Nevertheless, he still remains popular with his millions of fans and continues to have hit records all over the world.)

Consonant Every letter in the English alphabet that is not a vowel.

Ellipsis **eg** ... An ellipsis is used to show that one or more words have been missed out or that a sentence is not finished. *For example: "No! Don't tell Dad about the ..."*

Exclamation mark **eg** ! You use an exclamation mark to indicate shouting, surprise, or excitement in direct speech. *For example: 'Stop! Don't drink! The goblet is poisoned!'*

It can also be used to express surprise, alarm, or excitement in a narrative. *For example: The sun was coming up. She must hurry! Soon the spell would wear off!*

Full stop **eg** . A full stop shows where a sentence ends, when the sentence is neither a question nor an exclamation. *For example: Our story begins in 1914, on the eve of the First World War.*

Full stops go within quotation marks in direct speech. *For example: He said, 'I'll meet you outside the cinema.'* Full stops go within parentheses, when these surround a complete sentence. *For example: The waiter arrived with a plate of toast. (I had ordered waffles.)*

Homophone A noun with the same sound as another. *For example: son and sun*

Hyphen eg - Hyphens connect two or more words which make up a compound noun or adjective. *For example: close-up; an ultra-huge sandwich.*

Inverted commas eg ' ' ' ' Inverted commas occur in pairs and can surround a single word or phrase, or a longer piece of text. *For example: 'Look!' said a voice behind me. 'Look at the sky!'*

Inverted commas are also known as speech marks, quotation marks, or (informally) quotes. Pairs of quotation marks can be single ('...') or double ("..."), but are never mixed.

Mnemonics Memory joggers such as a rhyme, a phrase or a shape. For example, seeing a dinosaur in the shape of a letter d to help your child to associate the dinosaur with the letter and sound d.

Noun Nouns are used to name people, places, or things and tell you who or what a sentence is about

Common noun Common nouns name people or things in general. Common nouns only begin with a capital letter when they start a sentence. For example: dancer, lizard, sandwich, television.

Proper noun Proper nouns give the name of a specific person, place or thing.

Proper nouns always begin with a capital letter. *For example: Max, Antarctica, Hallowe'en, Friday.*

Collective noun Collective nouns name groups of people or things. *For example: a team of athletes, a herd of sheep, a swarm of bees.*

Abstract noun An abstract noun is a thing that cannot be seen or touched, such as an idea, a quality or a feeling. *For example: happiness, truth, friendship.*

Phonemes The smallest unit of sounds in a word represented by letters/ groups of letters.

Pronoun Pronouns are used to replace a noun in a sentence or clause, and help to avoid having to repeat words.

Personal pronouns Personal pronouns replace the name of a person or thing.

When the pronoun is the subject of the clause: *For example: I, you, he, she, it, we, they (Zoe and Bill are coming to the concert. She's got a ticket, but he hasn't.)*

When the pronoun is the object: *For example: me, you, him, her, it, us, them (The guards were following us and we were unable to shake them off.)*

Reflexive pronouns Reflexive pronouns refer back to the thing the clause is about.

For example: myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves (Most baby birds are unable to feed themselves. I wanted to see for myself what all the fuss was about.)

Interrogative pronouns Interrogative pronouns are used to form questions. *For*

example: what, who, whom, whose (What is happening? Who wants some ice cream? Whose is this?)

Punctuation Punctuation is the use of special marks to make a piece of writing easier to read and understand. Punctuation marks show divisions and connections between sentences, clauses, or individual words.

Question mark eg ? Question marks are used to mark a sentence that is a question. Question marks usually come at the end of a sentence. *For example: Are there wild animals in this wood?*

Question A question is a sentence which ends with a question mark. *For example: When would the ice begin to thaw?*

Sentence A sentence is a group of words that contains a verb. It should make sense on its own. In writing, a sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark. It can contain just one clause, or several clauses joined by conjunctions or punctuation.

Simple sentence A simple sentence consists of one main clause. *For example: The cat is sleeping.*

Compound sentence A compound sentence consists of two or more main clauses joined by conjunctions such as and or but. *For example: The cat is sleeping but the dog is awake.*

Complex sentence A complex sentence contains a main clause and at least one other clause. The two clauses are joined by conjunctions such as although

Semicolon eg ; You use a semicolon to mark a break in a sentence that is longer, or more important, than a break made with a comma: *For example: The castle was desolate; no one had lived there for three centuries or more.*

Semicolons can separate a series of connected clauses introduced by a colon. *For example: There were three clues: there was mud on the carpet; the door had been forced; and the air in the room smelled of fish.*

A single semicolon can also separate two contrasting or balancing clauses. *For example: You bring cups and plates; I'll bring juice and sandwiches*

Tense The form of a verb that shows when something happens in the past, present and future.

- **Present tense** *For example: I am walking.*
- **Past tense** *For example: I have walked.*
- **Future Tense** *For example: I will walk.*

Verb A verb can describe an action or process (for example: dive, chew, heal, thaw), a feeling or state of mind (for example: worry, think, know, believe), or a state (for example: be, remain). A sentence usually contains at least one verb.

Vowels The letters a, e, i, o, u in the English alphabet.

(Source: www.oxfordowl.co.uk)