

## Abbreviation

An abbreviation is a shortened version of a word or group of words.

### acronyms.

Some words are abbreviated so that only a part of the original word is used.

*phone (telephone)*

*fridge (refrigerator)*

## Active and passive

Many verbs can be active or passive. For example, *bite*:

*The dog bit Ben.* (active)

*Ben was bitten by the dog.* (passive)

In the active sentence, the subject (*the dog*) performs the action. In the passive sentence, the subject (*Ben*) is on the receiving end of the action.

The two sentences give similar information, but there is a difference in focus.

The first is about what the dog did; the second is about what happened to Ben.

## Adjective

An adjective is a word that describes somebody or something. *Old, white, busy, careful* and *horrible* are all adjectives.

## Adverb

Adverbs give extra meaning to a verb, an adjective, another adverb or a whole sentence:

*I really enjoyed the party.* (adverb + verb)

*She's really nice.* (adverb + adjective)

Many adverbs are formed by adding *-ly* to an adjective, for example *quickly, dangerously, nicely*, but there are many adverbs which do not end in *-ly*. Note too that some *-ly* words are adjectives, not adverbs (eg *lovely, silly, friendly*).

In many cases, adverbs tell us:

how (manner) *slowly, happily, dangerously, carefully*

where (place) *here, there, away, home, outside*

when (time) *now, yesterday, later, soon*

how often (frequency) *often, never, regularly*

An **adverbial phrase** is a group of words that functions in the same way as a single adverb. For example: *by car, to school, last week, three times a day, first of all, of course*:

*They left yesterday.* (adverb) *She looked at me strangely.* (adverb)

*They left a few days ago.* (adverbial phrase) *She looked at me in a strange way.* (adverbial phrase)

(adverbial phrase) (adverbial phrase)

Similarly, an **adverbial clause** functions in the same way as an adverb. For example:

*It was raining yesterday.* (adverb)

*It was raining when we went out.* (adverbial clause).

## Alliteration

a phrase where adjacent or closely connected words begin with the same phoneme: *one wet wellington; free phone; several silent, slithering snakes.*

## Ambiguity

a phrase or statement which has more than one possible interpretation. This sometimes arises from unclear grammatical relationships. For example, in the phrase: '*police shot man with knife*', it is not specified whether the man had the knife or the police used the knife to shoot the man. Both interpretations are possible, although only one is logical. In poetry, ambiguity may extend meanings beyond the literal.

The sentence: '*Walking dogs can be fun*' has two possible interpretations: '*it is fun to take dogs for walks*' or '*dogs which go walking are fun*'.

Ambiguity is often a source of humour. Ambiguity may be accidental or deliberate.

## Antonym

a word with a meaning opposite to another: *hot - cold, light - dark, light - heavy*. A word may have more than one word as an antonym: *cold - hot/warm; big - small/tiny/little/titchy*.

## apostrophe (')

An apostrophe is a punctuation mark used to indicate either omitted letters or possession.

### omitted letters

We use an apostrophe for the omitted letter(s) when a verb is contracted (= shortened). For example:

*I'm (I am) who's (who is/has)*

*they've (they have) he'd (he had/would)*

*we're (we are) it's (it is/has)*

*would've (would have) she'll (she will)*

In contracted negative forms, *not* is contracted to *n't* and joined to the verb: *isn't, didn't, couldn't* etc.

In formal written style, it is more usual to use the full form.

There are a few other cases where an apostrophe is used to indicate letters that are in some sense 'omitted' in words other than verbs, eg *let's* (= *let us*), *o'clock* (= *of the clock*).

Note the difference between *its* (= '*belonging to it*') and *it's* (= '*it is*' or '*it has*')

*The company is to close one of its factories.* (no apostrophe)

*The factory employs 800 people. It's (= it is) the largest factory in the town.* (apostrophe necessary)

## Possession

We use an apostrophe + s for the possessive form:

*my mother's car*

*Joe and Fiona's house*

*the cat's tail*

*James's ambition*  
*a week's holiday*

With a plural 'possessor' already ending in s (eg *parents*), an apostrophe is added to the end of the word:

*my parents' car*  
*the girls' toilets*

But irregular plurals (eg *men*, *children*) take an apostrophe + s:  
*children's clothes*

The regular plural form (-s) is often confused with possessive -'s:  
*I bought some apples.* (not *apple's*)

Note that the possessive words *yours*, *his*, *hers*, *ours*, *theirs*, and *its* are not written with an apostrophe.

## Appendix

a section added to a document which offers non-essential or illustrative information.

## Article

*A*, *an* and *the* are articles. *A* (*an* before a vowel sound) is the indefinite article; *the* is the definite article. Articles are a type of determiner.

## Ascender

In written or typed script, many letters have the same height: *a*, *c*, *e*, *m*, *n*, *o*, *r*, *s*, *u*, *v*, *w*, *x*, *z*, (although in some scripts, *z* has a **descender**). Some letters have parts which extend beyond this: *b*, *d*, *f*, *h*, *k*, *l*, *t*. These parts are called **ascenders**.

## Audience

the people addressed by a text. The term refers to listeners, readers of books, film/TV audiences and users of information technology.

## Autobiography

a life story of an individual written by that person. Generally written in the first person.

## Auxiliary verbs

These are verbs that are used together with other verbs. For example:

*we are going*  
*Lucy has arrived*  
*can you play*

In these sentences, *going*, *arrived* and *play* are the main verbs. *Are*, *has* and *can* are auxiliary verbs, and add extra meaning to the main verb.

The most common auxiliary verbs are *be*, *have* and *do* (all of which can also be main verbs).

*Be* is used in continuous forms (*be* + *-ing*) and in passive forms:

*We are going away. Was the car damaged?*

*Have* is used in perfect verb forms:

*Lucy has arrived. I haven't finished.*

Do is used to make questions and negatives in the simple present and past tenses:

*Do you know the answer? I didn't see anybody.*

More than one auxiliary verb can be used together. For example:

*I have been waiting for ages. (have and been are auxiliary verbs)*

The remaining auxiliary verbs are modal verbs, eg *can, will*.

## Character

an individual in a story, play or poem whose personality can be inferred from their actions and dialogue. Writers may also use physical description of the individual to give readers clues about a character.

## chronological writing

writing organised in terms of sequences of events.

## Clause

A clause is a group of words that expresses an event (*she drank some water*) or a situation (*she was thirsty/she wanted a drink*). It usually contains a subject (*she* in the examples) and verb (*drank/was/wanted*).

Note how a clause differs from a phrase:

*a big dog* (a phrase - this refers to 'a big dog' but doesn't say what the dog did or what happened to it)

*a big dog chased me* (a clause - the dog did something)

A sentence is made up of one or more clauses:

*It was raining* (one clause)

*It was raining and we were cold.* (two main clauses joined by and)

*It was raining when we went out.* (main clause containing a subordinate clause - the subordinate clause is underlined)

A **main clause** is complete on its own and can form a complete sentence

(eg *It was raining*). A **subordinate clause or embedded clause or drop in** (*when we went out*) is part of the main clause and cannot exist on its own. In the following examples, the subordinate clauses are underlined:

*You'll hurt yourself if you're not careful.*

*Although it was cold, the weather was pleasant enough.*

*Where are the biscuits (that) I bought this morning?*

*John, who was very angry, began shouting.*

Although most clauses require a subject and verb, some subordinate clauses do not. In many such cases, the verb *be* can be understood.

For example:

*The weather, although rather cold, was pleasant enough.*

(= *although it was rather cold*)

*When in Rome, do as the Romans do.*

(= *when you are in Rome*)

*Glad to be home, George sat down in his favourite armchair.*

(= *he was glad to be home*)

see also **adverbial clause, noun clause, participle, phrase, relative clause, sentence**

## connectives:

*I sat down and turned on the television. Just then, I heard a strange noise.*

The phrase 'just then' relates these events in time.

Cohesion is also achieved by the use of words (such as **pronouns**) that refer back to other parts of the text. In these examples, such words are underlined:

*There was a man waiting at the door. I had never seen him before.*

*We haven't got a car. We used to have one, but we sold it.*

*I wonder whether Sarah will pass her driving test. I hope she does. (= I hope Sarah passes her driving test)*

## colon (:)

A colon is a punctuation mark used to introduce a list or a following example (as in this glossary). It may also be used before a second clause that expands or illustrates the first:

*He was very cold: the temperature was below zero.*

## comma (,)

A comma is a punctuation mark used to help the reader by separating parts of a sentence. It sometimes corresponds to a pause in speech.

In particular we use commas:

to separate items in a list (but not usually before *and*):

*My favourite sports are football, tennis, swimming and gymnastics.*

*I got home, had a bath and went to bed.*

to mark off extra information:

*Jill, my boss, is 28 years old.*

after a subordinate **clause** which begins a sentence:

*Although it was cold, we didn't wear our coats.*

with many connecting **adverbs** (eg *however, on the other hand, anyway, for example*):

*Anyway, in the end I decided not to go.*

## compound word

a word made up of two other words: *football, headrest, broomstick.*

## Inferential

the reader can read meanings which are not directly explained. For example, the reader would be able to make inferences about the time of year from information given about temperature, weather, etc and from characters' behaviour and dialogue.

## Conditional

A conditional sentence is one in which one thing depends upon another.

Conditional sentences often contain the **conjunction** *if*:

*I'll help you if I can.*

*If the weather's bad, we might not go out.*

Other conjunctions used in conditionals are *unless, providing, provided and as long as*.

A conditional sentence can refer to an imaginary situation. For example:  
*I would help you if I could.* (but in fact I can't)  
*What would you do if you were in my position?*  
*If the weather had been better, we could have gone to the beach.*  
The term 'conditional' is sometimes used to refer to the form *would* + verb:  
*would go, would help* etc.  
see also **auxiliary verb**

## conjunction

A word used to link **clauses** within a sentence. For example, in the following sentences, *but* and *if* are conjunctions:  
*It was raining but it wasn't cold.*

Subordinating conjunctions (eg *when, while, before, after, since, until, if, because, although, that*). These go at the beginning of a subordinate **clause**:

*We were hungry because we hadn't eaten all day.*  
*Although we'd had plenty to eat, we were still hungry.*  
*We were hungry when we got home.*  
see also **clause, connective**

## connective

A connective is a word or phrase that links clauses or sentences. Connectives can be **conjunctions** (eg *but, when, because*) or connecting adverbs (eg *however, then, therefore*).

## Commas

are often used to mark off connecting adverbs or adverbial phrases or clauses:

*First of all, I want to say ...*  
*I didn't think much of the film. Helen, on the other hand, enjoyed it.*  
Connecting adverbs and conjunctions function differently. Conjunctions (like *but* and *although*) join clauses within a sentence. Connecting adverbs (like *however*) connect ideas but the clauses remain separate sentences:  
*I was angry but I didn't say anything.* (*but* is a conjunction - one sentence)  
*Although I was angry, I didn't say anything.* (*although* is a conjunction - one sentence)  
*I was angry. However, I didn't say anything.* (*however* is an adverb - two sentences)  
B.

## dash (—)

A dash is a punctuation mark used especially in informal writing (such as letters to friends, postcards or notes). Dashes may be used to replace other punctuation marks (*colons, semicolons, commas*) or brackets:  
*It was a great day out — everybody enjoyed it.*

## Descender

In written or typed script, many letters have the same height: *a, c, e, m, n, o, r, s, u, v, w, x, z*. Some letters have parts which extend below this: *g, j, p, q, y*. These parts are called descenders. In some fonts, *f* and *z* have descenders.

## Determiner

Determiners include many of the most frequent English words, eg *the, a, my, this*. Determiners are used with nouns (*this book, my best friend, a new car*) and they limit (ie determine) the reference of the noun in some way.

Determiners include:

articles *a/an, the*

demonstratives *this/that, these/those*

possessives *my/your/his/her/its/our/their*

quantifiers *some, any, no, many, much, few, little, both, all, either, neither, each, every, enough*

numbers *three, fifty, three thousand etc*

some question words *which (which car?), what (what size?), whose (whose coat?)*

When these words are used as determiners, they are followed by a noun (though not necessarily immediately):

*this book is yours*

*some new houses*

*which colour do you prefer?*

Many determiners can also be used as **pronouns**. These include the demonstratives, question words, numbers and most of the quantifiers. When used as pronouns, these words are not followed by a noun - their reference includes the noun:

*this is yours* (= this book, this money, etc)

*I've got some*

*which do you prefer?*

## Dialogue

a conversation between two parties. May be spoken or written.

## Digraph

two letters representing one phoneme: *bath; train; ch/ur/ch*.

## direct speech and indirect speech

There are two ways of reporting what somebody says, direct speech and indirect speech.

In direct speech, we use the speaker's original words (as in a speech bubble). In text, speech marks ('...' or "...") — also called inverted commas or quotes) mark the beginning and end of direct speech:

*Helen said, 'I'm going home'.*

*'What do you want?' I asked.*

In indirect (or reported) speech, we report what was said but do not use the exact words of the original speaker.

Typically we change pronouns and verb tenses, and speech marks are not used:

*Helen said (that) she was going home.*

*I asked them what they wanted.*

## **discussion text**

a text (written or spoken) which presents all sides of an issue. A discussion text typically begins by outlining the issues before making points for and against. These points are backed up with evidence. It often concludes by stating an opinion in favour of one particular side, or by asking the reader/listener to decide. An example of a discussion text would be presenting arguments for and against school uniform, or for and against a new runway at Manchester Airport.

## **Edit**

to modify written work, either own or another's, in preparation for publication. This process takes place after **drafting** (composition), **revising** (major restructuring) and before **proof-reading** (a final check for typographical, spelling errors, etc). It involves checking of facts, minor improvements to style at sentence level, and checking for **accuracy** and **agreement**.

## **Ellipsis**

Ellipsis is the omission of words in order to avoid repetition. For example:

*I don't think it will rain but it might.* (= it might rain)

*'Where were you born?' 'Bradford.'* (= I was born in Bradford)

An ellipsis is also the term used for three dots (...) which show that something has been omitted or is incomplete.

## **Exclamation**

An exclamation is an utterance expressing emotion (joy, wonder, anger, surprise, etc) and is usually followed in writing by an **exclamation mark (!)**.

Exclamations can be **interjections**:

*Oh dear!*

*Good grief!*

*Ow!*

Some exclamations begin with *what* or *how*:

*What a beautiful day!*

*How stupid (he is)!*

*What a quiet little girl.*

Exclamations like these are a special type of **sentence** ('exclamative') and may have no verb.

see also **interjection**, **sentence**

### **exclamation mark (!)**

An exclamation mark is used at the end of a **sentence** (which may be exclamative, imperative or declarative) or an **interjection** to indicate strong emotion:

*What a pity!*

*Get out!*

*It's a goal!*

*Oh dear!*

## **explanation text**

Explanation text is written to explain how or why something happens.

## **fairy tale**

a story written for, or told to, children which includes elements of magic and magical folk, such as fairies, elves, goblins.

## **Fiction**

text which is invented by a writer or speaker. Characters, settings and events are created by the originator. In some cases, one of these elements may be factual: for example, the setting may be a named city or area; the text may be based on an historical event.

## **figurative language**

use of metaphor or simile to create a particular impression or mood. A writer may develop an idea of a character's military approach to life by using phrases and words which are linked with the army, such as *he was something of a loose cannon (metaphor); he rifled through the papers; his arm shot out; he marched into the room; he paraded his knowledge*. To link a character with a bird, she/he may use: *he flew down the stairs; they twittered to each other; he perched on his chair; his feathers were definitely ruffled*.

## **Genre**

this term refers to different types of writing, each with its own specific characteristics which relate to origin (legend/folk tale) or reader interest area - the types of books individuals particularly choose to read: adventure, romance, science fiction.

Texts with these specific features - often related to story elements, patterns of language, structure, vocabulary - may be described as belonging to a particular genre. These attributes are useful in discussing text and in supporting development of writing skills.

## **Glossary**

part of a text, often an **appendix**, which defines terms the writer/editor considers may be unfamiliar to the intended audience.

## **Grammar**

the conventions which govern the relationships between words in any language. Includes the study of word order and changes in words: use of inflections, etc. Study of grammar is important, as it enhances both reading and writing skills; it supports effective communication.

## **Grapheme**

written representation of a sound; may consist of one or more letters; for example the phoneme s can be represented by the graphemes s, se, c, sc

and ce as in *sun, mouse, city, science*.

## Homograph

words which have the same spelling as another, but different meaning: *the calf was eating/my calf was aching; the North Pole/totem pole; he is a Pole*. Pronunciation may be different: *a lead pencil/the dog's lead; furniture polish/Polish people*. A **homonym**.

## Homonym

words which have the same spelling or pronunciation as another, but different meaning or origin. May be a **homograph** or **homophone**.

## Homophone

words which have the same sound as another but different meaning or different spelling: *read/reed; pair/pear; right/write/rite*. A **homonym**.

## hyphen (-)

A hyphen is sometimes used to join the two parts of a **compound** noun, as in *golf-ball* and *proof-read*. But it is much more usual for such compounds to be written as single words (eg *football, headache, bedroom*) or as separate words without a hyphen (*golf ball, stomach ache, dining room, city centre*).

## information text

text written to inform. Examples include **explanation, report, procedure** or **recount**.

## innovation on text

a classroom strategy in which the teacher uses a familiar text as the model for a piece of new writing: *Georgina and the Dragon; The Very Hungry Kittens; Burglar Barry*.

## instruction text

text written to help readers achieve certain goals. The text may consist of a statement of the intended outcome, the materials needed to achieve it and a sequence of actions in chronological order. Connectives will often be time-related; verbs may be imperative, and will often be placed at the beginning of sentences to form a series of commands. Examples of this type of text include recipes and instructions.

## letter string

a group of letters which together represent a **phoneme** or **morpheme**.

## Metaphor

where the writer writes about something as if it were really something else. Fowler describes it as an 'imaginative substitution'. For example: *he is an ass; love's meteor. A poisoned apple passed along from generation to generation (McGough).*

## Mnemonic

a device to aid memory, for instance to learn particular spelling patterns or spellings: *I Go Home Tonight; There is a rat in separate.*

## modal verb

The modal verbs are:

*can/could*

*will/would*

*shall/should*

*may/might*

*must/ought*

These **auxiliary verbs** are used to express such ideas as possibility, willingness, prediction, speculation, deduction and necessity. They are all followed by the **infinitive**, and *ought* is followed by *to* + infinitive:

*I can help you.*

*We might go out tonight.*

*You ought to eat something.*

*Stephanie will be here soon.*

*I wouldn't do that if I were you.*

*I must go now.*

These verbs can occur with other auxiliary verbs (*be* and *have*):

*I'll be leaving at 11.30.*

*You should have asked me.*

*They must have been working.*

In this context *have* is unstressed and therefore identical in speech to unstressed *of*; this is why the misspelling *of* for standard *have* or 've is not uncommon.

## Morpheme

the smallest unit of meaning. A word may consist of one morpheme (*house*), two morphemes (*house/s; hous/ing*) or three or more morphemes (*house/keep/ing; un/happi/ness*). **Suffixes** and **prefixes** are morphemes.

## Myth

an ancient traditional story of gods or heroes which addresses a problem or concern of human existence. May include an explanation of some fact or phenomenon.

## narrative text

text which re-tells events, often in chronological sequence. May be purely fictional, or include some information. May be in prose or poetic form.

## non-chronological writing

writing organised without reference to time sequence. Typically, writing organised by characteristics and attributes, for example, a report on a town might be organised into population, situation, facilities.

## Noun

A noun is a word that denotes somebody or something. In the sentence *My younger sister won some money in a competition*, 'sister', 'money' and 'competition' are nouns.

Many nouns (countable nouns) can be **singular** (only one) or **plural** (more than one). For example *sister/sisters, problem/problems, party/parties*. Other nouns (mass nouns) do not normally occur in the plural. For example: *butter, cotton, electricity, money, happiness*.

A **collective noun** is a word that refers to a group. For example, *crowd, flock, team*. Although these are singular in form, we often think of them as plural in meaning and use them with a plural verb. For example, if we say *The team have won all their games so far*, we think of 'the team' as 'they' (rather than 'it').

**Proper nouns** are the names of people, places, organisations, etc. These normally begin with a capital letter: *Amanda, Birmingham, Microsoft, Islam, November*.

## Noun phrase

is a wider term than 'noun'. It can refer to a single noun (*money*), a pronoun (*it*) or a group of words that functions in the same way as a noun in a sentence, for example:

*a lot of money*

*my younger sister*

*a new car*

*the best team in the world*

Similarly, a **noun clause** functions in the same way as a noun. For example:

*The story was not true.* (noun)

*What you said was not true.* (noun clause)

## Onomatopoeia

words which echo sounds associated with their meaning: *clang, hiss, crash, cuckoo*.

## Paragraph

a section of a piece of writing. A new paragraph marks a change of focus, a change of time, a change of place or a change of speaker in a passage of dialogue.

A new paragraph begins on a new line, usually with a one-line gap separating it from the previous paragraph. Some writers also indent the first line of a new paragraph.

Paragraphing helps writers to organise their thoughts, and helps readers to follow the story line, argument or dialogue.

## Participle

Verbs have a present participle and a past participle.

### present participle

The present participle ends in *-ing* (*working, reading, going* etc). Although it is called 'present', it is used in all continuous forms: *she is going, she was going, she will be going, she would have been going*, etc.

The *-ing* ending is also used for a verb functioning as a noun. For example: *I enjoy reading, Reading is important.* ('*Reading*' is used as a noun in these examples.) This *-ing* form is sometimes called a verbal noun or a gerund.

### past participle

The past participle often ends in *-ed* (*worked, played*) but many common verbs are irregular and have other endings, eg *-t* (*kept*), *-n* (*flown*), and *-en* (*stolen*).

Past participles are used:

a. after *have* to make perfect forms: *I've worked, he has fallen, we should have gone*

b. after *be* (*is/was* etc) to make passive forms: *I was asked, they are kept, it has been stolen*

Here too, the name is misleading, because passive forms need not refer to the past: *A toast will be drunk.*

Participles (present and past) are sometimes used as adjectives: *the falling leaves, stolen goods*. They can also be used to introduce subordinate clauses, for example:

*Being a student, Tom doesn't have much money.*

*Written in 1923, the book has been translated into twenty-five languages.*

see also **active** and **passive**, **tense** and **verb**

## person

In grammar, a distinction is made between first, second and third person. One uses the first person when referring to oneself (*I/we*); the second person when referring to one's listener or reader (*you*); and the third person when referring to somebody or something else (*he/she/it/they/my friend/the books* etc).

In some cases the form of the verb changes according to person:

*I/we/you/they know*

*I/we/you/they have*

*we/you/they were*

*he/she knows*

*he/she/it has*

*I/he/she/it was*

see also agreement

## personification

a form of **metaphor** in which language relating to human action, motivation and emotion is used to refer to non human agents or objects or abstract

concepts: *the weather is smiling on us today; Love is blind.*

## persuasive text

text which aims to persuade the reader. A persuasive text typically consists of a statement of the viewpoint, arguments and evidence for this thesis, possibly some arguments and evidence supporting a different view, and a final summary or recommendation.

**Connectives** will be related to reasoning (*therefore, however*).

An example of such a text would be an essay on banning fox-hunting or on recycling, or whether Roald Dahl was the greatest writer in English.

Advertisements are forms of persuasive text.

see also **discussion text**

## phoneme

A phoneme is the smallest contrastive unit of sound in a word. There are approximately 44 phonemes in English (the number varies depending on the accent). A phoneme may have variant pronunciations in different positions; for example, the first and last sounds in the word 'little' are variants of the phoneme /l/. A phoneme may be represented by one, two, three or four letters. The following words end in the same phoneme (with the corresponding letters underlined):

*to*

*shoe*

*through*

## phrase

A phrase is a group of words that act as one unit. So *dog* is a word, but *the dog, a big dog* or *that dog over there* are all phrases. Strictly speaking, a phrase can also consist of just one word. For example, in the sentence *Dogs are nice*, 'dogs' and 'nice' are both one-word phrases.

A phrase can function as a noun, an adjective or an adverb:

a noun phrase *a big dog, my last holiday*

an adjectival phrase (*she's not*) *as old as you, (I'm) really hungry*

an adverbial phrase (*they left*) *five minutes ago, (she walks) very slowly*

## poem

a text which uses features such as **rhythm, rhyme** or **syntax** and **vocabulary** to convey ideas in an intense way. Poets may also use **alliteration, figurative language** and other techniques. Prose may sometimes be poetic in effect.

## Predicate

The predicate is that part of a sentence which is not the subject but which gives information about the subject. So, in the sentence *Clare went to school*, 'Clare' is the subject and '*went to school*' is the predicate.

## Prefix

A prefix is a **morpheme** which can be added to the beginning of a word to change its meaning. For example:

*inedible*

*disappear*

*supermarket*

*unintentional*

## preposition

A preposition is a word like *at*, *over*, *by* and *with*. It is usually followed by a **noun phrase**. In the examples, the preposition and the following noun phrase are underlined:

*We got home at midnight.*

*Did you come here by car?*

*Are you coming with me?*

*They jumped over a fence.*

*What's the name of this street?*

*I fell asleep during the film.*

Prepositions often indicate time (*at midnight/during the film/on Friday*), position (*at the station/in a field*) or direction (*to the station/over a fence*).

There are many other meanings, including possession (*of this street*), means (*by car*) and accompaniment (*with me*).

In questions and a few other structures, prepositions often occur at the end of the clause:

*Who did you go out with?*

*We haven't got enough money to live on.*

*I found the book I was looking for.*

In formal style, the preposition can go before whom or which (*with whom*, *about which* etc):

*With whom do you wish to speak?*

Many prepositions (eg *on*, *over*, *up*) can also be used as **adverbs** (without a following noun or pronoun):

*We got on the bus.* (preposition - followed by a noun phrase)

*The bus stopped and we got on.* (adverb - no following noun or pronoun)

## pronoun

There are several kinds of pronoun, including:

personal pronouns

*I/me, you, he/him, she/her, we/us, they/them, it*

*I like him. They don't want it.*

possessive pronouns

*mine, yours, his, hers, ours, theirs, its*

*Is this book yours or mine?*

reflexive pronouns

*myself, herself, themselves etc*

*I hurt myself. Enjoy yourselves!*

indefinite pronouns

*someone, anything, nobody, everything etc*

*Someone wants to see you about something.*

interrogative pronouns

*who/whom, whose, which, what*

*Who did that? What happened?*

relative pronouns

*who/whom, whose, which, that*

*The person who did that ... The thing that annoyed me was ...*

Many **determiners** can also be used as pronouns, including *this/that/these/those* and the quantifiers (*some, much* etc). For example:

*These are mine.*

*Would you like some?*

Pronouns often 'replace' a noun or noun phrase and enable us to avoid repetition:

*I saw your father but I didn't speak to him.* (= your father)

*'We're going away for the weekend.'* *'Oh, are you? That's nice.'* (= the fact you're going away)

### **proof-read**

to check a piece of work thoroughly before final publication.

## **Pun**

a play on words; use of words with similar sounds but different meaning to humorous effect. For example, *grave* has two possible meanings, which Shakespeare used in 'Romeo and Juliet'. Mercutio's final words were: '*ask for me tomorrow And you shall find me a grave man*'; *red* and *read* sound the same, so *the book is never red/the book is never read; I'm on a seafood diet. I see food and I eat it*. Puns are often used in newspaper headlines.

## **Punctuation**

Punctuation is a way of marking text to help readers' understanding. The most commonly used marks in English are:

**apostrophe, colon, comma, dash, ellipsis, exclamation mark, full stop, hyphen, semi-colon** and **speech** marks (inverted commas).

### **question mark (?)**

A question mark is used at the end of an interrogative **sentence** (eg *Who was that?*) or one whose function is a question (eg *You're leaving already?*)

### **recount text**

a text written to retell for information or entertainment. A fictional narrative recount may consist of scene-setting, a starting point, a problem, account and a conclusion. The language is descriptive, and there may be dialogue. Characters are defined and often named.

A non-fiction recount may begin with a scene-setting introduction, and then retell events in chronological order. An example of this type of text would include writing about visits, newspaper accounts of an event or a biography.

### **reference text**

an information text organised in a clearly defined way, for example alphabetically, and used for study purposes.

### **relative clause**

A relative clause is one that defines or gives information about somebody or something. Relative clauses typically begin with relative pronouns

(*who/whom/whose/which/that*):

*Do you know the people who live in the house on the corner?* (defines 'the people')

*The biscuits (that) Tom bought this morning have all gone.* (defines 'the biscuits')

*Our hotel, which was only two minutes from the beach, was very nice.*  
(gives more information about the hotel)

## report text

a non-chronological text written to describe or classify. The text often begins with a general classification, moving to a description of particular characteristics with a final summary. It is often written in the continuous present tense with generalised participants (*people, cats, buildings*). An example of this sort of text would include a report on dinosaurs or Roman housing, a guide-book or a description of a scene.

## rhetical expression

an utterance in which the meaning intended by the speaker/writer is an expression different from that which might be inferred by a listener who is unaware of the conventions of the language; for example *Do you know his name?* is a question which seems to require a yes/no response; in fact, the speaker is asking *What is his name?* Rhetorical expressions are often questions disguising imperatives: *Would you like to get out your English books?* usually means *Get out your English books.*

## Rhyme

A rhyme occurs when words share the same stressed vowel phoneme, eg *she/tea, way/delay* and subsequent consonant(s) eg *sheet/treat, made/lemonade* and final unstressed vowel eg *laughter/after.*

## Rhythm

Rhythm is the more or less regular alternation of light beats and heavy beats (stresses) in speech or music. Some poetry uses very regular rhythm patterns.

## root word

a word to which **prefixes** and **suffixes** may be added to make other words; for example in *unclear, clearly, cleared*, the root word is *clear*.

## Scan

this word has two relevant meanings:

- a. to look over a text very quickly, trying to locate information by locating a key word;
- b. a line of poetry which conforms to the rhythm (metre) of the rest of the poem is said to scan.

## Segment

to break a word or part of a word down into its component phonemes, for example: *c-a-t*, *ch-a-t*, *ch-ar-t*, *g-r-ou-n-d*;  
*s-k-i-n*.

## semi-colon (;)

A semi-colon can be used to separate two main **clauses** in a sentence:

*I liked the book; it was a pleasure to read.*

This could also be written as two separate sentences:

*I liked the book. It was a pleasure to read.*

However, where the two clauses are closely related in meaning (as in the above example), a writer may prefer to use a semi-colon rather than two separate sentences.

Semi-colons can also be used to separate items in a list if these items consist of longer phrases. For example:

*I need large, juicy tomatoes; half a pound of unsalted butter; a kilo of fresh pasta, preferably tagliatelle; and a jar of black olives.*

In a simple list, **commas** are used.

## Sentence

A sentence can be simple, compound or complex.

A simple sentence consists of one **clause**:

*It was late.*

A compound sentence has two or more clauses joined by *and*, *or*, *but* or *so*.

The clauses are of equal weight (they are both main clauses):

*It was late but I wasn't tired.*

A complex sentence consists of a main clause which itself includes one or more subordinate clauses:

*Although it was late, I wasn't tired.* (subordinate clause beginning with *although* underlined)

Simple sentences can also be grouped as follows according to their structure:

declarative (for statements, suggestions, etc):

*The class yelled in triumph. Maybe we could eat afterwards.*

interrogative (for questions, requests, etc):

*Is your sister here? Could you show me how?*

imperative (for commands, instructions, etc):

*Hold this! Take the second left.*

exclamative (for exclamations):

*How peaceful she looks. What a pity!*

In writing, we mark sentences by using a capital letter at the beginning, and a full stop (or question mark or exclamation mark) at the end.

## Simile

the writer creates an image in readers' minds by comparing a subject to something else: *as happy as a lark*; *as strong as an ox*. Many similes are **idiomatic**: *he smokes like a chimney*.

## singular and plural

Singular forms are used to refer to one thing, person etc. For example: *tree, student, party*.

Many nouns (countable nouns) can be **singular** (only one) or **plural** (more than one). The plural is usually marked by the ending -s: *trees, students, parties*.

Some plural forms are irregular. For example: *children, teeth, mice*.

Other nouns (mass nouns) do not normally occur in the plural. For example: *butter, cotton, electricity, money, happiness*.

**Verbs, pronouns, and determiners** sometimes have different singular and plural forms:

*He was late They were late*

*Where is the key? Have you seen it? Where are the keys? Have you seen them?*

*Do you like this hat? Do you like these shoes?*

Note that *they/them/their* (plural words) are sometimes used to refer back to singular words that don't designate a specific person, such as *anyone* or *somebody*. In such cases, they usually means 'he or she':

*If anyone wants to ask a question, they can ask me later.* (= he or she can ask me)

*Did everybody do their homework?*

*Work with a partner. Ask them their name.*

See also **agreement, pronoun**

## Skim

read to get an initial overview of the subject matter and main ideas of a passage.

## Slang

words and phrases which are used in informal context, often linked with certain regions or used by people identifying with particular groups. May differentiate that group from others.

## standard English

Standard English is the variety of English used in public communication, particularly in writing. It is the form taught in schools and used by educated speakers. It is not limited to a particular region and can be spoken with any accent.

There are differences in vocabulary and grammar between standard English and other varieties. For example, *we were robbed* and *look at those trees* are standard English; *we was robbed* and *look at them trees* are non-standard.

To communicate effectively in a range of situations - written and oral - it is necessary to be able to use standard English, and to recognise when it is appropriate to use it in preference to any other variety.

Note that standard British English is not the only standard variety; other English-speaking countries, such as the United States and Australia, have their own standard forms.

see also **agreement, dialect, double negative**

## subject and object

In the sentence *John kicked the ball*, the subject is 'John', and the object is 'the ball'.

The subject is the person or thing about which something is said. In sentences with a subject and an object, the subject typically carries out an action, while the object is the person or thing affected by the action. In declarative sentences (statements), the subject normally goes before the verb; the object goes after the verb.

Some verbs (eg *give, show, buy*) can have two objects, indirect and direct. For example:

*She gave the man some money.*

Here, 'some money' is the direct object (= what she gave). 'The man' is the indirect object (= the person who receives the direct object).

When a verb has an object, it is transitive, eg *find* a job, *like* chocolate, *lay* the table. If it has no object, it is intransitive (eg *go, talk, lie*).

see also **active** and **passive, complement**

## suffix

A suffix is a **morpheme** which is added to the end of a word.

## Syllable

Each beat in a word is a syllable. Words with only one beat (*cat, fright, jail*) are called **monosyllabic**; words with more than one beat (*super, coward, superficiality*) are **polysyllabic**.

## Synonym

words which have the same meaning as another word, or very similar: *wet/damp*. Avoids overuse of any word; adds variety.

## Tense

A tense is a verb form that most often indicates time. English verbs have two basic tenses, present and past, and each of these can be simple or continuous. For example:

### present past

*I play* (simple) *I played* (simple)

*I am playing* (continuous) *I was playing* (continuous)

Additionally, all these forms can be perfect (with *have*):

### present perfect past perfect

*I have played* (perfect) *I had played* (perfect)

*I have been playing* *I had been playing* (perfect continuous)  
(perfect continuous)

English has no specific future tense. Future time can be expressed in a number of ways using *will* or present tenses.

For example:

*John will arrive tomorrow.*

*John will be arriving tomorrow.*

*John is going to arrive tomorrow.*

*John is arriving tomorrow.*

*John arrives tomorrow.*

## Text

language organised to communicate. Includes written, spoken and electronic forms.

## text type

this term describes texts which share a purpose: to inform/persuade/describe. Whole texts or parts of texts with specific features - patterns of language, structure, vocabulary - which help them achieve this purpose may be described as belonging to a particular text type. These attributes are not obligatory, but are useful in discussing text and in supporting development of a range of writing skills.

Texts may consist of mixed genres: for example, a guide-book may contain procedural text (the path or route) and report (information about exhibits).

## Theme

the subject of a piece of writing. This may not be explicitly stated, but can be deduced by the reader. For example, many traditional stories have similar themes: the triumph of good over evil, cunning over strength, kindness over beauty.

## Thesaurus

a reference text which groups words by meaning. A thesaurus can help writers to select words, consider the full range of alternatives and vary words which are used frequently: *said, went, nice*.

## Trigraph

three letters representing one phoneme: *high; fudge*.

## Verb

A verb is a word that expresses an action, a happening, a process or a state. It can be thought of as a 'doing' or 'being' word. In the sentence *Mark is tired and wants to go to bed*, 'is', 'wants' and 'go' are verbs. Sometimes two or more words make up a verb phrase, such as *are going, didn't want, has been waiting*.

Most verbs (except modal verbs, such as *can* or *will*) have four or five different forms. For example:

base form or

infinitive

+ -s + -ing (present

participle

simple past past participle

*wait waits waiting waited*

*make makes making made*

*drive drives driving drove driven*

A verb can be present or past:

*I wait/she waits* (present)

*I waited/she waited* (past)

Most verbs can occur in simple or continuous forms (*be* + *-ing*):

*I make (simple present)/I'm making (present continuous)*  
*she drove (simple past)/she was driving (past continuous)*

A verb can also be perfect (with *have*):

*I have made/I have been making (present perfect)*

*he had driven/he had been driving (past perfect)*

If a verb is regular, the simple past and the past participle are the same, and end in *-ed*. For example:

*wanted*

*played*

*answered*

Verbs that do not follow this pattern are irregular. For example:

*make/made*

*catch/caught*

*see/saw/seen*

*come/came/come*

see also **active** and **passive**, **auxiliary verbs**, **infinitive**, **modal verbs**, **participle**, **person**, **tense**

## **vowel**

a phoneme produced without audible friction or closure. Every syllable contains a vowel. A vowel phoneme may be represented by one or more letters. These may be vowels (*maid*, or a combination of vowels and consonants (*start*, *could*).

## **word class**

The main word classes are **verb**, **noun**, **adjective**, **adverb**, **pronoun**, **determiner**, **preposition** and **conjunction**. These are all dealt with separately in this glossary.

Note that a word can belong to more than one class. For example:

*play* verb (*I play*) or noun (*a play*)

*fit* noun (*a fit*), verb (*they fit*) or adjective (*I'm fit*)

*until* preposition (*until Monday*) or conjunction (*until I come back*)

*like* verb (*I like*) or preposition (*do it like this*)

*hard* adjective (*it's hard work*) or adverb (*I work hard*)

*that* determiner (*that book*) or pronoun (*who did that?*) or

conjunction (*he said that he ...*)