Glossary of Grammatical Terms

**absolute phrase** A modifier usually made from a noun or noun phrase and a participle. It can modify a noun or pronoun or the whole of the base sentence to which it is attached.

*Teeth chattering,* we waited for hours in the bitter cold.
Who is the best person for the job, *all things considered?*

**active voice** See voice.

**adjective** A word that modifies a noun or pronoun, specifying such things as what kind, how many, and which one.

For a *small* crime, he spent years in a *tiny* cell of the *old* prison.
She is *intelligent.*

**adjective phrase** A phrase that modifies a noun or pronoun.

*A long, thin* scar was visible on his back.
On the table was a vase *with red roses.*
It was a *once-in-a-lifetime* opportunity.

**adjective (relative) clause** A subordinate clause used as an adjective within a sentence. It normally begins with a relative pronoun—a word that relates the clause to a preceding word or phrase.

Pablo Picasso, *who learned to paint by the age of twelve,* worked at his art for nearly eighty years.

**adverb** A word that modifies a verb, an adjective, another adverb, or a clause. It tells such things as how, when, where, why, and for what purpose. It often ends in *-ly.*

He *seldom* spoke.
The road was *extremely* bumpy.
The cyclists were breathing *very heavily.*
*Fortunately,* no one was injured.

**adverb clause**  A subordinate clause used as an adverb within a sentence. It begins with a subordinator, a term like *because, if, when,* or *although.*

- We canceled the deal *because the buyer could not get a loan.*
- *If the temperature falls below freezing,* roads will become unsafe.
- Excited *when his friends arrived,* he was miserable *when they left.*

**adverb phrase**  A phrase that modifies a verb, an adjective, another adverb, or a clause.

- The fox hid *under the hedge.*
- Wary *at first,* we approached *in silence.*
- The children were eager *to see the clowns.*

**agent**  The source of the action in a passive-voice construction.

- The preamble was written by *Alice Harvey.*
- The launching of the space shuttle will be viewed by *millions.*

**agreement of pronoun and antecedent**  Correspondence in gender and number between a pronoun and its antecedent.

- Nellie Bly, the American journalist, was noted for *her* daring. [*Her* is feminine and singular.]
- Ms. Sterns handed Mr. Nichols *his* briefcase. [*His* is masculine and singular.]
- You can’t tell a book by *its* cover. [*Its* is neuter and singular.]
- The Andrews Sisters sang some of *their* best-known songs during World War II. [*Their* is plural and used for all genders.]

**agreement of subject and verb**  Correspondence in number between the form of a verb and its subject. In most cases, the subject affects the form of the verb only in the present tense; when the subject is a singular noun or a third-person singular pronoun, the present tense is made by the addition of *-s* or *-es* to the bare form.

- Jerry *paints* his houses.
- He *fishes* every summer.

When the subject is not a singular noun or a third-person singular pronoun, the present tense is normally the same as the bare form.

- I *paint* houses.
- The men *fish* every summer.

The verb *be* has special forms in the present and the past, as shown in 21.3.
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**antecedent**  The word or word group that a pronoun refers to.

\[
\text{A} \quad \text{P}
\]

Oliver said that he could eat a whole pizza.

\[
\text{A} \quad \text{P}
\]

The police, who have surrounded the building, expect to free the hostages tonight.

\[
\text{A} \quad \text{P}
\]

A *snake* sheds its skin several times a year.

**appositive**  A noun, noun phrase, or series of nouns used to identify another noun, noun phrase, or a pronoun.

The blackjack player, *an expert at counting cards in play*, was barred from the casino.

They were denied their favorite foods—*ice cream, pizza, and peanut butter*.

He and she—*brother and sister*—opened a record store.

**article**  A short word (*a*, *an*, or *the*) commonly used before a noun or noun equivalent.

The bombing of a village provoked *an* outcry of protest.

See also determiner.

**auxiliary (helping verb)**  A verb used with a base verb to make a verb phrase.

I *have* seen the Kennedy Library.

It *was* designed by I. M. Pei.

People *do* find it impressive.

**bare form**  The verb form used in the present tense with every subject except a singular noun and a third-person singular pronoun.

**base (bare-bones) sentence**  A sentence without modifiers.

Prices rose.

Orders dropped.

Customers saved money.

**base verb**  The principal verb in a verb phrase made with an auxiliary.

She has *earned* a promotion.

She will be *supervising* all overseas operations.
case  The form that a noun or pronoun takes as determined by its role in a sentence. The subject case is used for a pronoun that is the subject of a verb.

The dog was far from home, but he still wore a leather collar.

The object case is used for a pronoun that serves as an object (see object) or that immediately precedes an infinitive.

I found him trailing a broken leash behind him.
I wanted him to come home with me.

The possessive case of a noun or pronoun indicates ownership of something or close connection with it.

The dog’s hind feet were bleeding, and his coat was muddy.

The reflexive/emphatic case of a pronoun indicates a reflexive action—an action affecting the one who performs it. This case is also used for emphasis.

The dog had hurt himself; as I tried to comfort him, the owner herself rushed up to me.

clause  A word group consisting of a subject and a predicate.

S  P
We / bought an old house. [one clause]

S  P  S  P
After we / bought the house, we / found a crack in the foundation. [two clauses]

S  P  S  P
Furthermore, the roof / leaked, the floors / sagged, and the
S  P
furnace / was out of order. [three clauses]

collective noun  A noun naming a collection of people, animals, or things treated as an entity. Examples include team, committee, herd, flock, and family.

comma splice  The error of trying to link two independent clauses with nothing but a comma.

*Sir Richard Burton failed to find the source of the Nile, John Hanning Speke discovered it in 1862.
EDITED: Sir Richard Burton failed to find the source of the Nile; John Hanning Speke discovered it in 1862.

Separating the clauses with a period would give you two sentences.
common and progressive forms Forms of the verb. The common form indicates an action that is habitual, completed, or to be completed.

They *take* excursions on weekends.
He *opened* the door and *entered* the room.
She *will finish* by dark.

The progressive form indicates a continuing action or one that was in progress when something else occurred.

They *are taking* an excursion right now.
He *was opening* the door when the cat scratched him.
She *will be working* on the design throughout the day.

The progressive consists of some form of the auxiliary *be* followed by a present particle—a verb with *-ing* on the end.

comparative, positive, and superlative Forms of the adjective and adverb. The positive form describes a person or thing without drawing a comparison.

This lemonade tastes *sour*.
Ms. Berkle talks *loudly*.

The comparative is used to compare one person, thing, or group with another person, thing, or group.

Los Angeles is *bigger* than Sacramento.
Sarah was *more ambitious* than her classmates.
Sheila argued *less persuasively* than Susan did.
In general, women live *longer* than men.

The superlative is used to compare one person, thing, or group with all others in its class.

Joan’s quilt was the *most colorful* one on display.
Whales are the *largest* of all mammals.
Gold is the *most eagerly* sought mineral in the world.

complete subject See subject.

complex sentence A sentence consisting of one independent clause and at least one subordinate clause. The independent clause in a complex sentence is usually called the main clause.

Although Frank pleaded with Ida [subordinate clause], she would not give him any money [main clause].
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**compound-complex sentence**  A sentence consisting of two or more independent clauses and one or more subordinate clauses.

When I moved to Chicago [subordinate clause], I first applied for a job [main clause], and then I looked for an apartment [main clause].

**compound phrase**  Words or phrases joined by a conjunction, a comma, or both.

The plan was *simple but shrewd*.
We saw an *enormous, old, rough-skinned* elephant.
The kitten was *lively, friendly, and curious*.
You must *either pay your dues on time or turn in your membership card*.

**compound sentence**  A sentence consisting of two or more independent clauses.

Jill made the coffee, and Frank scrambled the eggs.
He practiced many hours each day, but he never learned to play the piano well.

**conditional sentence**  A sentence normally consisting of an *if* clause, which states a condition, and a result clause, which states the result of that condition.

If it rains on the Fourth of July, the fireworks will be canceled.
If Social Security were abolished, millions of retirees would be destitute.

**conjunction (coordinating conjunction)**  A word used to show a relation between words, phrases, or clauses. The conjunctions are *and, yet, or, but, nor,* and—for joining clauses only—*for* and *so*.

The tablecloth was red, white, *and* blue.
Small *but* sturdy, the cabin had withstood many winters.
Al *and* Joan walked to the meeting, *for* they liked exercise.

**conjunctive adverb**  A word or phrase used to show a relation between clauses or sentences. Conjunctive adverbs include *nevertheless, as a result, therefore, however,* and *likewise*.

The ship was supposed to be unsinkable; *nevertheless,* it did not survive its collision with an iceberg.
The lawyer spoke for an hour; the jury, *however,* was unimpressed.

**coordinating conjunction**  *See* conjunction.

**coordination**  An arrangement that makes two or more parts of a sentence equal in grammatical rank.
Martha took the script home and read it to her friend.
The fight ended, and the crowd dispersed.
A porcupine or a raccoon had raided the garbage can.

correlative  Words or phrases used in pairs to join words, phrases, or clauses. Correlatives include both . . . and, not only . . . but also, either . . . or, neither . . . nor, and whether . . . or.

The Web site is both fun and informative.
She not only got the part but also played it brilliantly.
Either they would visit us, or we would visit them.

dangling modifier  A modifier without a headword—a word or phrase that it can modify.

*Running angrily out the back door, a couple of flower pots were overturned.
EDITED: Running angrily out the back door, he overturned a couple of flower pots.

declarative sentence  A sentence that makes a statement and ends with a period.

The Earth orbits the sun.
Many Americans are overweight.

definite pronouns  See pronoun.

dependent clause  See subordinate clause.

determiner  A modifier that always precedes a noun or noun equivalent and marks it as such. Determiners include articles (a, an, the), demonstratives (such as this), indefinites (such as some), possessives (such as her), ordinal numbers (such as ten), and cardinal numbers (such as third). Unlike adjectives (A), determiners cannot follow the nouns they modify and have no comparative or superlative forms.

The first ten customers each got a box of popcorn.

The manager, smiling and happy, greeted every customer.

His smiling made them happier.

direct object  See object.

direct and indirect reporting  Two ways of reporting spoken or written statements and questions. A direct report reproduces within quotation marks the words someone spoke or wrote.
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“He that cannot obey, cannot command,” writes Benjamin Franklin.

An indirect report turns the original statement into a subordinate clause usually starting with *that*.

Franklin writes that anyone who cannot obey is unable to command.

double negative  The error of using two negative words to make one negative statement.

*We *didn’t need no guide.

**EDITED:** We didn’t need a guide. [or] We needed no guide.

expletive  A word used before a linking verb when the subject follows it.

*There* was no food in the house.

*It* was exciting to see the bald eagles.

faulty comparison  The omission of one or more words needed to make a comparison clear.

*The neighborhood is more violent than five years ago.

**EDITED:** The neighborhood is more violent than it was five years ago.

faulty parallelism  A construction in which two or more elements are parallel in meaning but not in form.

*He wants to write with clarity, power, and logically.

**EDITED:** He wants to write clearly, powerfully, and logically.

faulty predication  Using words after a linking verb that are not compatible with the subject.

*A necessary step in any campaign to lose weight is eating habits.

**EDITED:** A necessary step in any campaign to lose weight is to change one’s eating habits.

faulty shift in tense  An unjustified shift from one tense to another, or an inconsistency between the tense of a subordinate verb and the tense of the main verb.

*I lit a candle, but the darkness is so thick I saw nothing.

**EDITED:** I lit a candle, but the darkness was so thick I saw nothing.

*Though the trumpeter blows as hard as she could, the drummer drowned her out.

**EDITED:** Though the trumpeter blew as hard as she could, the drummer drowned her out.

fragment  See sentence fragment.
fused sentence  See run-on sentence.

future perfect tense  See tense.

future tense  See tense.

gender  The form of a pronoun as determined by the sex of its antecedent, which may be masculine, feminine, or neuter.

Bill [antecedent] brought his guitar, and Sally [antecedent] brought her drums.
The sun [antecedent] shed its rays over the lake.

gerund  A verbal noun made from the present participle.

Gambling takes nerve.
Fawn hated washing dishes.

headword (H)  A word or phrase modified (M) by another word, phrase, or clause.

A black leather wallet was found in the men’s room.
Running for the elevator, Pritchett nearly knocked over Mr. Givens.
The breeze that refreshes us comes from the ocean.

helping verb  See auxiliary.

imperative  See mood.

indefinite pronoun  See pronoun.

independent clause  A clause that can stand by itself as a simple sentence.
The roof leaks.
It can be combined with one or more independent clauses in a compound sentence.
The roof leaks, and the floor sags.
And it can serve as the main clause in a complex sentence.
Whenever it rains, the roof leaks.
indicative mood  See mood.

indirect object  See object.

indirect report  See direct and indirect reporting.

infinitive  A form usually made by the placing of to before the bare form of a verb.

Some say that politicians are born to run.
The prisoners of war refused to continue their forced march.

After some verbs the to in the infinitive is omitted. Compare:

Jack wanted the little boy to feed the ducks.
Jack watched the little boy feed the ducks.

infinitive phrase  A phrase formed by an infinitive and its object, its modifiers, or both.

She hates to see horror movies.
It was beginning to rain furiously.
I hoped to have found a job by July 4.

interrogative pronoun  A pronoun that begins a question.

What is making that noise?

interrogative sentence  A sentence that asks a question and ends with a question mark.

Do whales have lungs?

intransitive verb  See transitive and intransitive verbs.

irregular verb  See regular and irregular verbs.

linking verb  A verb followed by a word or word group that identifies or describes the subject.

This machine is a drill press.
I feel good today.
That perfume smells sweet.

main clause  The independent clause in a complex sentence.

Since the refrigerator was empty, we went to a restaurant.

main verb  The verb of the independent clause in a complex sentence.
I cut the grass before the storm came.  
Since the store was closed, we drove away.

**misplaced modifier**  A modifier that does not clearly point to its headword—the word or phrase it modifies.

*Sleeping in an empty shoebox, Michelle discovered the missing kitten.  
**EDITED:** Michelle discovered the missing kitten sleeping in an empty shoebox.

**mixed construction**  Any combination of words that do not fit together grammatically or meaningfully.

*Fearful of punishment caused the boy to stutter.  
**EDITED:** Fear of punishment caused the boy to stutter.  
[or] Fearful of punishment, the boy stuttered.

**modal auxiliary**  A helping verb that indicates the subjunctive mood.

The children *should* be here on Father’s Day this year.  
I’m not so sure that the average citizen *can* fight City Hall.

Besides *should* and *can*, the modal auxiliaries include *would, could, may, might, must,* and *ought.*

**modifier**  A word or word group that describes, limits, or qualifies another word or word group in a sentence.

Pat smiled *winningly.*  
I rarely travel *anymore.*  
The big gray cat seized the little mouse as it ran up the stairs.  
*Polished to a high gloss, the mahogany table immediately drew our attention.*

See also determiner.

**mood**  The form of a verb that indicates the writer’s attitude toward a particular statement as it is made. The *indicative* is the mood used in statements of actuality or strong probability.

He always *lingers* over his second cup of coffee.  
We *will* sleep well tonight.

The *imperative* is the mood of commands and requests made directly.

*Be quiet!*  
*Please go away.*  
*Let us pray.*  
*Stop!*
The **subjunctive** is the mood used in statements of hypothetical conditions or of wishes, recommendations, requirements, demands, or suggestions. Normally the subjunctive requires either a modal auxiliary or a subjunctive verb form.

- I wish I *could* go. [modal auxiliary expressing a wish]
- I wish I *were* a rock star. [subjunctive verb form expressing a wish]
- Each member *must* pay her dues by December 1. [modal auxiliary expressing a requirement]
- The rules require that each member *pay* her dues by December 1. [subjunctive verb form expressing a requirement]

**nonrestrictive modifier**  
See restrictive and nonrestrictive modifiers.

**noun**  
A word that names a person, creature, place, thing, activity, condition, or idea.

**noun clause**  
A subordinate clause that is used as a noun within a sentence. It serves as subject, object, predicate noun, or object of a preposition.

- *Whoever contributed to the office party* deserves many thanks.
- I said *that I was hungry.*
- You are *what you eat.*
- The station offered a prize to *whoever called first with the right answer.*

**noun equivalent**  
A verbal noun or a noun clause.

**noun marker**  
See determiner.

**noun phrase**  
A phrase formed by a noun (N) and its modifiers (M).

\[
\begin{align*}
&M & N \\
&\text{They swam contentedly in the warm, clear water.} \\
&M & N \\
&\text{The eighteenth-century building was declared a landmark last week.}
\end{align*}
\]

**number**  
The form of a word as determined by the number of persons or things it refers to. Most nouns and many pronouns may be singular or plural.

- A *carpenter* [singular] works hard.
- Carpenters [plural] work hard.
- Jeff said that *he* [singular] would give the party.
- All *his* [singular] friends said that *they* [plural] would come.

**object**  
A word or word group naming a person or thing affected by the action that a verb, a participle, an infinitive, or a gerund specifies.
I hit the ball.
Sighting the bear, he started to aim his rifle.
Splitting wood is hard work.

A **direct object** names the person or thing directly affected by the action specified.

The accountant prepared my tax return.

An **indirect object** names the person or thing indirectly affected by the action specified.

I gave Joe a bit of advice.
She bought her father a shirt.

The **object of a preposition** is any word or word group that immediately follows a preposition.

For her, the meeting was crucial.
I found the sponge under the kitchen sink.

**object case**  See case.

**object complement**  A word or word group that immediately follows a direct object and identifies or describes it.

I found the first chapter fascinating.
Many sportswriters used to consider Greg Louganis the best diver in the world.

**parallel construction**  The arrangement of two or more elements of a sentence in grammatically equivalent patterns: noun lined up with noun, verb with verb, phrase with phrase, and clause with clause.

Sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish, I give my hand and my heart to this vote. —Daniel Webster
We must take the risk or lose our chance.
I'll take either the chocolate cake or the coconut pie.

**particle**  A preposition used as an adverb. Particles always follow a verb and strongly affect its meaning.

I looked up the word in the dictionary.
The rich sometimes look down on the poor.

**participle**  A term usually made by the addition of -ing, -d, or -ed, to the bare form of a verb.

**PRESENT PARTICIPLE:** calling living burning lifting
**PAST PARTICIPLE:** called lived burned lifted
A perfect participle is made by the combination of having or having been with the past participle.

having called  having been lifted

**participle phrase** A phrase formed by a participle and its object, its modifiers, or both. Usually a participle phrase modifies a noun or pronoun.

*Wearied after their long climb*, the hikers were glad to stop and make camp. She picked at the knot, *loosening it gradually.*

**passive voice** *See* voice.

**past participle** *See* participle.

**past perfect tense** *See* tense.

**past tense** *See* tense.

**perfect infinitive** The form of the infinitive made with *have* and the past participle.

*I was glad to have finished* the project by the deadline.

**perfect participle** *See* participle.

**person** In English grammar the term *person* designates the following system of classification.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIRST PERSON</td>
<td>I, me, mine, my</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECOND PERSON</td>
<td>you, yours, your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THIRD PERSON</td>
<td>he, him, his</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>she, her, hers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>it, its</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and singular nouns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**phrase** A sequence of two or more words that serves as a unit within or attached to a clause.

*A bright red kimono* caught my eye.
*Encouraged by her friends*, Helen bought the house. I hurried to reach the post office.

**possessive case** *See* case.
**predicate**  A word or word group that normally follows the subject of a sentence and tells what it does, has, or is, or what is done to it.

   The pastry chef makes doughnuts, napoleons, and éclairs.
   Venice is a golden city interlaced with canals.

A **base predicate (simple predicate)** is a predicate without its modifiers.

   Simon and Garfunkel sang for a crowd of almost half a million.
   The children threw snowballs at passing cars.
   They were soon punished.

**predeterminer**  A word that precedes a determiner.

   Half the pie is yours.
   We met both the girls.

The main predeterminers are all, both, and half.

**predicate adjective**  An adjective or adjective phrase that follows a linking verb and describes the subject.

   Velvet feels soft.
   Henry seems upset by the vote.

**predicate noun**  A noun or noun phrase that follows a linking verb and identifies the subject.

   Time was our only enemy.
   J. D. Salinger is a very reclusive writer.

**preposition**  A word followed by its object—a noun, pronoun, or noun equivalent. A preposition shows the relation between its object and another word or word group in the sentence.

   The table was set under a tree.
   Hounded by his creditors, he finally declared himself bankrupt.

Besides under and by, prepositions include with, at, of, in, from, over, after, and on.

**prepositional phrase**  A phrase that starts with a preposition and ends with its object. Phrases of this type are regularly used as adjectives or adverbs.

   Helen admired women with strong ambition.
   Have you ridden on the Ferris wheel?
   I took the suitcase from the woman / in the room / on the left.
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**present participle**  See participle.

**present perfect tense**  See tense.

**present tense**  See tense.

**principal parts**  The following parts of a verb:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRESENT (BARE FORM)</th>
<th>PRESENT PARTICIPLE</th>
<th>PAST</th>
<th>PAST PARTICIPLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>see</td>
<td>seeing</td>
<td>saw</td>
<td>seen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work</td>
<td>working</td>
<td>worked</td>
<td>worked</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**progressive form**  See common and progressive forms.

**pronoun**  A word that commonly takes the place of a noun or noun phrase. Pronouns may be definite or indefinite. A **definite pronoun** refers to an antecedent (A), a noun or noun phrase appearing before or shortly after the pronoun.

A
As soon as Grant saw the enemy, he ordered his men to fire.

A
Janis Joplin was only twenty-seven when she died.

A
Though he won the battle, Nelson did not live to savor the victory.

An **indefinite pronoun** refers to unspecified persons or things. It has no antecedent.

Everyone likes Janet.
Marvin will do anything to help a friend.

An **interrogative pronoun** introduces a question.

What did the officer say?
Who is pitching for the Blue Jays tomorrow?

**pronoun-antecedent agreement**  See agreement of pronoun and antecedent.

**reflexive/emphatic case**  See case.

**regular and irregular verbs**  A **regular verb** is one for which the past tense and past participle are formed by the addition of -d or -ed to the present.
### An irregular verb

An irregular verb is one for which the past, the past participle, or both are formed in other ways.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present (Bare Form)</th>
<th>Past</th>
<th>Past Participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>work</td>
<td>worked</td>
<td>worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tickle</td>
<td>tickled</td>
<td>tickled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>walk</td>
<td>walked</td>
<td>walked</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Relative clause

See adjective clause.

### Relative pronoun

A pronoun that introduces an adjective clause.

College students who enjoy doing their laundry are hard to find.

Some companies now make furnaces that burn wood as well as oil.

I’m looking for someone whose degree is in economics.

The relative pronouns are which, that, who, whom, and whose.

### Restricter

An adverb that limits or restricts the meaning of the word immediately after it.

On the first day, we hiked just five miles.

Walking along the beach, she almost stepped on a crab.

I ate nearly all the turkey.

Restricters include almost, hardly, just, only, and nearly. When used at the end of a sentence, a restricter limits the meaning of the word just before it.

Tickets were sold to adults only.

### Restrictive and nonrestrictive modifiers

A restrictive modifier restricts or limits the meaning of its headword.

All taxpayers who fail to file their returns by April 15 will be fined.

A restrictive modifier is essential to the meaning of a sentence. Without the modifier, the meaning of the sample sentence would be fundamentally different.

All taxpayers will be fined.

A nonrestrictive modifier does not restrict or limit the meaning of its headword.

Sam, who loves football, cheered louder than anyone else.
A nonrestrictive modifier is not essential to the meaning of a sentence. Without the modifier, the meaning of the sample sentence remains basically the same.

Sam cheered louder than anyone else.

**run-on sentence (fused sentence)** Two or more independent clauses run together with no punctuation or conjunction between them.

*Mosquitoes arrived at dusk they whined about our ears as we huddled in our sleeping bags.*

**EDITED:** Mosquitoes arrived at dusk, and they whined about our ears as we huddled in our sleeping bags.

**sentence** A word group consisting of at least one independent clause. A sentence begins with a capital letter and closes with a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point.

The telephone was ringing.
By the time I got out of the shower, the caller had hung up.
I was furious!
Was the call important?

**sentence fragment** A part of a sentence punctuated as if it were a whole one.

The plant drooped. *And died.*
I could not get into the house. *Because I had forgotten my key.*

**sequence of tenses** The relation between the tenses of the verbs in a sentence that contains more than one verb, or in a passage of several sentences.

By the time I *arrived,* everyone else *had left.*
When the parade *goes* through town, all the townspeople *come* to see it.

**simple sentence** A sentence consisting of just one independent clause.

The problem was complex.
It challenged the skill of experts.
For months there was no solution.
Then a solution was found by two veterans in the decoding department.

**simple subject** See subject.

**split infinitive** An infinitive in which one or more words are wedged between *to* and the verb.

The purchasing department is going *to carefully check* each new order.
**Better:** The purchasing department is going to check each new order carefully.

**Squinting Modifier** A modifier placed so that it could plausibly modify either the word(s) before it or the word(s) after it.

*Cutting classes frequently leads to low grades.*

**Edited:** Frequent cutting of classes leads to low grades.

[or] Frequently, cutting classes leads to low grades.

[or] Cutting classes leads frequently to low grades.

**Subject** A word or word group that tells who or what performs or undergoes the action named by a verb, or that is described or identified in a linking verb construction.

*Gossip fascinates me.*

*Morgan hit one of Johnson’s best pitches.*

*Piccadilly Circus is the Times Square of London.*

*Does your allergy cause a rash?*

*Jan and I were pelted by the rain.*

*There was a snake under the chair.*

A **simple subject** is a subject without its modifiers.

*The old dusty volumes fell to the floor.*

A **complete subject** is a subject with its modifiers.

*The old dusty volumes fell to the floor.*

**Subject Case** See case.

**Subject Complement** A word or word group that immediately follows a linking verb and identifies or describes the subject:

*Blue is my favorite color.*

*The house was enormous.*

**Subject-Verb Agreement** See agreement of subject and verb.

**Subjunctive Mood** See mood.

**Subordinate (Dependent) Clause** A clause that normally begins with a subordinator or a relative pronoun. Such a clause cannot stand alone as a sentence. In formal writing it must be connected to or included in a main clause.

*Because Mrs. Braithwait was writing her memoirs, she reviewed all her old diaries and correspondence.*
Glossary of Grammatical Terms

Has anyone ever seen the bullet that killed John F. Kennedy? I didn’t know where she had left the key.

subordinate verb  The verb of a subordinate clause in a complex sentence.
I cut the grass before the storm came.
Since the door was open, I walked in.

subordinating conjunction  See subordinator.

subordination  An arrangement that makes one or more parts of a sentence secondary to and dependent upon another part.

WITHOUT SUBORDINATION: The dog ate lunch, and then he took a nap.
WITH SUBORDINATION: After the dog ate lunch, he took a nap.

subordinator (subordinating conjunction)  A word or phrase regularly used to introduce a subordinate clause.

When we left, I locked all the doors.
They can do nothing if the drought continues.

superlative  See comparative, positive, and superlative.

tense  The form of a verb that helps to indicate the time of an action or condition.

PRESENT: I jump.
PAST: I jumped.
FUTURE: I will jump.
PRESENT PERFECT: I have jumped.
PAST PERFECT: I had jumped.
FUTURE PERFECT: I will have jumped.

transitive and intransitive verbs  A transitive verb names an action that directly affects a person or thing specified in the predicate.

He struck the gong.
Water erodes even granite.
Did you mail the letters?
We elected Sloan.

An intransitive verb names an action that has no direct impact on anyone or anything specified in the predicate.

Wilson smiled at the comedian’s best efforts, but he did not laugh.
**verb** A word or phrase naming an action done by or to a subject, a state of being experienced by a subject, or an occurrence.

   My uncle *was* asleep when the hurricane *destroyed* his house.

**verbal noun** A word or phrase formed from a verb and used as a noun.

   *Hunting* was once the sport of kings.
   I want *to travel*.
   *Fixing bicycles* keeps me busy.
   *To sacrifice his rook* would have been Gilman’s best move.

**verb phrase** A phrase formed by two or more verbs—a base verb and at least one auxiliary.

   Richard *may complete* his experiment by July.
   Alison *would have come* earlier if you *had called* her.

**voice** The aspect of a verb that indicates whether the subject acts or is acted upon. A verb is in the *active voice* when the subject performs the action named by the verb.

   The officer *told* me to leave.
   A famous surgeon *performed* the operation.

A verb is in the *passive voice* when the subject undergoes the action named by the verb.

   I *was told* to do it that way.
   The operation *will be performed* by a famous surgeon.