

# Better

# ENGLISH



is a prefix  
the difference  
question?  
2 Should "spring", "summer",  
"autumn" and "winter" start  
with capital letters?  
3 If you looked up "guide"  
in a dictionary, would you  
look under "guide" or "book"?

4 Are you "bored" or "bore"  
bored of something?  
5 How do you spell the plural of  
Eskimo?  
6 Should you put a full stop  
at the end of a sentence?  
7 What's the difference between  
"recover" and "recovery"?  
8 What's the difference between  
colon and a semicolon?  
9 Should you use "and" or "or"

# What is punctuation?

Punctuation is a collection of marks and signs which break words up into groups and give other helpful clues and information about their meaning. The purpose of punctuation marks is to make it easier for people to understand the exact meaning of written words.

This book explains the different uses of each punctuation mark and gives lots of tips and hints on how and where to use them. Here, you can see the complete range of punctuation marks to choose from.

?!,:;- ( ) “ ” ‘ ’ \_ ’

It might help you to understand exactly what punctuation marks do if you think about the difference between spoken words and written words.

When someone speaks they can do all sorts of things to help make the meaning of their words clearer to the person or people listening to them. They can vary their voice by making it higher or lower, or louder or softer; they can change the tone (or quality) of their voice and the speed at which they speak; and they can put in pauses of various different lengths. If the person listening can see, as well as hear, the person speaking, the expression on the speaker's face and the gestures they use, it can also help to communicate the exact meaning of their words.



Most people, without even thinking about it, use all these techniques to help them express the meaning of their words. In other words, these things act as "voice punctuation". When people don't use voice punctuation they are boring to listen to and difficult to understand. When children first learn to read aloud they usually ignore voice punctuation and this makes it hard to follow the meaning of the words they are reading.



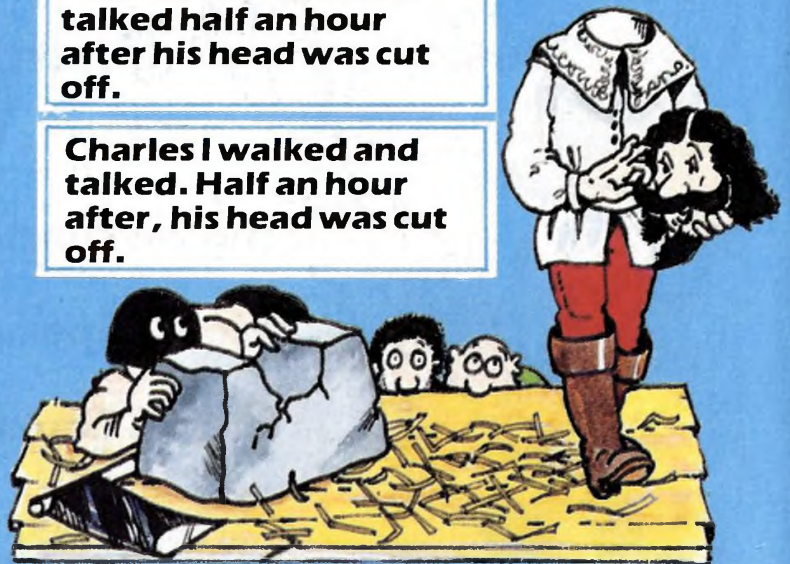
Written punctuation cannot convey as much as voice punctuation, but it is still very important. It tells you how to turn the words into the right voice patterns to help you understand them. Today, once people have learnt to read, they usually do this inside their heads, but back in the Middle Ages anyone who could read and understand something without reading it aloud, or at least mouthing it, was considered very rare and talented.

## Helping you read

One important thing that punctuation tells you is when and how long to pause when you are reading. The number and length of the pauses can make a great difference to the meaning of the words. You can see this by comparing the meaning of the two sentences below.

**Charles I walked and talked half an hour after his head was cut off.**

**Charles I walked and talked. Half an hour after, his head was cut off.**



At one time people used to write without putting any gaps between words. They then began to realize how helpful it would be to separate groups of letters into words, so that they could be converted back into speech more easily. The next step after separating the words was to put in punctuation marks for the pauses.

**At one time people wrote without putting any gaps between words**



If you listen to people talking you will probably notice that their voices rise at the end of a question, but fall at the end of most other sentences. You can test this by getting someone to read the sentences below.

**This is the best you can do.**

**This is the best you can do!**

**This is the best you can do?**

The rise and fall of a voice is called its intonation pattern and is often an important part of the meaning of spoken words. (In some languages, such as Chinese, the same word said with different intonations can mean totally different things.) Punctuation marks, especially question and exclamation marks, indicate what intonation you should use.

## Are there any rules?

There are very few unbreakable rules of punctuation. Once you have learnt the basic uses of each mark, the way you punctuate can often be a matter of what you happen to prefer. Remember that there is often more than one perfectly correct way of punctuating a sentence. Concentrate on the clearest, simplest way of expressing something. The main thing to remember is



that each mark should be useful. If a punctuation mark is not doing anything useful, leave it out.

When you are having difficulty trying to decide which punctuation marks to use in something you have written, it can be very helpful to say the words aloud and think about the pauses you use when you say them. A tape recorder can be even more helpful. It is very good practice to record yourself, or someone else, describing a scene or incident. Then play back the

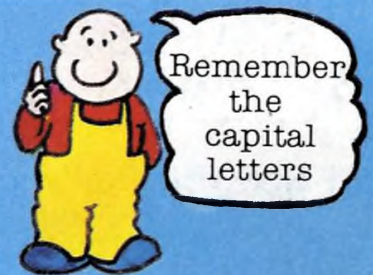


recording, writing out your own words and putting in punctuation wherever you paused. Play back the recording again and check your written version against it.

In this book the main guidelines on how to use punctuation are given in the text. Examples which help to illustrate these guidelines are surrounded by blue borders.

**She had a blue-eyed, big-eared, bird-brained boyfriend.**

A team of little punctuation experts make comments and suggestions to help pick out particular points.



## Test yourself

There are short tests on each section. These appear in yellow boxes so that you can spot them easily. There are also two pages of tests and quizzes on pages 26 and 27. The answers to all the tests are on pages 28 to 31. Always do the tests on a separate piece of paper.

In some sections you will find "Do" and "Don't" boxes. The "Don't" boxes warn of common mistakes and pitfalls to avoid. The "Do" boxes summarize the main points to remember about the more complicated punctuation marks.

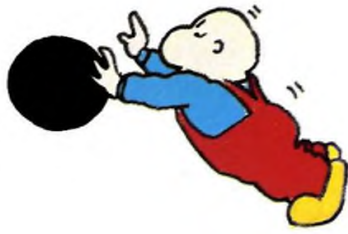
Punctuation is very closely linked to grammar (the rules about the way words are used in a language), so you may come across the occasional grammatical term (e.g. "noun", "clause"). If you do not understand any of these terms or feel a bit hazy about the meaning, turn to the glossary on page 32 to check the exact meaning.

The rules and guidelines given in this book apply to English written by hand or on a typewriter. The printed English used in books, newspapers and magazines sometimes follows slightly different rules and conventions, so don't be put off if you see things in print which you would express differently in writing.

# Full stops

Full stops (also called full points) do several jobs. They are the strongest punctuation mark, making the most definite pause.

1



They are used at the end of all sentences which are not questions or exclamations. (A sentence is a word, or group of words, which makes complete sense on its own.)

2



**The witch stirred the cauldron.**

This is a sentence

**Stop.**

**Hello.**

These are one word sentences.



Sentences usually have a noun and a verb, but they can, sometimes, consist of only one word.

3

**Who are you?**

**Help!**



4

**The boy sat up. He got out of bed.**

Don't forget the capital letter.



A sentence can also be ended by a question mark, ? (see page 6) or an exclamation mark, ! (see page 7). In these cases you don't need a full stop.

When you have used a full stop to end a sentence, remember to start the next sentence with a capital letter.

## Stop the everlasting sentence

Remember the capital letters.

This is a very long sentence which does not make any sense. Can you put it right? There should be five full stops.



He trudged wearily along the dusty road his feet hurt and his head throbbed there was not a soul in sight for miles and he wondered what to do next then he saw someone waving at him at the top of the hill it was a tall man in a large hat

## Three full stops in a row

You can use three full stops where part of a quotation or text is left out.

**"Jack and Jill went up the hill . . . and Jill came tumbling after."**

You can also use three full stops to show where a sentence is unfinished.

**"He hid behind the gravestone and . . ."**

I wonder what happened?



## Notices, lists and labels

You don't use full stops in these.



No full stops here.

## Shortening words by using full stops

Instead of writing some words in full you can cut them short, or "abbreviate" them, by just writing some of the letters, or just the first (initial) letters.

A full stop is used to show where letters have been left out, words shortened, or after initials.



**Dr – Doctor**  
**Mr – Mister**

Where the first and last letters in the shortened form are the same as in the full word, you can leave off the full stops if you want to.

**Joanna Jane Johnson**  
**J. J. Johnson**

Sometimes the first (initial) letter of a word is used to stand for the whole word. People's first names are often written as initials.

If an abbreviation comes at the end of a sentence, you don't need to use two full stops.



**Feb. 14th**  
**Sun. 30th**

**Prof. (Professor)**  
**Rev. (Reverend)**

You can use a full stop to shorten the names of the days of the week and the months of the year. It is also used to shorten titles.



No full stop here.

**km – kilometre**  
**mm – millimetre**  
**cm – centimetre**



Don't use full stops with abbreviations of metric measurements.

**UN (United Nations)**  
**NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)**  
**BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation)**  
**USA (United States of America)**

No full stop here.

You can leave out the full stops after initial letters of well-known organizations and place names.



**They took the dog to the R.S.P.C.A.**

## Short or long?

These words can be written in a much shorter way. How can you abbreviate them?

Victoria Cross  
et cetera  
Reverend John Williams  
Professor Alexander Johnson  
Saint Augustine  
centimetre

A.A. R.A.C. Y.W.C.A. R.S.P.C.A.  
W.R.V.S. St. John Ch. 4 v. 3 B.Sc.

You may need a dictionary.



# Question marks

A question mark is used at the end of a sentence which asks a question. It is used instead of a full stop so the next word begins with a capital letter.

When the word or words in the sentence actually form a question it is called a *direct question*. This kind of sentence expects an answer.

**Which is the best route to London?**

An *indirect question* is a sentence which does not ask a question but tells you what question was asked. It does not have a question mark.

No question mark here.

**He asked which was the best route to London.**



A question can be just one word.

These are questions

**Why? Who? How?**

**When? What?**

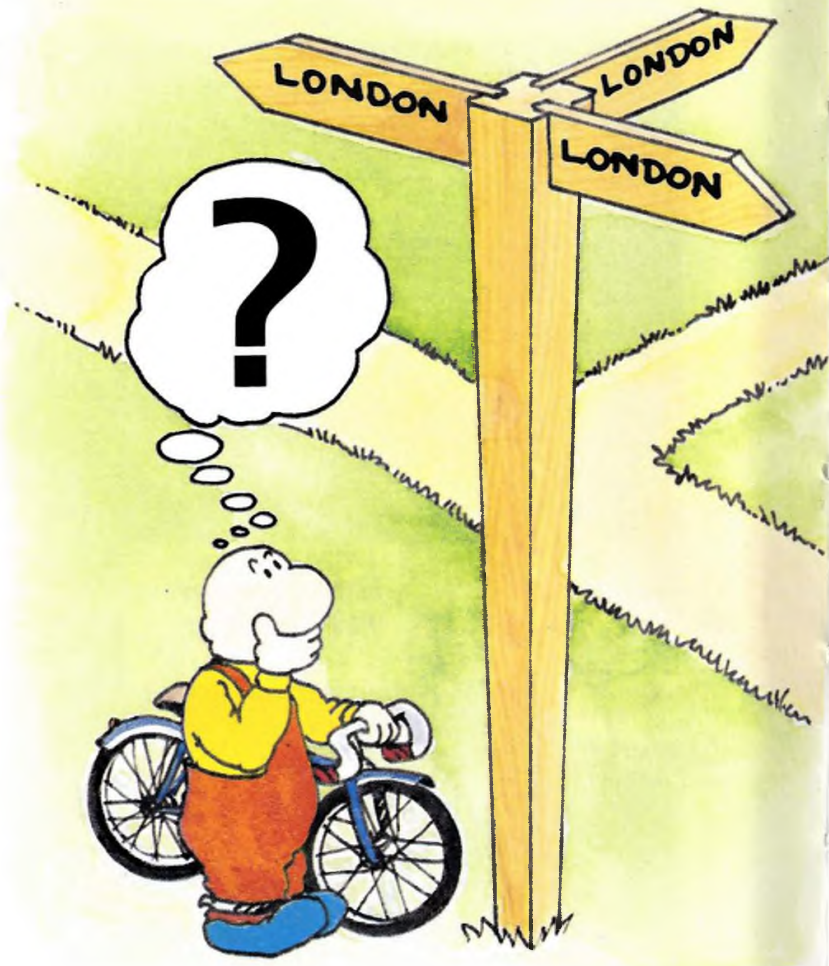
Take care! If a sentence begins with one of these words it does not necessarily mean it is a question.

but this isn't.

**When it is cold I wear my hat.**

## Uncertainty

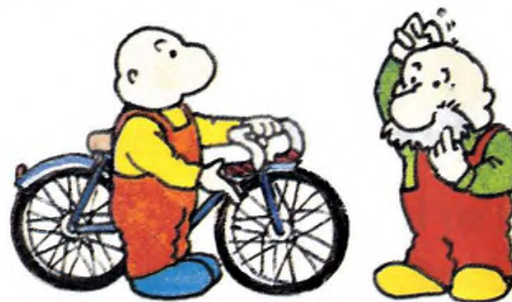
Sometimes a question mark is used to show doubt about something like a date of birth. These should not be used in normal writing.



## Question tags

A question can be tagged on to the end of a sentence.

**It's not far, is it? I can get there tonight, can't I?**



## Question quiz

Which of these sentences do you think are questions?

1. Where is the hotel
2. He asked how much it would cost
3. Is it expensive
4. Will I like the food
5. What an awful room
6. It's a large room, isn't it
7. How long shall I stay

# Exclamation marks



An exclamation mark is used at the end of a sentence or phrase to emphasize some special meaning within it.

It can mark surprise, humour or joy.

**I don't believe it!**



**Silly me!**

**What a beautiful day!**



It can show fear, anger, pain and danger.

**Don't shoot!**

**How dare you!**



**Ouch!**



## Don't

1. Don't use more than one exclamation mark at a time.

**Wow!!!**

**What!!**

2. Don't use them too often or they will lose their effect and make what you write boring to read.

Too many here.



When someone is giving an order or shouting, an exclamation mark is used.

**Stand up straight!**

**Halt!**

**Attention!**

**Call the police!**



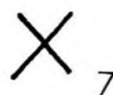
An exclamation mark can sometimes appear in the middle of a sentence.

**Good gracious! what has happened?**



Don't use one to make your own comment on something.

**The fat lady ate fifty(!) cream buns.**



# Commas



**We ate chocolate, jelly and cake.**



This makes it sound as though the jelly was made of chocolate.



**We ate chocolate jelly and cake.**

A comma is used to mark a brief pause, much shorter than a pause made by a full stop. It can be used to separate two words, or groups of words, in a sentence, in order to make the meaning clear.

Commas are the most common punctuation mark, but you have to be careful how you use them. You can easily change the meaning of a sentence by moving a comma to a different place or taking it away altogether.

## Lists

When there is a list of words in a sentence, each word in the list is separated from the next by a comma.

They may be nouns,

**We will need hammers, nails and a saw.**

or adjectives.

**Mr Cherry was a warm, hospitable man.**

or verbs.

**She stopped, stared and ran.**

The last word in the list is usually joined to the the list by "and", instead of a comma.



The list may consist of groups of words divided by commas, instead of single words.

**Sam frightens the cat, teases the dog, bullies his brother and annoys the neighbours.**

There is no comma before the first word in the list, or after the last.



## Try these

Can you see where the commas should be?



All these sentences need commas to help clarify their meaning. Can you see where they should be?

1. The monster was huge fat and spiky.
2. Everyone threw spears stones swords and boiling oil at the creature.
3. It roared growled spat and groaned but still it did not die.
4. A knight appeared wearing bright shining armour and pierced the beast with his special magic sword.
5. The huge beast screamed fell to the ground rolled over and died.
6. The king rewarded the knight with gold silver diamonds rubies and other precious things.



## Long sentences

1

The comma comes before the joining word.

**We queued for the concert for four hours, but we didn't manage to get tickets.**

These two parts of the sentence are equally important.

Two or more simple sentences joined together by words like "but", "or", "nor", "so", "either" and "neither" are separated by a comma before the joining word.



2

**When he saw the pirate ship on the horizon, the captain gave the alarm.**



A sentence is sometimes made up of one main part (a main clause) with other, less important parts (subordinate clauses) joined to it by words like "when", "because" and "although". A subordinate clause is often separated from a main clause by a comma, especially if it comes before the main clause.

## Sentence linking words

The joining words in long sentences are called conjunctions. Here are some more common conjunctions:

Beware! Some of these words are not always conjunctions.

**after**    **if**  
**before**   **unless**  
**until**    **though**  
**while**    **as**  
**since**    **for**



When you see any of these words think about using commas to separate the group of words they introduce from the rest of the sentence.

## Commas with "and"

Commas are not generally used with "and". In a list "and" tends to replace the comma, but sometimes you need to use a comma before "and" to make the meaning absolutely clear.

**The best horses in the race were Pacemaker, Starlight, Mr Speedy, Windstorm, and Thunder and Lightning.**



Without this comma you might think there were four horses, or that the fourth horse was called Windstorm and Thunder.

## Test yourself

Use the information above to help you.



Can you improve these sentences by adding commas?

1. The robber climbed through the window crept up the stairs and peered into the bedroom.
2. She called as loudly as she could but no-one could hear her.
3. The telephone was not far away yet there was little she could do to reach it.
4. She switched on all the lights so the man ran away in a panic.
5. The policeman who arrived later told her to put a lock on her window.

## Inessential words and phrases

Commas are used to separate words or phrases in a sentence. The words enclosed by the commas could be left out without changing the general sense of a sentence.

Try reading these sentences through, then read them again, leaving out the words surrounded by commas.

Words like this are called sentence modifiers.

**I felt, moreover, that he was being totally unreasonable.**

Used for emphasis.

**The book was, without doubt, the best she had read.**

Describes Harry.

**Harry Mann, our star player, broke his leg in the match last Saturday.**

**The man, who was wearing a blue hat, slid silently into the room.**

But note this:

**Men who have beards often smoke pipes.**

These words are vital to the meaning of the sentence, so no commas are used.

Compare the two sentences below.

**The trumpeters, who were playing in the overture, started to tune up.**

In this sentence all the trumpeters present were part of the overture.

**The trumpeters who were playing in the overture started to tune up.**

This sentence suggests that there were trumpeters around who weren't taking part in the overture.

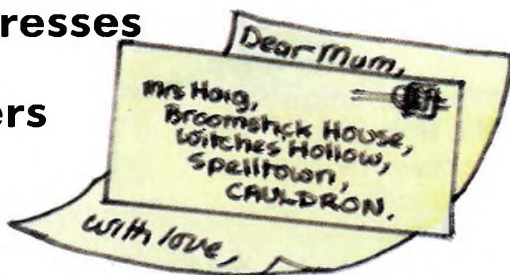
The commas change the meaning of these two sentences. They show that the words they surround are not essential to the meaning of the sentence.

## Puzzle it out

Are the words in italics essential to the meaning of the sentence, or inessential?

1. The singer, *who was French*, had a very beautiful voice.
2. I felt, *however*, that he was unsuitable for the part.
3. The man *who was taller* would have been better.
4. He was, *without a doubt*, just as talented.
5. All the actors *in the opera* were of a very high standard.

## Addresses and letters



You can use commas as above when writing addresses\* and opening and closing letters.

**The flight from Perth, Australia to London, England took 36 hours.**

Break up names of places with commas.

## Dates and numbers

**1,999,999**

Commas are used to break up groups of numbers into thousands.

**February 14, 1990**

**February, 1990**

**Spring, 1990**

Here the comma can be left out.

Commas are used in dates to separate the year, the day, month or season.

## Comma moving puzzle

Can you change the meaning of these sentences by moving or removing the commas?

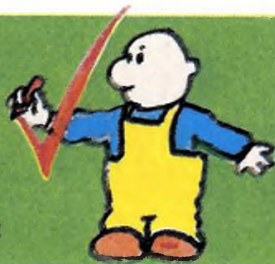
1. The old lady collected all sorts of things: silver, paper, hats, clocks and tablecloths.
2. He had large, bright, green eyes.
3. She liked Rod, who played the drums, better than Jim.

## Spot the mistakes

Some of the commas below are not necessary. Can you spot which ones?

The player, kicked the ball into the goal which was close by. The goalkeeper ran, jumped up, but missed it and the ball shot in. The spectators, who were delighted, shouted and screamed for joy. The referee, blew his whistle and waved his arms, around but the match continued.

## Do



Do use commas:

1. To show a pause inside a sentence.
2. To separate the items on a list.
3. To separate inessential words or phrases from the rest of the sentence
4. To break up numbers into thousands.
5. When writing a date.
6. When opening and closing letters.  
(For use of commas in direct speech see page 13.)

Remember that a comma should always help to make the meaning of a sentence clearer.

## Don't

1. Use too many commas. If a sentence is broken by commas in too many places it makes it harder, instead of easier, to understand.

**Flora came in, shouting out the news, that she had won, the competition.**

2. Break up a list of adjectives by commas, if they sound better without pauses.

**They talked for hours about the good old days.**

When it does not make sense to put "and" in, don't put a comma in.

\*See page 25.

# Inverted commas



Inverted commas are also called quotation marks, quotes or speech marks. They are used in writing to show the exact words that someone has spoken. This is called direct speech.



Spoken words.

Spoken words can be set out in three basic ways:

they can come at the beginning of a sentence,

they can come at the end of a sentence,

or they can come at the beginning and end of a sentence with an interruption in the middle.

**"I have won a holiday for two in France," said Fred.**

**Fred said, "I have won a holiday for two in France."**

Use inverted commas only around the words actually spoken.

**"I have won," said Fred, "a holiday for two in France."**

Make the inverted commas curved and facing inwards.

Inverted commas always appear in pairs.



## Capital letters

A capital letter must be used whenever someone starts to speak,

Capital letter.

**Alice asked, "How did you manage to win a holiday?"**

but do not use a capital letter unless it either starts someone's spoken words or starts a sentence.

No capital letter.

**"How," asked Alice, "did you manage to win a holiday?"**

## Reported speech

There are two ways of writing down what someone says. You can write down the person's exact words (direct speech) and put them in inverted commas, or you can report what they said in your own words. The second way is called reported or indirect speech. With reported speech you do not use inverted commas.

**"I have always wanted to go to France," said Alice.**

**Alice said that she had always wanted to go to France.**



# Commas with inverted commas

In direct speech there must always be a comma between the introduction to speech (subject and "verb of saying") and the speech itself.

The verb of saying is often "says" or "said", but all these can be verbs of saying:

mutter	ask	declare
whisper	reply	comment
cry	exclaim	observe
shout	repeat	command

When the words spoken come before the verb of saying, they are followed by a comma,

**"I am very excited about going abroad," said Fred.**

The comma goes inside the inverted commas.

but if the words spoken are a question or exclamation, use a question mark or an exclamation mark, not a comma.

**"When are you going?" asked Alice.**

**"You lucky thing!" she said.**

When the verb of saying and its subject start the sentence, they are followed by a comma.

**Fred replied, "We are leaving tomorrow morning."**

The comma goes before the inverted commas.

The first word spoken has a capital letter.

When the spoken sentence is interrupted to insert a verb of saying and its subject, one comma is needed before breaking off the spoken words and another before continuing.

This comma goes inside the inverted commas.

This comma goes in front of the second pair of inverted commas.

**"I do hope," said Alice politely, "that you and your friend have a wonderful time."**

This word is continuing the spoken sentence so it starts with a small letter.

Remember, also, to use commas:

round people's names, when they are spoken to by name,

**"I was wondering, Alice, if you would like to come with me," said Fred.**

round words like "yes", "no", "please" and "thank you",

**"Yes, of course I would."**

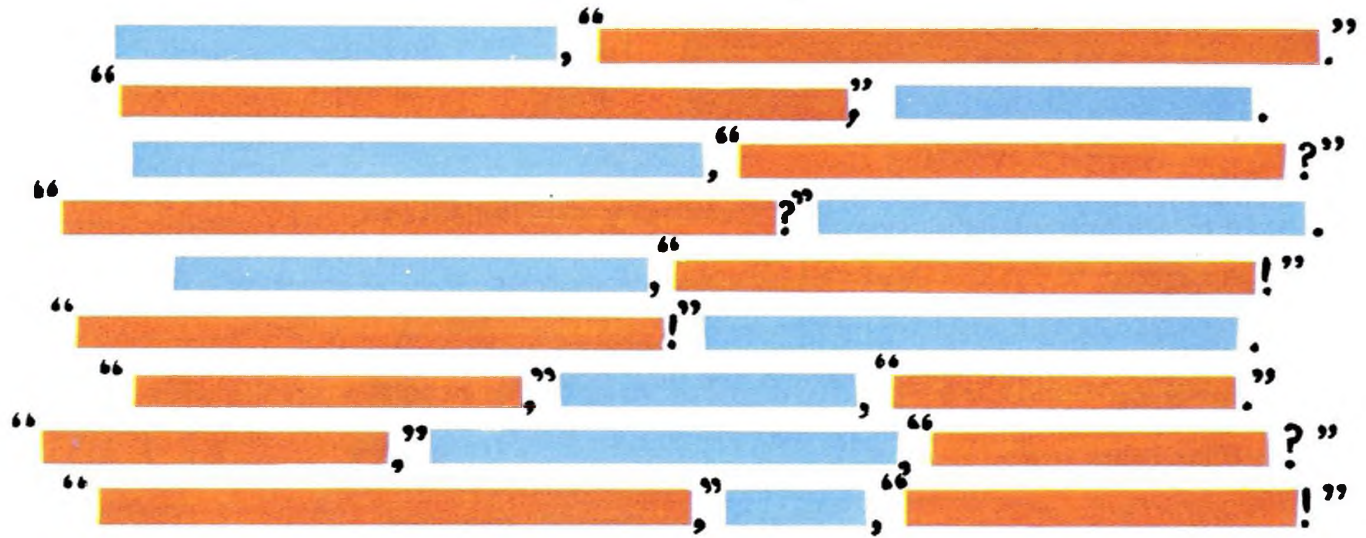
before question tags.

**"But I can't be ready to leave tomorrow morning, can I?"**

## Punctuation patterns to remember

If you find it difficult to decide what punctuation marks to use with inverted commas and what order to put them in, the punctuation patterns below may help you. Look at all the different

patterns and decide which one best suits the sentence you want to write. The red block represents the spoken words; the blue block represents the verbs of saying.



Commas, full stops, question marks and exclamation marks after spoken words usually come inside the closing inverted commas.

## Turn nonsense into a conversation

(When you use inverted commas for a conversation always start a new paragraph when one person stops speaking and another starts. \*)

Good morning, how are you today? the doctor asked. I feel dreadful, he replied gruffly. You should try to get up and walk about, she suggested. Then you might feel better. You must be joking! he exclaimed. Do you want a patient or a corpse?

## Quotations

Pages 12 and 13 explain how inverted commas are used when you are quoting (repeating the exact words) that someone has said. They are also used when you quote the exact words from a book, newspaper or magazine.

Use full stops to show where you have left out some of the original words.

**“One day. . . I was exceedingly surprised with the print of a man’s naked foot on the shore, which was very plain to be seen in the sand.” This was when Robinson Crusoe first realized there was another human on his island.**



**Some people feel that “many hands make light work”, but in my experience “too many cooks spoil the broth”.**



You must also use inverted commas when you quote a proverb or traditional saying.

\* See page 24.

## Single inverted commas

**'I have nothing to declare except my genius,' he said.**

You can use single inverted commas instead of double ones, but single ones look rather like apostrophes,\* which can cause confusion.



**"Who said 'I have nothing to declare except my genius' and when did he say it?" asked the quizmaster.**

Sometimes you may need to use two sets of inverted commas in one sentence. This happens when you write a title or quote someone's words in the middle of a sentence that is already a quotation. The clearest thing to do is to use double inverted commas for the outer marks and single inverted commas for the inner marks.

## Titles

Use capital letters for the first word and any other important words.

In printed material titles are often put in italics.

**Have you read "The Life and Adventures of Freddy the Frog"?**

Do not use capital letters for words like "a", "the", "and", "of", "at", "to", "in", "from", "on", "for".

You also need to use inverted commas when you write the titles of books, plays, films, newspapers, magazines, poems, songs, paintings and T.V. programmes.

## Unusual words

Unusual words such as specialist terms, foreign words, slang and words used only in certain areas are often put in inverted commas. This helps to show the reader that they are unusual (and that the reader is not necessarily expected to know it already).

**He "flipped his lid".**

**We stayed in a small "pension".**

**The wind is "veering" when it changes in a clockwise direction.**

## Being funny

**Our "luxury" hotel turned out to be a concrete shed surrounded by a field of mud.**

Inverted commas can help you to add an ironical, sarcastic or funny twist to something you write. You can put them round some words to give the word emphasis and show that you do not take it seriously.

## Words quoted for discussion



**I have looked up "amnesia" in the dictionary hundreds of times, but I always forget what it means.**

When you write a word, not simply for its meaning within a sentence, but in order to say something particular about it, you should put it in inverted commas.

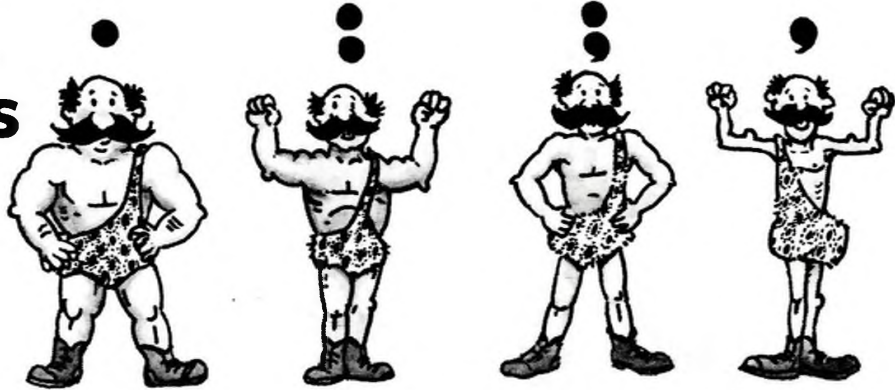
## Spot the title

Where should the inverted commas go?

1. He went to see Superman and E.T. last week.
2. They had good reviews in The Times.
3. I wanted to watch Coronation Street and Dallas so I didn't go with him.

\* For apostrophes, see page 23.

# Colons and semi-colons



Colons and semi-colons, like commas and full stops, mark the places where you would break or pause when speaking. You can get away without using them, but they can come in useful and it is worth knowing where you can use them.

Imagine that each punctuation mark has a certain strength according to how long a pause it represents. The comma is the weakest mark; then comes the semi-colon. The colon is stronger than the semi-colon, but weaker than the full stop.

Old-fashioned teachers used to tell their pupils to pause and count one at a comma, two at a semi-colon, three at a colon and four at a full stop. It might sound rather odd if you tried doing this, but it may help you to understand how to use colons and semi-colons.



## How colons are used

- 1 A colon nearly always "introduces" or leads into something that is to follow. You may see it used before someone speaks or before a quotation.

Don't forget that you have to use inverted commas\* as well as colons here.

**He said: "I'll eat my hat."**

**Remember the saying: "A stitch in time saves nine."**



- 2 A colon is used to break a sentence when the second half of the sentence explains, expands or summarizes what comes in the first half.

**Eventually he told us his secret: the old beggar was, in fact, a very rich man.**

A colon used like this often means the same as "that is to say".



- 3 Colons are also used to introduce lists. Some people use a dash after the colon at the beginning of a list, but it is better to leave the dash out.

**To make this pudding you will need the following ingredients: three ripe bananas, a pint of fresh cream, a small glass of brandy and some cherries and almonds for decoration.**

Watch out for these phrases. All of them are quite often followed by a colon.

**for example  
in other words  
to sum up  
the following  
as follows**





## How semi-colons are used

**1** A semi-colon can sometimes be used to replace a full stop. It links two complete sentences and turns them into one sentence. The two sentences should be closely linked in meaning and of equal importance.

**The door swung open; a masked figure strode in.**

Here, a full stop would be a bit abrupt.



**2** Semi-colons are often used before words like "therefore", "nevertheless", "however", "moreover", "consequently", "otherwise" and "besides", when these words link two independent clauses.

**He never took any exercise; consequently he became very fat.**

Don't use semi-colons before ordinary conjunctions, like "and", "but", "for", "nor" and "or".



**3** Semi-colons can also be used to break up lists, especially where each item on the list is rather long and using commas would be confusing.

Sometimes you need to use commas as well as semi-colons to make the meaning of the sentence clearer.

You *can* use a semi-colon before the word "and" when "and" introduces the last part of the list.

**At the circus we saw a dwarf, juggling with swords and daggers; a clown who stood on his head on a tight-rope; a fire-eater with flashing eyes; and an eight-year-old lion tamer.**



## Deciding which one to use

There are times when it is difficult to decide whether to use a colon or a semi-colon.

If the first part of the sentence leads you forward to the information in the second part of the sentence, use a colon.

**The boy was like his father: short, fat and with a large nose.**

If the two parts of the sentence seem to be equally balanced, use a semi-colon.

**Florence was very keen on swimming; her sister preferred cycling.**

## Do

Use a colon:

1. Before a list.
2. To introduce an explanation, expansion or summary of the first part of the sentence.

Use a semi-colon:

1. To join two closely linked sentences.
2. To break up lists.

## Don't

Use a capital letter after either a colon or a semi-colon.

# Brackets and dashes

Brackets are used in pairs around a group of words to keep them separate from the rest of the sentence. The words inside the brackets can also be referred to as "in parenthesis".



Brackets always appear in pairs.



**I spoke to Eliza (her sister is a doctor) about your strange symptoms.**

**The streets were deserted (it was Easter Sunday) and not a single shop was open.**

**I gave the bear a banana (all I had left).**



Interruption.



Explanation.

Afterthought.



If you take away the words between the brackets, the rest of the sentence should still make complete sense.



The words marked off by brackets introduce an extra idea into the sentence. This extra idea could be an explanation of something

else in the sentence, an afterthought, or an interruption of the main idea in the sentence.

## Full stops and commas with brackets

When you use brackets it is sometimes difficult to decide exactly where to put commas, full stops and other punctuation marks. First work out how you would punctuate the sentence if the words in brackets were not there.

**(you all know what we have to do)**

**The rescue is tomorrow, but the plans may be changed any time.**

A comma would normally come after the second bracket not before the first one.

**We will need to take plenty of provisions (blankets, clothes, food and weapons).**

If the words in brackets come at the end of a sentence, a full stop comes after the second bracket.

**Wake me early. (Set your alarms for five o'clock.) We must leave before it gets light.**

If the words in the brackets make a complete sentence and come between complete sentences, put a full stop inside the second bracket.

## Double dashes

Dashes can be used in pairs, like brackets, to separate a group of words from the rest of a sentence. They are only used if the words they separate come in the middle of a sentence.

You could use brackets here.

**Hannah invited her friends – there were ten boys and ten girls – to a fancy dress party.**



## Test yourself on brackets

These sentences need brackets to make sense. Can you think where they should go?



1. She got up early to go shopping the sales were on.
2. She went with Anne her best friend and the lady next door.
3. It took ages to travel home there was a bus strike and they returned exhausted.

## Single dashes

Dashes, unlike brackets, do not always have to be used in pairs. For certain purposes they can be used singly. In some situations they are an alternative to brackets but they can also be used to mark an expectant pause.

1 **They tell me he is very kind – I don't know him.**

You could use brackets here.



A dash is often used to mark a pause or break before a sudden change of direction in a sentence. It may come before an afterthought added on to the end of a sentence.

2 **Apples, pears, plums – all these grow in our orchard.**

You could use brackets here.

List.



Summary.

Summary.

**My favourite kind of fruit is citrus fruit – oranges, grapefruits, lemons, limes.**

List.



Sometimes a dash is used to separate a list from its summary. The summary may come before or after the list.

3 **Pause for dramatic effect.**

**I opened the lid eagerly and there inside the box was – a dead mouse.**



The part of the sentence after the dash is often surprising or unexpected. The dash gives you a moment of suspense before the surprise.

4 **You could use brackets here.**

**The jumper she made was full of mistakes – mistakes which you could see at a glance.**



Sometimes you may want to emphasize a particular word in a sentence by repeating it. If you do this, use a dash to separate the two identical words.

## Choosing between brackets and dashes

When you want to put words in parenthesis you have to choose whether to use brackets or dashes. This often depends on which you happen to prefer. If you can't decide, think about how strong a division you want to make between the words in parenthesis and the rest of the sentence.

Brackets mark the strongest division.



Dashes mark a less strong division.



If the words you want to separate are fairly close to the main meaning of the sentence, a pair of commas\* may do the job quite well.



If you are still in doubt, it is probably safest to use brackets.

## Practise your dashes

Where should the dashes go?

1. She decided to emigrate to Canada I don't know why.
2. She packed everything she could think of clothes, jewellery, books and records.
3. They drove on and on up the hill until at last, there to her delight was a beautiful old house.

## Don't

1. Use double dashes if the parenthesis comes at the end of a sentence. Do use brackets or a single dash.
2. Use more than one pair of dashes in the same sentence.
3. Use double dashes and a single dash in the same sentence.
4. Put brackets within brackets.

## Do

1. Use brackets or dashes to separate an interruption, explanation or afterthought from the main sentence.

\*For commas see pages 8-9.

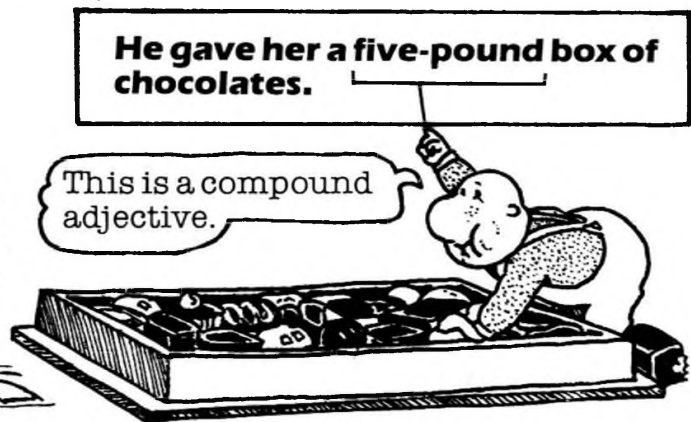
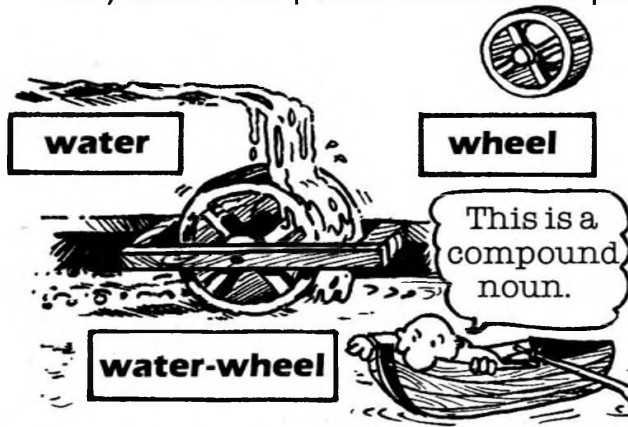
# Hyphens

The hyphen is half the length of a dash. It is a linking mark which joins two or more words together to make one word or expression.



## Compound words

1 When two or more words are joined together they are called compound words. They can be compound nouns or compound adjectives.



2 Sometimes the compound word is made up of a noun or an adjective and a participle. A hyphen is used to join these.

This is a participle.



**short-sighted  
hard-wearing  
home-made**

**The kind-  
hearted old lady  
gave five pots of  
home-made jam  
to the bazaar.**

3 A hyphen is used to join an adjective or noun to a noun ending in d or ed.

**blue-eyed**

**heavy-footed**

**She had a blue-eyed,  
big-eared, bird-  
brained boyfriend.**



4 You can use a hyphen to make a group of words into an expression.

**do-it-yourself**

**good-for-nothing**

**The do-it-yourself man was a  
bit happy-go-lucky!**



5 You also use a hyphen to write numbers and fractions that are more than one word.

**three-quarters  
sixty-six**

**When she reached the age  
of twenty-one Cynthia  
inherited three-quarters of  
her father's money.**



## Nine missing... have a go!

There are nine hyphens missing. Where should they go?

The half witted taxi driver was ninety nine years old and had rather a couldn't care less attitude. This resulted in the hard working woman arriving tear stained and miserable three quarters of an hour late for the dress rehearsal.



# Avoiding confusion

6 When the meaning of something is vague you can use a hyphen to avoid confusion.

**Man eating tiger escapes from the zoo.**

This is what is really meant.

**Man-eating tiger escapes from the zoo.**

**a walking-stick not a walking stick**



7 Two words can be spelt exactly the same way and have different meanings. Sometimes a hyphen is used to make the difference clear.

**recover re-cover**

**resign re-sign**

**She re-covered the sofa when she had recovered from her illness.**



8 When two words are joined together and have identical letters they are separated by a hyphen.

**re-echo not reecho**

This looks odd.

Never write this.

**grass-seed not grassseed**

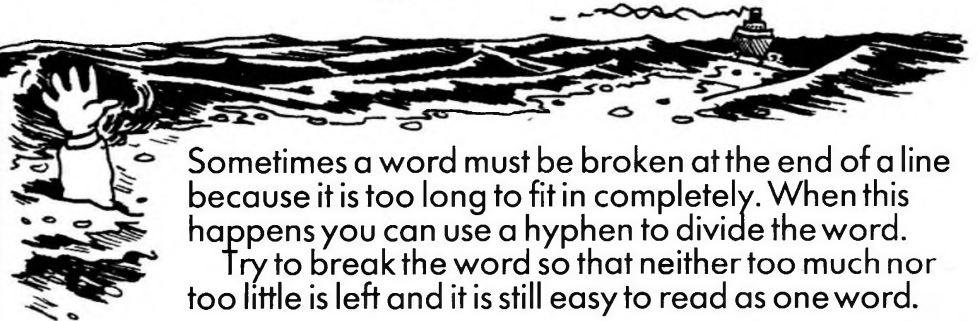
9 A hyphen can be used to attach a prefix to a word. This changes the meaning of the word.

This is a prefix.

**pre-school  
ex-army  
multi-storey  
anti-aircraft**

10

**The man fell overboard and the ship sailed on. He sank beneath the gigantic waves and was never seen again.**



Sometimes a word must be broken at the end of a line because it is too long to fit in completely. When this happens you can use a hyphen to divide the word. Try to break the word so that neither too much nor too little is left and it is still easy to read as one word.

## If in doubt

Some words that were once hyphenated are now accepted as one word. If you are doubtful about when to use a hyphen always use a dictionary.

**nightdress  
inkwell  
haystack**



## Try again

Can you see where the hyphens should go here?



Her father was an ex army officer who was injured in the war. Although he was a semi invalid he was self reliant and sat all day at his writing desk typing out novels non stop.

# Apostrophes

“ An apostrophe looks like a comma only it is raised off the line of writing. It is used for various reasons.



## 1 Showing who owns what (possession)

An apostrophe goes after the owner's name to show something belongs to him or her.

If the owner is singular, put the apostrophe at the end of the word and add an "s".

This shows the cat belongs to Jane.



**This is Jane's cat.**

If the word ends in an "s" already you still need an apostrophe + another "s".

**That is James's dog.**

When the owner is plural (more than one) and the word ends in "s" already just put the apostrophe after the "s" that is already there.

Just the apostrophe here.



**The man stole the ladies' handbags.**

If the plural does not end in "s" you still add an apostrophe + "s".

Apostrophe "s".

Take care! There is *no* apostrophe with these possessive pronouns.

**He went to get the men's coats.**



its his hers ours yours

## 2 Filling in for missing letters (contractions)

You can also use an apostrophe when you want to leave out one or more letters. The apostrophe goes in where the letters come out. In this way two words are joined together in a shorter form. These are called *contractions*.



she has

she's

you are

you're

I am

I'm

we have

we've

There are some unusual contractions.

**shall not – shan't  
will not – won't  
I would – I'd**

**I had – I'd  
of the clock – o'clock**

Don't confuse *it's* and *its*.  
it's – it is  
it has  
its – this is the possessive pronoun.

**It's time we all went to bed. (It is)**

**It's been a long day. (It has)**

**The cat wants its supper.**



There is nothing missing here.

Watch out for *who's* and *whose*. These sound the same but they are different.

**Who's coming with us? (Who is)**

**Whose book is that? (To whom does that book belong?)**

## Test yourself

Where should the apostrophes go?

1. Shes got her mothers good looks, hasnt she?
2. Its the princess birthday today, isnt it?
3. The womens Keep Fit Class opens today.

# Capital letters



A capital letter should always be used for:

1 The beginning of a sentence.

**The old lady took her dog for a walk.**

2 People's names.

**Henrietta**

**Bert**

**Doris Smith**

Surnames and Christian names.



3 Names of places.

**New York**

**Mount Everest**

**River Thames**

These can be towns, cities, countries, rivers or lakes.



*But* don't use capitals for the points of the compass –

**north**

**south**

**east**

**west**

unless it is part of the name.

**North Pole**

**South Africa**

4 Names of streets, roads and buildings.

**Church Road**

**Main Street**

**Empire State Building**

5 Titles of books, plays, songs, newspapers, films and poems.

**The Spy Who Loved Me**

**The Mousetrap**

6 Days of the week, months of the year and for special days.

**Monday**

**December**



**Christmas**



*But* capitals are not used for the seasons of the year.

**spring**    **winter**  
**summer**    **autumn**



No capitals here.

7 A capital letter is used for titles.

**Prime Minister**

**Admiral-of-the-Fleet**

8 Also for titles before names.

**Lord Longford**    **Prince Charles**

*But* these titles do not have capitals when they do not accompany a name.

No capital here.



**The Duke of York made a speech. Afterwards the duke walked out.**

9 The name of God, Jesus Christ and words relating to them have capitals.

**The Messiah**

**Our Father**

**Allah**

10 The word I is always a capital. It must never be a small letter.

**I think I am going to be sick.**

11 Capitals are always used to begin paragraphs and to start each new line of an address.

Capitals here.



**Dr A. Giles,**  
**The Farthings,**  
**Cheam,**  
**Surrey.**

# Layout

Just as punctuation helps a reader to understand what you have written, the way you arrange words on a page and the amount of space you leave around them, also helps your reader to understand and take in the exact meaning of your words.

## Paragraphs

Long chunks of writing unbroken by paragraphs are very offputting to most readers. A paragraph is a set of sentences. There are no hard and fast rules about how many sentences there should be in a paragraph. Use as many as makes an easily digestible piece of reading, but try to end one paragraph and begin another at a point where it is logical to have a slight break.

The first line of a paragraph is set inwards from the margin (indented) to make it easier to see where each paragraph begins.



Once there was a strange old man, who lived in a huge castle on the edge of a dark wood.

He lived quite alone in his castle, but to keep him company he had hundreds of animals.

**"Waiter, I would like my bill, please," said the customer.**  
**"How did you find your steak, sir?" asked the waiter.**  
**"Ah, I just moved the potato and there it was."**

When you write down conversations you start a new paragraph every time one person stops speaking and another person starts. This makes it much easier for the reader to tell who is speaking which words.

When there is a complete change of subject it is usually quite easy to tell that a new paragraph is needed. If you are telling a story, the following occasions might be the right moment for a new paragraph:

1. When a person is introduced into the story.
2. When a new place is introduced into the story.
3. When there is a change of time.

## Letters

There is a special pattern to follow when you write letters, which helps to make them much clearer to the reader. Below you can

see one way of setting out your letters to friends or relatives.

Remember to put a comma here.



Your own address. You can indent each line, as shown here, or start each line straight below the one above.

Here are some other endings you can use in personal letters:  
Love from,  
With love,  
Yours ever,  
Best wishes,



Dear Rob,  
Just a short note to let you know that I'll be able to arrange the reunion for the 14<sup>th</sup> September. I will keep you informed.  
Yours sincerely,  
Sonia Head.

Put commas at the end of each line and a full stop at the end of the last line.

The date goes below the address.

Remember to put a comma after your ending.

Leave a margin on both sides of the writing and a space at the top and bottom of the page.

Write your ending and signature in the middle or slightly to the right.



Business letters can be set out like either of the two letters below.

Write "Sir", "Madam" or "Sir/Madam" if you do not know the name of the person you are writing to.



21, The Grove,  
BOCKINGFORD,  
Herts.  
E2 12C.  
22<sup>nd</sup> May 1981.

The Manager,  
Buzzza Alarms Ltd,  
The Estate,  
Boxley,  
Kent.

Dear Sir/Madam,  
Please find enclosed the  
"Buzzza" Supa Fire Alarm.  
If you should need to  
contact me with regard to  
the repairs, then I shall be  
available at the above  
address from the 24<sup>th</sup> of this  
month.

Yours faithfully,  
Peter Thompson.

Name and address of person you are writing to.

Your own address.

Date.



Write the person's name if you know what it is.



21, The Grove,  
BOCKINGFORD,  
Herts.  
E2 12C  
22<sup>nd</sup> May 1981

The Manager,  
Buzzza Alarms Ltd,  
The Estate,  
Boxley  
Kent.

Dear Mr. King,  
Please find enclosed the "Buzzza"  
Supa Fire Alarm.  
If you should need to contact me  
with regard to the repairs, then  
I shall be available at the above  
address from the 24<sup>th</sup> of this  
month.

Yours sincerely,  
Peter Thompson.

Write "Yours faithfully" if you have addressed the person "Dear Sir," "Dear Madam" or "Dear Sir/Madam".



Write "Yours sincerely", when you have addressed the person by name.


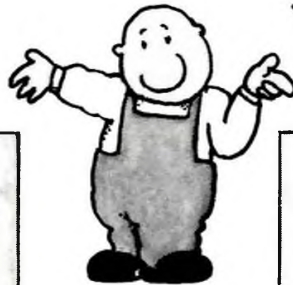


No capital letter for "faithfully" or "sincerely".

1. This way of setting out a letter is known as the "fully-blocked" layout. The writer's address is now indented line by line.
2. Everything else including new paragraphs and the signature begin up against the left-hand margin.
3. Leave a space between paragraphs.


You can write the address on envelopes for business or personal letters in either of the two ways shown below.

Mr. P. Thompson,  
21, The Grove,  
BOCKINGFORD,  
Herts.  
E2 12C

The lines of the address can be indented (left) or blocked (right).

Mr. P. Thompson,  
21, The Grove,  
BOCKINGFORD,  
Herts.  
E2 12C



Start the address about half-way down and half-way across the envelope.



Punctuation at the end of the lines is not essential.



# Test yourself

## Put in the capitals

Can you see where they should go?

There should be 19 capital letters below.

at christmastime harriet and tom brown went to london to stay with their uncle william. their uncle was admiral-of-the-fleet in the royal navy and he had some very grand friends. while the children were staying he had a party, to which he invited the prime minister, the duke of monmouth and a famous author from america.

Try not to write in the book. Use paper instead.



## Apostrophes

Where should the missing apostrophes go?



1. Its the first time this week that the dog has eaten its food.
2. Toms wife is James sister.
3. The ladies cloakroom is next to the mens.
4. Shes a lot older than she looks.
5. Weve not forgotten that youre an excellent cook.
6. Whose turn is it to see whos coming?

Can you shorten this conversation using apostrophes?

"I am tired," said Fred. "I have had an awful day."  
"Where have you been?" asked his mother. "It is late, and we have been looking everywhere for you. You are lucky we did not call the police. I will not give you any supper until I know what is going on."



## Spot the missing hyphens

There are 16 hyphens missing below. Can you see where they should go?

1. The girl with reddish brown hair kept teasing Ben, but as he was rather thick skinned and happy go lucky it didn't bother him.
2. The half witted man drove three quarters of the way in the wrong direction. He went south east instead of north west.
3. The hard working old lady had a well earned rest when she retired at the age of sixty five.
4. As her six foot tall fiancé was rather a ne'er do well, the twenty one year old girl broke off their nine month long engagement.

## Colon or semi-colon?

Can you decide where to put a colon or semi-colon?



1. Many people wear uniforms to work policemen, nurses, traffic wardens, bus drivers and schoolchildren.
2. Alice never had enough to eat therefore she became thin and ill.
3. Tom worked long hours every day nevertheless he remained healthy.
4. The actor read aloud "To be, or not to be that is the question."
5. There was a knock at the door in came a tall, hooded figure.
6. At last he told us everything he had been involved in the most horrific murder.



## Brackets, dashes or commas?

Can you think where to put brackets, dashes or commas to make these sentences clearer?

1. Maud took all her family three boys and three girls to the cinema.
2. They all have names beginning with the letter J Joshua, Jeremy, John, Joanne, Jessica and Jane.
3. Joanne the youngest ate three boxes of popcorn.
4. Joshua unlike the others ate nothing the whole time.
5. Poor Maud had no money left it cost £1.50 each to get in.



## No punctuation at all!

Can you rewrite this conversation putting in the capital letters, full stops, commas, inverted commas, question marks, exclamation marks and anything else you think necessary?

theres a letter for you called her mother ive put it on the table  
amanda rushed down the stairs tore open the envelope and  
found to her delight it was an invitation  
hooray ive been invited to james twenty first birthday party she  
cried there was a pause what am i going to wear  
youve got plenty of clothes dear replied her mother calmly sipping  
her tea theres absolutely nothing suitable for james party  
amanda replied it will be very smart  
whats james like asked her mother suspiciously  
hes six foot tall with brownish blond hair huge brown eyes and a  
wonderful smile replied amanda  
her mother sighed i meant what is his personality like is he hard  
working trustworthy kind and clever or is he selfish and mean



Now turn over and see if you were right.

# Answers

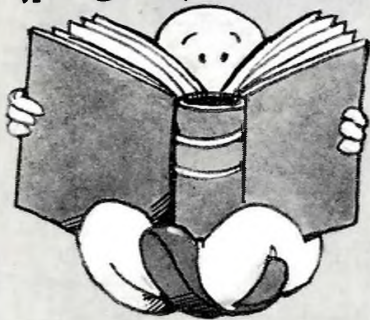
Check your brainpower.



## Stop the everlasting sentence (page 4)

He trudged wearily along the dusty road. His feet hurt and his head throbbed. There was not a soul in sight for miles and he wondered what to do next. Then he saw someone waving at him at the top of the hill. It was a tall man with a large hat.

## Short or long? (page 5)



V.C.  
etc.  
Rev. J. Williams  
Prof. A. Johnson  
St. Augustine  
cm

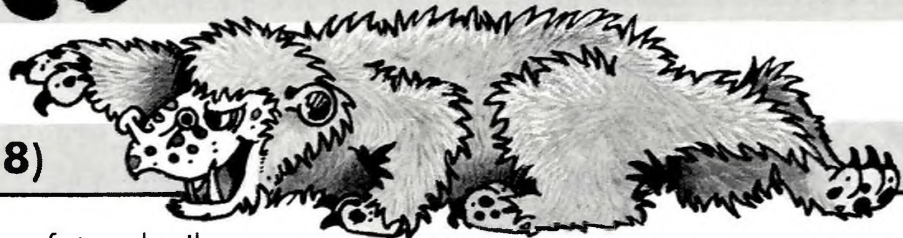
Automobile Association  
or Alcoholics Anonymous  
Royal Automobile Club  
or Royal Armoured Corps  
Young Women's Christian Association  
Royal Society for the Prevention of  
Cruelty to Animals  
Women's Royal Voluntary Service  
Saint John, Chapter 4, verse 3  
Bachelor of Science

## Question quiz (page 6)



1. Where is the hotel?
2. Is it expensive?
3. Will I like the food?
4. It's a large room, isn't it?
5. How long shall I stay?

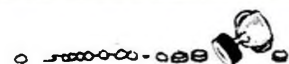
## Try these (page 8)



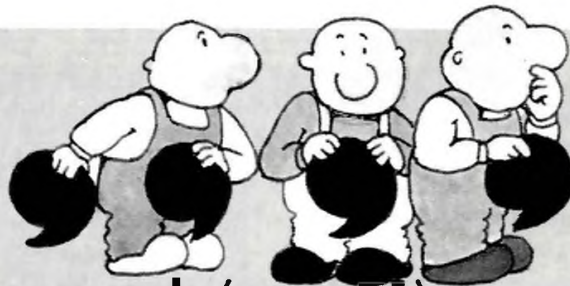
1. The monster was huge, fat and spiky.
2. Everyone threw spears, stones, swords and boiling oil at the creature.
3. It roared, growled, spat and groaned, but still it did not die.
4. A knight appeared wearing bright, shining armour and pierced the beast with his special, magic sword.
5. The huge beast screamed, fell to the ground, rolled over and died.
6. The king rewarded the knight with gold, silver, diamonds, rubies and other precious things.

## Test yourself (page 9)

1. The robber climbed through the window, crept up the stairs and peered into the bedroom.
2. She called as loudly as she could, but no-one could hear her.
3. The telephone was not far away, yet there was little she could do to reach it.
4. She quickly switched on all the lights, so the man ran away in a panic.
5. The policeman, who arrived later, told her to put a lock on her window.



## Puzzle it out (page 10)



1. Inessential.
2. Inessential.
3. Essential.
4. Inessential.
5. Essential.

## Comma moving puzzle (page 11)

1. The old lady collected all sorts of things: silver paper, hats, clocks and tablecloths.  
or/  
The old lady collected all sorts of things: silver, paper hats, clocks and tablecloths.
2. He had large, bright green eyes.
3. She liked Rod, who played the drums better than Jim.

## Spot the mistakes (page 11)

The player(,) – not necessary.  
The referee(,) – not necessary.  
arms(,) – not necessary.



## Turn nonsense into a conversation (page 14)

"Good morning, how are you today?" the doctor asked.  
"I feel dreadful," he replied gruffly.  
"You should try to get up and walk about," she suggested. "Then you might feel better."  
"You must be joking!" he exclaimed.  
"Do you want a patient or a corpse?"

## Spot the title (page 15)

1. He went to see "Superman" and "E.T." last week.
2. They had good reviews in "The Times".
3. I wanted to watch "Coronation Street" and "Dallas" so I didn't go with him.



## Test yourself on brackets (page 18)

1. She got up early to go shopping (the sales were on).
2. She went with Anne (her best friend) and the lady next door.
3. It took ages to get home (there was a bus strike), and they returned exhausted.

## Practise your dashes (page 19)

1. She decided to emigrate to Canada – I don't know why.
2. She packed everything she could think of – clothes, jewellery, books and records.
3. They drove on and on up the hill until at last, there to her delight was – a beautiful old house.

How well have you done?

## Nine missing . . . have a go! (page 20)

The half-witted taxi-driver was ninety-nine years old and had rather a couldn't-care-less attitude. This resulted in the hard-working woman arriving tear-stained and miserable three-quarters of an hour late for the dress-rehearsal.



## Try again (page 21)

Her father was an ex-army officer who was injured in the war. Although he was a semi-invalid he was self-reliant and sat all day at his writing-desk typing out novels non-stop.



## Test yourself (page 22)



1. She's got her mother's good looks, hasn't she?
2. It's the princess's birthday today, isn't it?
3. The women's Keep Fit Class opens today.

## Put in the capitals (page 26)

At Christmastime Harriet and Tom Brown went to London to stay with their Uncle William. Their uncle was Admiral-of-the-Fleet in the Royal Navy and he had some very grand friends. While the children were staying he had a party, to which he invited the Prime Minister, the Duke of Monmouth and a famous author from America. (19 capitals)

## Apostrophes (page 26)

1. It's the first time this week that the dog has eaten its food.
2. Tom's wife is James's sister.
3. The ladies' cloakroom is next to the men's.
4. She's a lot older than she looks.
5. We've not forgotten that you're an excellent cook.
6. Whose turn is it to see who's coming?



"I'm tired," said Fred. "I've had an awful day."

"Where've you been?" asked his mother. "It's late. We've been looking everywhere for you. You're lucky we didn't call the police. I won't give you any supper until I know what's going on."

(page 26)



## Spot the missing hyphens

1. The girl with reddish-brown hair kept teasing Ben, but as he was rather thick-skinned and happy-go-lucky it didn't bother him.
2. The half-witted man drove three-quarters of the way in the wrong direction. He went south-east instead of north-west.
3. The hard-working old lady had a well-earned rest when she retired at the age of sixty-five.
4. As her six-foot tall fiancé was rather a n'er-do-well, the twenty-one year old girl broke off their nine-month long engagement. (16 hyphens)

(page 27)

## Colon or semi-colon?

1. Many people wear uniforms to work: policemen, nurses, traffic wardens, bus drivers and schoolchildren.
2. Alice never had enough to eat; therefore she became thin and ill.
3. Tom worked long hours every day; nevertheless he remained healthy.
4. The actor read aloud: "To be, or not to be: that is the question."
5. There was a knock at the door: in came a tall, hooded figure.
6. At last he told us everything: he had been involved in the most horrific murder.

## Brackets, dashes or commas?

1. Maud took all her family – three boys and three girls – to the cinema.
2. They all have names beginning with the letter J – Joshua, Jeremy, John, Joanne, Jessica and Jane.
3. Joanne (the youngest) ate three boxes of popcorn.
4. Joshua, unlike the others, ate nothing the whole time.
5. Poor Maud had no money left (it cost £1.50 each to get in).



## No punctuation at all! (page 27)

"There's a letter for you," called her mother. "I've put it on the table."

Amanda rushed down the stairs, tore open the envelope and found to her delight – it was an invitation.

"Hooray! I've been invited to James's twenty-first birthday party," she cried. There was a pause. "What am going to wear?"

"You've got plenty of clothes, dear," replied her mother, calmly sipping her tea.

"There's absolutely nothing suitable for James's party," Amanda replied. "It will be very smart."

"What's James like?" asked her mother suspiciously.

"He's six-foot tall with brownish-blond hair, huge brown eyes and a wonderful smile," replied Amanda.

Her mother sighed. "I meant what is his personality like? Is he hard-working, trustworthy, kind and clever; or is he selfish, and mean?"

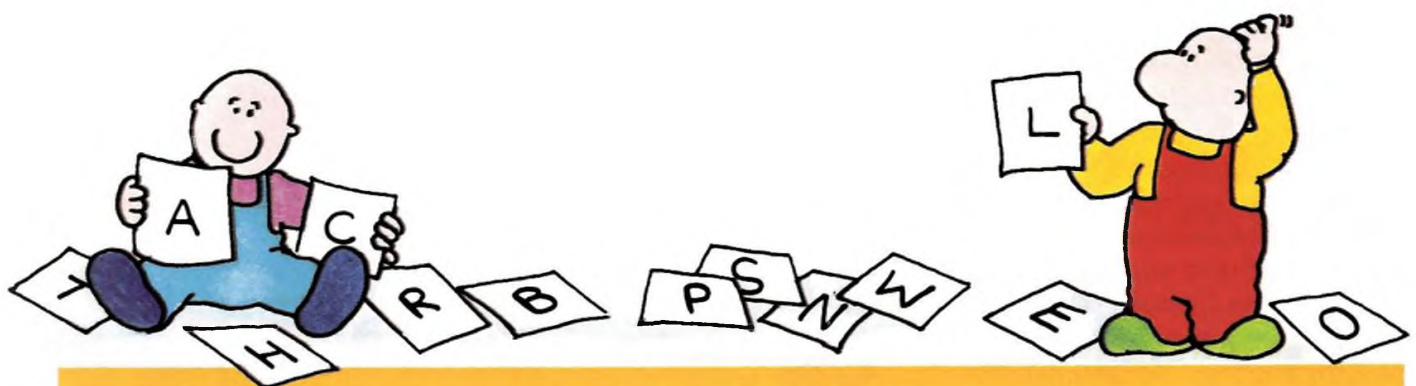


# Index/glossary

- adjective, 9, 20 Describing word which gives a fuller meaning to a noun: e.g. *pretty* girl, *vicious* dog.
- apostrophe, 15, 22 Punctuation mark which shows: (1) that one or more letters have been missed out; e.g. didn't; (2) possession.
- brackets, 18 Two punctuation marks used to enclose words or figures to separate them from the main part of the text.
- capital letters, 4, 12, 23 Upper case letters used: (1) to start a sentence; (2) for proper nouns e.g. people's names.
- clause, 9 Subdivision of a sentence which includes a verb. There are two kinds: (1) main clause; (2) subordinate clause. The main clause makes complete sense on its own, but a subordinate clause is dependent on the main clause for its sense: e.g. He ate a loaf of bread, (main clause) because he was hungry. (subordinate clause).
- colon, 17 Mark of punctuation usually used before a quotation or contrast of ideas.
- comma, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 16, 18 Punctuation mark representing shortest pause in a sentence.
- compound word, 20 Word made up from two or more other words.
- conjunction, 9, 17 Word which connects words, clauses or sentences.
- contraction, 22 Shortened form of two words, using an apostrophe.
- dash, 19 Punctuation mark which marks a pause or break in the sense of the text.
- direct question, 6 The kind of question which expects an answer in return.
- direct speech, 12 The exact words that someone speaks.
- exclamation mark, 4, 7 Punctuation mark used at the end of a sentence or phrase, when the content conveys a strong feeling or emotion.
- full stop, 4, 5, 16, 18 Strongest punctuation mark making the most definite pause. Used at the end of all sentences which are not questions or exclamations.
- hyphen, 20, 21 Punctuation mark used to link two or more words together to make one word or expression.
- indirect question, 6 This kind of sentence does not ask a question but tells you what question was asked.
- inverted commas, 12, 13, 14, 15 Punctuation marks used to show the exact words that someone has spoken.
- noun, 4, 20 Word used as the name of a person, thing or place: e.g. dog, man.
- paragraph, 23, 24 Passage or section of writing marked off by indenting the first line.
- parenthesis, 18 Another word for brackets. Words inside brackets are also called parenthesis.
- participle, 20 Part of verb. Can be past or present. (1) Present participle is part of verb that usually ends in *ing*: e.g. making, laughing, working; (2) past participle is the part of the verb which follows "have" or "has" in the past tense: e.g. They have *eaten*. He has *made* it.
- phrase, 10 Small group of words without a verb, which is not a complete sentence.
- prefix, 21 Small addition to a word made by joining on one or more letters at the beginning. e.g. ex, pre, anti.
- pronoun, 22 Word which stands instead of a noun. There are many kinds of pronoun including possessive pronouns (mine, yours, hers).
- question marks, 4, 6 Punctuation mark used at the end of a sentence which asks a question.
- quotation, 4, 14, 16 One or more words or sentences borrowed from another piece of text.
- reported speech, 12 Repeating or "reporting" in your own words what someone has said.
- semi-colon, 16 Punctuation mark indicating a longer pause than a comma, but less than a colon or full stop.
- sentences, 4, 9 A word or group of words which make complete sense on their own.
- subordinate, 9 (see clause).
- verb, 4 Word which shows some kind of action or being: e.g. run, jump, think, is, was, were.
- verb of saying, 13 Verb which is another way of expressing "says" or "said" depending on the context: e.g. whisper, mutter, etc. Usually comes before or after speech in inverted commas: e.g. "Who are you?" she *asked*.
-



# ENGLISH SPELLING



## English Spelling: Contents

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# Why English spelling is difficult

English is used in many parts of the world as a first or second language, yet it is a very difficult language to learn.

There seems to be no logical pattern as to the way English words are spelt, and the way the words are pronounced often does not help either.

The reason why English is such an extraordinary language is that it is a mixture of many other languages.

## Where do the words come from?

Long ago the British Isles were invaded by many different races, and each of these races contributed words to the language we now speak.

The Ancient Britons spoke a language called Celtic. Then Britain was invaded by the Romans who brought with them the Roman alphabet which we use today.



When Roman power declined, Britain was invaded by the Jutes, the Saxons and the Angles. Eventually their languages mingled to form Anglo/Saxon which is really the basis of the English language.

Next came the Viking invasions which introduced Scandinavian words; and finally there was the Norman Conquest which was very important as it introduced French into the language.



Over the centuries words from many other countries were gradually introduced into English as merchants travelled across the world, and scholars were influenced by the Renaissance. Latin and Greek were used by educated people, and for more than a century Latin was the only language recognized in English schools.



The British ruled in India for two hundred years and many Indian words have been absorbed into English from there.

These words came from India.

thug

verandah

bungalow

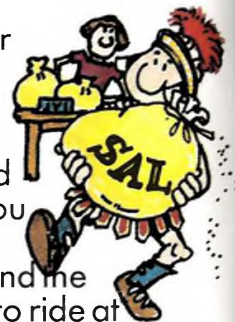
<sup>1</sup>salary <sup>2</sup>canter

More recently, our language has been influenced by the two World Wars and by American films and culture.

It is fun to discover where words came from. The study of word derivations is called *etymology*. Most good dictionaries provide a certain amount of information on etymology, but if you want a lot of detail you will need a special *etymological dictionary*.

## Stories about words

In Roman times each Roman soldier was given an allowance to pay for the salt he needed. The Latin word for salt is *sal*. Nowadays there is an English word meaning "wages paid by the month or by the year". Do you know what it is?<sup>1</sup>



During the Middle Ages in England the pilgrims going to Canterbury used to ride at a gentle gallop known as the "Canterbury gallop". There is now a six-letter word to describe this gallop. Can you think what that is?<sup>2</sup>



There are lots of stories about words. See if you can discover some more.

## Words from names

Some of the words we use now are connected with the names of people or places.

Sardines are so called because they are caught off the shores of Sardinia.



Wellington boots are named after the 1st Duke of Wellington who wore very high boots covering his knees.



The 4th Earl of Sandwich was an English nobleman who loved hunting. One day he hunted for twenty-four hours without stopping, and the only food he ate was meat placed between slices of bread. Food eaten like this has been called after him ever since.



# How we spell

The first thing usually learnt at school is the alphabet. The English alphabet is made up of twenty-six letters. Five of these letters are called vowels – a e i o u. The other twenty-one letters are called consonants – b c d f g h j k l m n p q r s t v w x y z. The letter y can act as a consonant or a vowel depending on its position in a word.

Sometimes the combination of letters may look the same but *sound* different.

**enough**

**though**

These are things which you have to look out for and try to remember.

## Syllables

Words are made up of one or more syllables. These are one syllable words:

**pen hat pig fat**

These words are more than one syllable:

**better**

**sister**

**wonderful**

When you speak, you stress different syllables in different words. Most dictionaries will show you which syllable in the word is to be stressed most.

Here the stress is on the first syllable.

Here the stress is on the second syllable.

**mas'-ter**

**mis-take'**

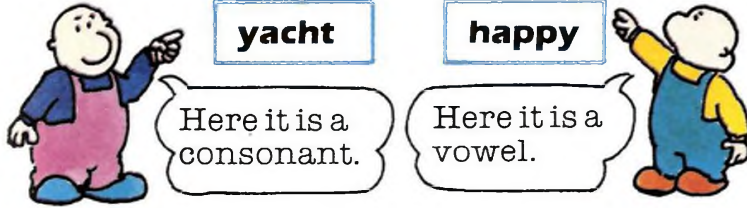
Some people misspell words because they miss out syllables. When you are not sure how to spell a long word try to sound every syllable as you write.

ba-na-na

The pronunciation of words laid out in most dictionaries, and in this book, is the standard one (without any accent) and does not attempt to deal with regional accents in any way.

## Rules

There are certain spelling rules to help you learn English spelling. Unfortunately, there are so many exceptions to the rules that you wonder whether it is worth learning them in the first place. However, it is better to have some guide than no guide at all. In this book, the rules are laid out as simply and as clearly as possible to provide the guidelines. The rules have pink boxes round them to make them easy to spot.



Every word has a vowel letter in it. Try to remember this when you are writing.

## Sounds

Each vowel letter has a short and long sound. (The long sound is the name of the letter.)

**cat pen dig log tub**

These are short vowel sounds.

**mane these tide home tube**

These are long vowel sounds.

The dictionary shows you which are short or long sounds by using special marks.\* Some words are easy to spell because each letter stands for a sound.

c-a-t spells cat.

This is easy.

Letters can, however, be combined in different ways to make many sounds.

**ea oa ee ou ch sh th ck**

Some letter combinations make the same sound.

**oi oy ea ee**

This is when it becomes tricky. Many words or parts of words *sound* the same but are spelt differently.

**pain pane**

**buoy boy**

\* See page 39

# Using a dictionary

If you want to improve your spelling it is very important to have a good dictionary, and to try to look up words whenever you are in doubt about how they are spelt.

Besides telling you how to spell a word, a dictionary tells you a lot of other things. It tells you what a word means, how to use it, where it came from and how to say it. All this information has to be squashed into as small a space as possible. To do this the people who write dictionaries use abbreviations, signs and symbols, and different kinds of type which helps to make things clearer.

Different dictionaries use slightly different symbols and abbreviations, so look in the front of your own dictionary to find an explanation of the code.

Below is an entry from the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*. The labels around it tell you what everything stands for and should help you to decode your own dictionary.

## What a dictionary tells you

1. **Main entry.** The word *reindeer* is the main entry word. It is in darker type than everything else, so that it stands out clearly.

2. **Pronunciation.** The letters in brackets after the word *reindeer* and the accent over it are there to help you say the word correctly. See pages 38 and 39 for more information.

3. The letter *n.* is an abbreviation for the word noun. One word can be several different parts of speech according to the work it does in a sentence, so sometimes there are other letters after the word as well.

They are:

- a. = adjective
- adv. = adverb
- conj. = conjunction
- v. = verb etc.

**rei'ndeer** (rā'n-) *n.* (*pl.* usu. same). Subarctic deer (*Rangifer tarandus*), with large antlers in both sexes, used for drawing sledges and kept in herds for its milk, flesh, and hide; ~ **moss**, lichen of genus *Cladonia* much eaten by reindeer. [ME, f. ON *hreindyri* (*hreinn* reindeer, *dýr* DEER)]

7. **Word origin.** The information in square brackets at the end of the definition tells you where the word comes from. Here *ME* stands for *Middle English*.

5. **Definition.** This is the meaning of the word. (*Rangifer tarandus*) is the Latin name for reindeer.

4. The letters *pl.* are short for plural. Here it means that the plural is usually the same.

6. **Run-on entry.** The word *moss* is a run-on entry. These are words that are formed by adding a prefix<sup>1</sup>, a suffix<sup>2</sup>, or another word on to the main entry word. They are in darker type so they stand out.

## Using a dictionary to help you spell

How can you find out how to spell a word by using a dictionary? First of all you make a guess at the spelling and check to see if you are right. If you are wrong, make another guess and try again. Here are some useful hints to help you find the word you want.

**1** All dictionaries have words listed in alphabetical order. The words are arranged firstly according to the letter they begin with. When two words begin with the *same* letter they are arranged alphabetically according to the second letter; and so on.

If a long word has the same first letters as a short word, but just goes on further, the short word always comes first.

**latch before match**

**match before meat**

**medal before melon**

l before m.

a before e.

d before l.

## 2

In English, one sound can be spelt in many different ways. If your first guess is wrong and you are trying to think of another sensible guess, it might help you to turn to page 40. This suggests alternative ways in which the consonant sounds in your words might be spelt. If this does not help, look at pages 42 and 43 to see in what other ways the vowel sounds in your word may be spelt.

Here are some guesses you might make about how to spell "enough".

**enuf      inough**  
**enuff    enough**  
**enough   enogh**  
**enough   enouf**



## 3

Some words have double letters where you don't expect them. Look out for these. You cannot always hear the difference between a double or single consonant sound, and so you can be caught out when you try to spell it. (See pages 40, 52 and 53 for guidelines to help you.)

This one is right.



**unnecessary**  
**unnecessary**  
**unnecessary**  
**unecessary**

## 4

Sometimes you may not be able to find the word you want because it contains a letter which is not pronounced, so you cannot hear it when you say the word. Letters which are not pronounced are called silent letters. They can be anywhere in a word. If you are having difficulty finding a word, turn to page 41 to help you decide whether it might contain a silent letter.

To look a word up it is very important to know what letter it starts with.



**gnaw**  
**honest**  
**know**  
**psalm**  
**wrong**

## 5

You may not find the exact word you are looking for as a main entry. Many words are formed by adding different endings, or "suffixes" (see page 52), to main entry words. If adding a suffix to a word alters the spelling in a way you would not expect, the spelling of the word plus its suffix may be listed in the run-on entries.

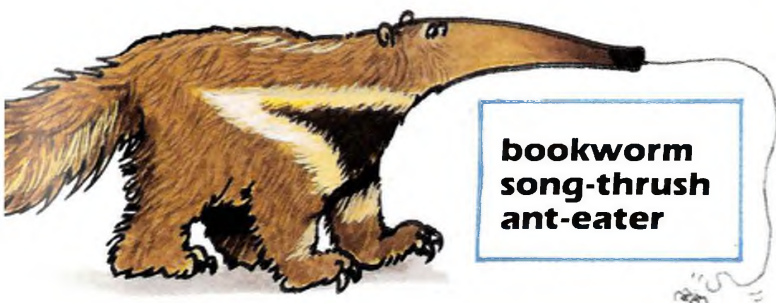
**descending**  
**descended**  
**descends**



Look up under "descend".

## 6

Some words consist of two other words joined together. They may be joined by a small mark called a hyphen, or simply written as one word. If you cannot find a word like this when you look it up, try looking it up in the run-on entries under the first part of the word. If this does not work, check the run-on entries under the second part of the word.



**bookworm**  
**song-thrush**  
**ant-eater**

### Looking-up checklist

If you can't find a word in the dictionary, try:

1. Checking the consonant sounds on page 40 for for alternative spellings.
2. Checking the vowel sounds on pages 42 and 43 for alternative spellings.
3. Checking for silent letters on page 41.

# Pronunciation and spelling

It is very important when learning to spell a word to say it aloud to yourself, so that your mind links the sound of the word and the feeling of saying it with the look of the word on paper and the feeling of writing it down. On this page and the one opposite are some suggestions on how you can make your pronunciation help your spelling.

## 1

If you come across a word you are not sure how to spell, it is often a good idea to break it up into *syllables* or sounds. A syllable is a part of a word pronounced as a single sound. It can form a complete word, or be part of a larger word and it usually consists of a vowel sound with or without consonants. When you split the word up into these separate sounds and say them slowly and clearly, you will often find that you feel more confident about spelling them right. This works well for words that are spelt more or less as they sound.



## 2

There are certain tricky words in English where vowel or consonant sounds are ignored when the words are said aloud. It will help your spelling if you try to pronounce these words in a slightly exaggerated way, making sure you stress the sound that is usually lost.

These are vowels that often get lost.

bound(a)ry    int(e)rested

These are consonants that often get lost.

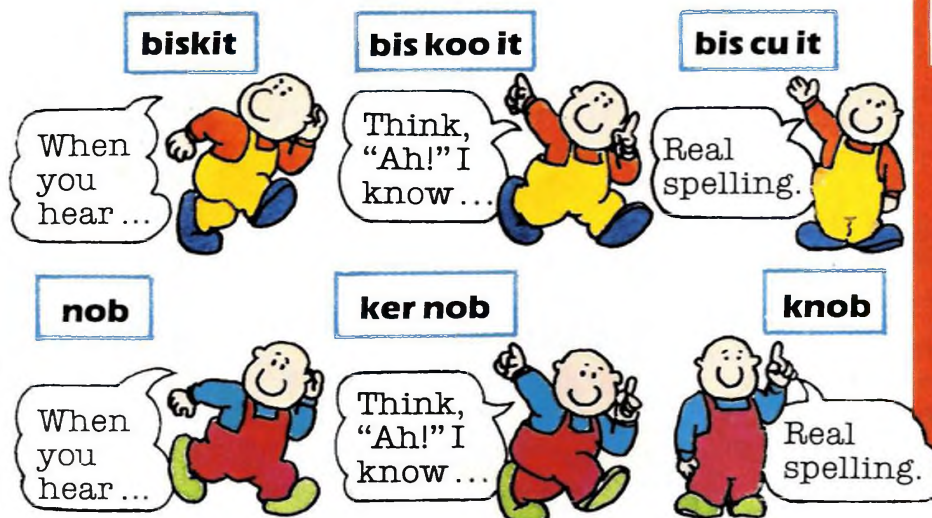
reco(g)nize    gover(n)ment

Try to pronounce both the double consonants.

fat|ter    rab|bit    mam|mal

## 3

For words in which the pronunciation and the spelling seem to have little connection with each other, it is quite a good idea to have your own private way of pronouncing them to help you with the spelling. This can be very useful for words that have a silent letter in them.



### Beware



draw*x*ing

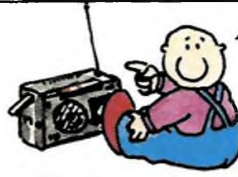
saw*x*ing

Beware of certain words where an extra letter creeps into everyday pronunciation. The letter "r" is particularly inclined to worm its way into places where it should not be.

# How a dictionary helps with pronunciation

**1**

If you are not sure how to pronounce a word correctly, a dictionary can be very helpful. A good dictionary will show how words are normally spoken, by using a system of signs and symbols. Pronunciation can, of course, vary from one region or country to another.



Radio and TV have helped to establish a standard or "received" pronunciation.

Dictionaries give what is called "received pronunciation". This is what most people would recognize as "good English".

**2**

Most dictionaries give a pronunciation guide for vowels, consonants and certain groups of letters, in the introduction. For words that present particular difficulties a dictionary often gives a respelling of the whole word, or just the difficult bit, in brackets after the word. The respelling is given in "phonetic" spelling based on a phonetic alphabet. A phonetic alphabet is a special kind of alphabet in which each letter, symbol or group of letters always represents the same sound, so that there is no confusion about what sound is written down. The phonetic system used by the dictionary should also be explained in the introduction.

## conscientious (-shiēnshus)

### Phonetic system:

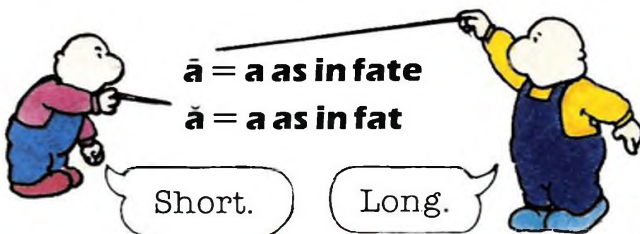
- sh = sh as in ship
- ī = i as in bit
- ē = e as in net
- n = n as in net
- u = u as in bonus
- s = s as in sip



Most phonetic systems stay as close as possible to the normal alphabet.

**3**

Each of the five vowels in the alphabet can be pronounced in many different ways. Most dictionaries use a system of marks over vowels to help show the correct pronunciation. The key to these marks should appear in the explanation of the phonetic system in the introduction.



**4**

In long words, one or more of the syllables usually has more stress or emphasis on it than the others. Dictionaries normally show which is the most strongly sounded syllable by putting an accent, a comma or a stop after the stressed syllable. Some dictionaries divide their main entry words into syllables.

### co'nsonant a'lphabet vow'el



## Beware

Be careful with the spelling of these two words:

**I pronounce words clearly.**

But

**My pronunciation is clear.**

No "o" here.



## What is the real spelling?

These words are written according to their phonetic spelling in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*. Do you know how each of them is really spelt?

- |             |                  |
|-------------|------------------|
| 1. āk       | 6. prē'shus      |
| 2. bihāvyer | 7. ka'rīj        |
| 3. bī'znis  | 8. sī'zerz       |
| 4. for'in   | 9. stū'mak       |
| 5. nō'lij   | 10. hāng'kerchif |




# Consonant sounds

Many sounds in English can be spelt in different ways. Below is a chart showing the consonant sounds that can be spelt in several ways and the different ways of spelling them. If you are having difficulty spelling a word or finding it in the dictionary, you may find it useful to look up the sound you want in this chart.


**F** The sound "f" as in *fall* can be spelt:

1. "f" as in *frog*
2. "ff" as in *giraffe*
3. "gh" as in *laugh*
4. "ph" as in *pheasant*




**G** The sound "g" as in *grab* can be spelt:

1. "g" as in *goat*
2. "gg" as in *egg*
3. "gh" as in *ghost*
4. "gu" as in *guitar*



**J** The sound "j" as in *jog* can be spelt:

1. "dg" as in *fudge*
2. "g" as in *giant*
3. "i" as in *joke*




**K** The sound "k" as in *kill* can be spelt:

1. "c" as in *cat*
2. "cc" as in *accordion*
3. "ch" as in *echo*
4. "ck" as in *duck*
5. "k" as in *king*
6. "qu" as in *bouquet*
7. "que" as in *cheque*




**S** The sound "s" as in *salute* can be spelt:

1. "ce" as in *mice*
2. "s" as in *snake*
3. "sc" as in *scent*
4. "ss" as in *hiss*



**SH** The sound "sh" as in *shoot* can be spelt:

1. "ch" as in *machine*
2. "ci" as in *special*
3. "s" as in *sugar*
4. "sh" as in *shampoo*
5. "si" as in *pension*
6. "ssi" as in *mission*
7. "ss" as in *pressure*
8. "ti" as in *nation*



**Z** The sound "z" as in *zoom* can be spelt:

1. "s" as in *daisy*
2. "z" as in *lazy*

## Hard and soft "c"s and "g"s

The letters "c" and "g" can be either soft (*cinema, giant*) or hard (*card, gap*). The soft "g" sounds like a "j"; the soft "c" sounds like an "s". Both letters are only soft when they are followed by an "e", an "i" or a "y".

<b>gem</b> <b>garden</b>	<b>gin</b> <b>gum</b>	<b>gym</b> <b>good</b>
-----------------------------	--------------------------	---------------------------

<b>celery</b> <b>cactus</b>	<b>cider</b> <b>corn</b>	<b>cycle</b> <b>cucumber</b>
--------------------------------	-----------------------------	---------------------------------

## Double letters


It is often difficult to hear any difference in sound between a single or double consonant. One useful guideline is to think about the sound of the vowel before it. *Double* consonants in the middle of a word *usually* only appear after a *short* vowel sound.\*

These are all short vowel sounds:

These are all long vowel sounds:

**matter**  
**poppy**  
**puppy**

**later**  
**pony**  
**pupil**



\*See pages 35 and 42.



## Silent letters

English words are full of silent letters. These letters are not pronounced but must always be written.

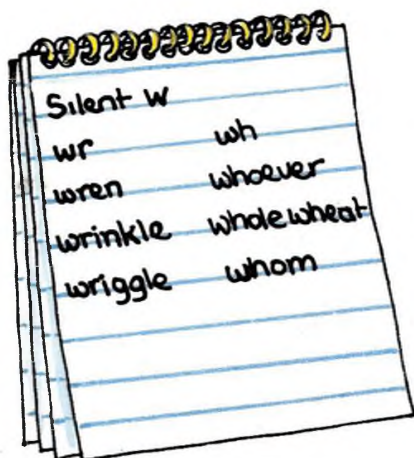
You may wonder why these silent letters are there in the first place. The answer is that they used to be pronounced. In the Middle Ages all the consonants and most of the silent "s"s were still being sounded. Gradually, as pronunciation changed, some of the letters became silent.

Here are some examples of silent letters and words containing them.



## Collecting words with silent letters

If you have a spelling notebook, it is a good idea to make a collection of words with silent letters. Use a different page for each separate silent letter and add words as you come across them.



**B** (after "m")  
lamb bomb  
thumb comb  
(before "t")  
debt subtle



**E** An "e" on the end of a word is not usually pronounced. Many words have a silent "e" on the end.  
The silent "e" usually makes the previous vowel long, if there is only one consonant between it and the previous vowel:

hat hate

**G** (always before "n")  
gnat gnome sign

**GH**  
(at the end of a word)  
weigh though  
(before "t")  
bright daughter

**H** (at the beginning of a word)  
honest hour heir

(after "r")  
rhubarb  
rhyme  
rhinoceros



(after "w" — in some accents, such as Scottish, you can hear an "h" when it comes after a "w")

whip  
whisky



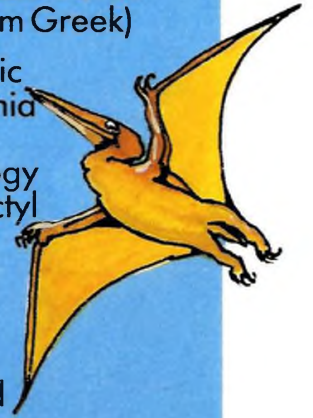
**K** (always before "n")  
knot knee knife

**L**  
half calm talk

**N** (after "m")  
autumn solemn  
hymn condemn

**P** (always before "s", "n" or "t"). These words come from Greek)

pneumatic  
pneumonia  
psalm  
psychology  
pterodactyl



**R**  
Sometimes "r" is not pronounced at the end of a word unless the next word begins with a vowel:

far far enough

**S**  
island aisle



**T** (usually after "s")

whistle  
castle  
listen  
rustle



(it is also hard to hear a "t" before "ch")

watch  
fetch  
itch



**W** (before "r")  
wrong write

(sometimes before "h")  
who whole

# Vowel sounds

**1** There are five vowels in the English alphabet. Each of these vowel letters, a e i o u, has two sounds:

a. A short sound:

**man hop pip tub pet**



b. A long sound:

**mane hope pipe tube Pete**



**2** Dictionaries usually show which are short or long vowel sounds by putting different marks above the vowel letter to show you how to pronounce it.

**hăd  
băd  
lip**



This is the sign for a short vowel.

**shine  
hāte  
tūne**



This is the sign for a long vowel.

**3** You can make more vowel sounds by writing two or more vowels together, or by writing a vowel and a consonant together.

**boar pier**

Two vowels.



**new half bird**

A vowel and a consonant.



## Sounds chart

There are about 20 vowel sounds altogether in English and this chart shows you the most common ways of spelling them.

The sound "a" as in *hat* is nearly always spelt with an "a".

The sound "a" as in *skate* can be spelt:

1. "a" as in *gate*
2. "ai" as in *plain*
3. "ay" as in *crayon*
4. "ea" as in *steak*
5. "ei" as in *eight*
6. "ey" as in *grey*

The sound "a" as in *vase* can be spelt:

1. "a" as in *pass*
2. "al" as in *half*
3. "ar" as in *car*
4. "au" as in *laugh*

The sound "air" as in *fair* can be spelt:

1. "air" as in *chair*
2. "are" as in *share*
3. "ear" as in *bear*
4. "ere" as in *there*
5. "eir" as in *their*

The sound "aw" as in *yawn* can be spelt:

1. "a" as in *ball*
2. "al" as in *walk*
3. "augh" as in *caught*
4. "aw" as in *law*
5. "oar" as in *roar*
6. "or" as in *sword*
7. "ough" as in *ought*

The sound "e" as in *spell* can be spelt:

1. "e" as in *bed*
2. "ea" as in *bread*

The sound "ear" as in *disappear* can be spelt:

1. "ear" as in *dear*
2. "eer" as in *beer*
3. "ere" as in *here*
4. "ier" as in *pier*

The sound "ee" as in *see* can be spelt:

1. "e" as in *demon*
2. "ea" as in *eat*
3. "ee" as in *keen*
4. "ei" as in *ceiling*
5. "ey" as in *key*
6. "i" as in *sardine*
7. "ie" as in *field*

the sound "er" as in *jerk* can be spelt:

1. "er" as in *earn*
2. "er" as in *service*
3. "ir" as in *bird*
4. "or" as in *word*
5. "our" as in *journey*
6. "ur" as in *nurse*

The sound "i" as in *sit* can be spelt:

1. "i" as in *pin*
2. "ui" as in *build*
3. "y" as in *pyramid*

Can you think of more ways of spelling these sounds?



# The "i" before "e" rule

One of the vowel sounds that people most frequently get wrong is the "ee" sound. Here is a rule to help you..

"i" before "e" except after "c" when the sound is "ee".

These are "i" before "e" words.



**achieve** **field**  
**believe** **grief**  
**brief** **piece**  
**chief** **shield**  
**thief** **siege**

**ceiling**  
**deceive**  
**conceit**  
**receive**  
**perceive**

These are "e" before "i" words.



The most common exceptions to this rule are: seize, weir, weird.



## Y as a vowel

The letter "y" is sometimes used as a vowel depending on its position in a word. When it is placed at the beginning of a word it usually acts as a consonant. If it is at the end of a word, or if it has an "i" sound, it acts as a vowel.

Here it is a vowel.

**yoyo** **yacht**

**Wye valley**



The sound "i" as in *drive* can be spelt:  
 1. "i" as in *dime*  
 2. "igh" as in *high*  
 3. "ie" as in *pie*  
 4. "ye" as in *goodbye*  
 5. "y" as in *cry*

The sound "oy" as in *boy* can be spelt:  
 1. "oi" as in *coin*  
 2. "oy" as in *toy*

The sound "u" ("you") as in *use* can be spelt:  
 1. "ew" as in *new*  
 2. "u" as in *duty*

the sound "o" as in *hop* can be spelt:  
 1. "a" as in *wasp*  
 2. "au" as in *sausage*  
 3. "o" as in *blot*  
 4. "ou" as in *cough*

The sound "u" as in *duck* can be spelt:  
 1. "o" as in *come*  
 2. "ou" as in *young*  
 3. "u" as in *much*

The words above have a "y" sound in front of the "u".



The sound "o" as in *poke* can be spelt:  
 1. "o" as in *bone*  
 2. "oa" as in *soap*  
 3. "oe" as in *toe*  
 4. "ow" as in *blow*

The sound "u" as in *push* can be spelt:  
 1. "oo" as in *book*  
 2. "ou" as in *would*  
 3. "u" as in *bull*

The sound "ore" as in *more* can be spelt:  
 1. "oor" as in *poor*  
 2. "our" as in *tour*  
 3. "ur" as in *jury*  
 4. "ure" as in *sure*

The sound "ow" as in *frown* can be spelt:  
 1. "ou" as in *cloud*  
 2. "ow" as in *clown*

The sound "u" as in *rule* can be spelt:  
 1. "ew" as in *screw*  
 2. "o" as in *do*  
 3. "oo" as in *shoot*  
 4. "ou" as in *soup*  
 5. "u" as in *flute*  
 6. "ui" as in *fruit*

Make a list of any more words that have this sound.



# Words which sound alike **HOMOPHONES**

There are many words which sound alike but are spelt differently. Words that sound alike are called *homophones*. (The word homophone means "the same sound".) You will come across a great many *pairs* of homophones, but you will also find some groups of three or more words with the same sound but different meanings and spellings. Try to spot homophones and make a list of which spelling goes with which meaning.



This is a prefix\* which means "the same".



**read reed**



**boy buoy**



## Try these

Here are ten sets of the most common homophones. Can you fit them into the sentences correctly?

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. hear/here       | 1. "Come over . . . . .," called Fred, but Alice was so busy she didn't . . . . .       |
| 2. new/knew        | 2. No-one . . . . . the people who had moved into the . . . . . house.                  |
| 3. no/know         | 3. ". . . . ., I don't . . . . . the answer to your question.                           |
| 4. past/passed     | 4. The girl . . . . . out as her favourite pop star went . . . . .                      |
| 5. right/write     | 5. Most people . . . . . with their . . . . . hand.                                     |
| 6. weather/whether | 6. Even the . . . . . man couldn't tell . . . . . it was going to be wet or fine.       |
| 7. which/witch     | 7. The silly . . . . . forgot . . . . . spell to use.                                   |
| 8. wood/would      | 8. He told us he . . . . . be moving to a house on the edge of a . . . . .              |
| 9. where/wear      | 9. She didn't know . . . . . they were going, or what she should . . . . .              |
| 10. to/too/two     | 10. . . . . of the boys were . . . . . young . . . . . go . . . . . the football match. |

## Apostrophe muddle

Apostrophes are often used to make two words into one. When this happens the word formed can sometimes sound like another word. Make sure you do not confuse the words on the left below with their sound-alike words on the right.

On the end of another word.



they're (they are)	- there
	their
it's (it is, it has)	- its
you're (you are)	- your
who's (who is)	- whose
've (have)	- of

These words are all possessive adjectives – they show that something belongs to something else.



\*See pages 50 and 51.

# Nouns and verbs which sound alike

Do you know the difference between these pairs of words?

practise	practice
advise	advice
license	licence



You can *hear* the difference between the verb "advise" and the noun "advice". Remember how to spell these words and it will help you with others like them.

The words on the left are verbs; the ones on the right are nouns. Look at the examples below to see how they are used.

**I practise my piano playing every day.  
I need more practice at using the pedals.**

The verbs are spelt with an "s". The nouns are spelt with a "c".



**I advise you to be more careful.  
I always give you good advice.**

**I am licensed to drive a car.  
I have lost my driving licence.**

## Meter or metre?

A "meter" is an instrument that measures something like gas, electricity, water or parking.

A thermometer measures temperature.

A speedometer measures speed.

A "metre" is a unit of length. The ending "metre" is used for all lengths based on the metre: kilometre, centimetre and millimetre.

The Americans use the word "meter" where the English use "metre". Don't let this confuse you.

## Puns

A pun is a saying or sentence which makes use of homophones in a funny or clever way. Newspaper headlines, advertising slogans and some jokes and riddles are often puns.

**Teacher: "No fighting allowed in here!"**

**Pupil: "We weren't fighting aloud sir, we were fighting quietly."**

**"Have you heard the story about the peacock? . . . It's a beautiful tale (tail)."**

## Spot the mistakes

There are 13 mistakes in the sentences below. Can you find them all?

1. Cynthia had such a pane in her heal it maid her grown.
2. Fred was so greedy he ate a hole current cake without offering anyone else a peace.
3. Tom had such huge mussels he could lift too cars with his bear hands.
4. The drunkard spent the night in a prison sell and was find for using fowl language.

# Plurals

A singular word is a word which refers to one thing or group of things; a plural word refers to more than one thing. When singular words become plural they change their spelling slightly to show the difference in their meaning. The way they change depends on what letter they end with in the singular.



The plural of most words is formed by adding "s" to the singular.

## Words ending in hissing sounds



Words ending in "s" and other hissing sounds such as "sh", "tch", "x" and "z" take "es" to form the plural.

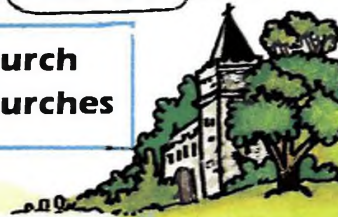
<b>dress</b>	<b>dresses</b>
<b>dish</b>	<b>dishes</b>
<b>match</b>	<b>matches</b>
<b>box</b>	<b>boxes</b>
<b>waltz</b>	<b>waltzes</b>



If you try to say these words in the plural by just adding an "s", you will see why you need to add an "e" before the "s".

Words ending in "ch" take "es" if the "ch" has a soft sound.

**church**  
**churches**



Here you don't need an "e" to make the plural sound different from the singular.

If the "ch" has a hard sound, like a "k", you just add "s".

**monarch**  
**monarchs**



If the hissing sound is followed by an "e", you just add an "s".

**rose**  
**roses**

## Test yourself

Can you change all these words into the plural using the above rules to help you?



- |            |             |            |
|------------|-------------|------------|
| 1. address | 7. lash     | 13. tax    |
| 2. garden  | 8. princess | 14. table  |
| 3. case    | 9. pitch    | 15. arch   |
| 4. loss    | 10. dish    | 16. house  |
| 5. wish    | 11. ship    | 17. torch  |
| 6. march   | 12. crash   | 18. splash |

# Words ending in "y"

If there is a vowel before the "y", just add "s" to form the plural.

If there is a consonant before the "y" change the "y" to "i" and add "es".

**Singular** → **Plural**

vowel + y

boy

+ s

boys



**Singular** → **Plural**

consonant + y

puppy

+ ies

puppies



Any kind of name ending in "y" takes "s" in the plural, even if there is a consonant before the "y", so that the name will not be changed.

**"Do you know Mr and Mrs Henry?"**  
**"Yes, I know the Henrys."**

Helpful hint! Pick on a word ending in "y", whose plural you already know, e.g. boy (boys). From this you can easily work out that it must be consonant + y that ends in "ies".



## Add the right ending

Can you make these "y" words plural?

1. toy
2. misery
3. donkey
4. deputy
5. country
6. quay
7. memory
8. jelly
9. tray
10. robbery



# Words ending in "o"

Most words ending in "o" make their plural by adding "s".

**piano pianos**

But here are some words that end in "oes" in the plural. There is no rule to help you to tell which words end in "oes"; you just have to try to remember them.

There are also some words that can end in either "os" or "oes". You cannot go wrong with these. Use whichever ending you think looks best.

Try to remember these words.

buffaloes  
cargoes  
dominoes  
echoes  
heroes  
mosquitoes  
potatoes  
tomatoes



Eskimos or Eskimoes  
flamingos or flamingoes  
halos or haloes  
mementos or mementoes  
mottos or mottoes  
zeros or zeroes

## Words ending in "f", "fe" and "ff"

Most words drop the "f", or "fe", and add "ves" in the plural.

**leaf**  
**leaves**



If you say them aloud you can always hear which words end in "ves".

A few words just add "s" to form the plurals.

**dwarfs** **proofs**  
**chiefs** **roofs**  
**griefs** **beliefs**

Take your pick.

Four words can be spelt either "fs" or "ves".

**hoofs** **hooves**  
**turfs** **turves**  
**scarfs** **scarves**  
**wharfs** **wharves**



## Which of these pairs are wrong?

Only some of these pairs of words have the correct plural. Can you pick out the *wrong* ones?



- |                     |                        |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| 1. chief chiefs     | 12. life lives         |
| 2. roof roofs       | 13. shelf shelves      |
| 3. scarf scarves    | 14. wolf wolves        |
| 4. calf calfs       | 15. elf elfs           |
| 5. sheriff sheriffs | 16. wharf wharves      |
| 6. knife knives     | 17. grief griefs       |
| 7. leaf leafs       | 18. cliff cliffs       |
| 8. wife wives       | 19. gulf gulves        |
| 9. proof proofs     | 20. mischief mischiefs |
| 10. half halves     | 21. loaf loafs         |
| 11. tariff tariffs  | 22. belief believes    |

## Words with hyphens

Hyphenated nouns add an "s" to the main noun part.

**son-in-law**  
**sons-in-law**



"Sons" is the most important part.

But where the nouns are formed from verbs, add an "s" on the end.

**lay-by**  
**lay-bys**



"Lay" is part of a verb.

## Words that stay the same

Sometimes the plural stays the same as the singular.

**sheep** **sheep**  
**deer** **deer**  
**aircraft** **aircraft**



## Complete change

Some words change their spelling completely in the plural.

**mouse** **mice**  
**woman** **women**  
**tooth** **teeth**



Can you think of any more?



## Latin words

Some words, which have kept their Latin form, take Latin plural endings.

Words ending in "us" change to "i" in the plural.

**terminus**    **termini**

Words ending in "a" change to "ae" in the plural.

**formula**    **formulae**

Words ending in "um" change to "a" in the plural.

**medium**    **media**

Words ending in "is" change to "es" in the plural.

**axis**    **axes**

## Puzzle it out

What is the plural of:

1. antenna
2. cargo
3. axis
4. salmon
5. motto
6. brother-in-law
7. woman
8. buffalo
9. goose
10. piano
11. tomato
12. man-of-war

Use all the information to help you.



What is the singular of:

1. leaves
2. holidays
3. radishes
4. patches
5. echoes
6. kangaroos
7. courts-martial
8. opportunities
9. cities
10. hippopotami
11. abscesses
12. oases

## Spot the mistakes

There are 13 mistakes in the story below. Can you spot them all?

One day the Kennedies went out for a walk, taking with them their dog and its two puppies. They wanted to get away from the noise of the cars, lorrys and busess; so they headed towards the open fields.

The leafs on the trees rustled in the breeze and the sun shone down on the rooves of the houses. As they drew nearer to the countryside, the dog chased butterflys and the puppies yapped at some donkies which were peering through the bushes.

At last the family reached the river and sat down to eat their picnic lunches. Unfortunately, as they ate some tomatos they were attacked by a swarm of mosquitos.



# Adding to the beginning of words

A prefix is a group of letters which can be added on to the front of other words to change their meaning. Prefixes have their own meanings (they usually come from Latin and Greek words), which become part of the meaning of the new word. If you know the meaning and spelling of some of the most common prefixes, it can help you to work out the meaning and spelling of a great many of the words we use.



Most dictionaries list prefixes as main entry words and give their meanings.

Here are some of the more common prefixes with their meanings:



ab-	away, from	per-	through, thorough
ad-	to, into	poly-	many
ante-	before	post-	after
anti-	against	pro-	in favour of, forwards, in front
com-	with, together	pur-	
de-	down, below, off	re-	onwards, again, back
dia-	through, across	sub-	below
en-	} in	super-	} over, beyond
in-			
epi-	upon, above	sur-	
ex-	out, away	syn-	with, together
hyper-	above, greater	tele-	far away
hypo-	below, lesser	uni-	one
inter-	between	bi-	two
mal-	bad	tri-	three

## Opposite meanings

A prefix is often added to give the opposite meaning to a word. All the prefixes on the right give the meaning of "not", "opposite of", "without". They are called *negative prefixes*.

dis-	non-
in-	un-
mis-	



## Test 1 Can you add the right prefixes to the words below?

<i>dis or de</i> part agreement lay obedient	<i>dis or mis</i> take understanding please satisfied	<i>ante or anti</i> natal septic climax chamber
<i>im or il</i> legal moral logical possible	<i>un or in</i> discreet reliable expensive important	<i>pre or pro</i> ceed pare caution vide

## Remember this rule

The rule about spelling words with prefixes is quite easy to remember:

You do not change the spelling of a word when adding a prefix to it.

**dis + solve = dissolve**

**mis + spell = misspell**

Even when the last letter of the prefix is the same as the first letter of the word you are adding it to, don't miss out any letters.

You need both "s"s here.

## All and well are exceptions

When you add "all" or "well" to the front of other words, they only have one "l".

**all + together = altogether**

**well + come = welcome**

All's well, if there's only one "l".

## Prefixes in disguise

arrange	collect	suffer
illegal	irregular	suppose

Do these words have prefixes?

Many words in common use have prefixes that you might not recognize as prefixes. This is because some prefixes which end in a consonant change according to the word they are attached to – usually to make them easier to pronounce. The last letter of the prefix normally changes to become the same as the first letter of the base word:

ad- can become ac-, af-, ag-, al-, an-, ap-, ar-, as-, at-

com- can become col-, cor-, con-

in- can become il-, im-, ir-

sub- can become suc-, suf-, sug-, sup-, sur-, sus-

**Test 2** What does the prefix in front of each of these words mean?

advance  
descend  
supervise  
bilingual  
submerge  
malformation  
entrance  
exit



**Test 3** Can you make these words opposite in meaning by adding a negative prefix?

employment  
fortune  
respectful  
pleasant  
appear  
responsible  
alcoholic  
patient

# Adding to the end of words

A suffix is a letter or group of letters added to the end of a word to change the way you use it.

When you add a suffix to a word it shows the way in which the word is used and can change it from one part of speech to another.

**She sat *dreaming* all day long. (verb)**

This is the suffix *-ing*.



**John is such a *dreamer*. (noun)**

This is the suffix *-er*.



If you know a little about suffixes it can help you to spell a word correctly.

Remember . . .

The spelling of a suffix never changes but the spelling of the word to which it is added sometimes does.

Below are some common suffixes and clues to how they are usually used.

-ary    -ly  
-ery    -ous  
-ory    -ic  
-en    -like  
-ish    -y  
-less   -ful



These suffixes usually make adjectives.

-er    -ship    -ure    -ice  
-or    -hood    -ance    -age  
-ar    -ness    -ence    -ly  
-re    -ism    -ment

-ing    -ise  
-ed    -ize  
-ude    -yse  
-ure



These are often verb endings.



These usually form nouns.

## Doubling trouble

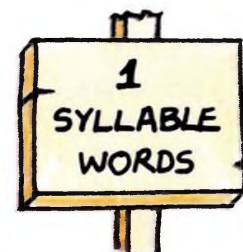
When you add a suffix beginning with a vowel to a word which ends in one consonant, you sometimes have to *double* the consonant.

The rule is:

With one syllable words you must *double* the *final consonant* when there is only *one* vowel before it.

**rob** + **-er** = **robber**

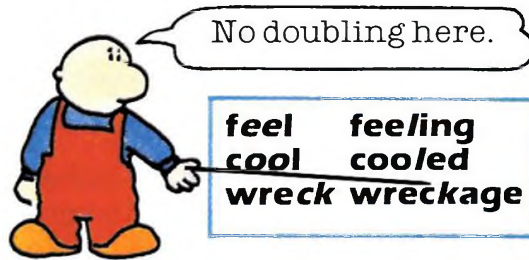
You double the consonant.



hot    hotter  
swim   swimmer  
dig    digger

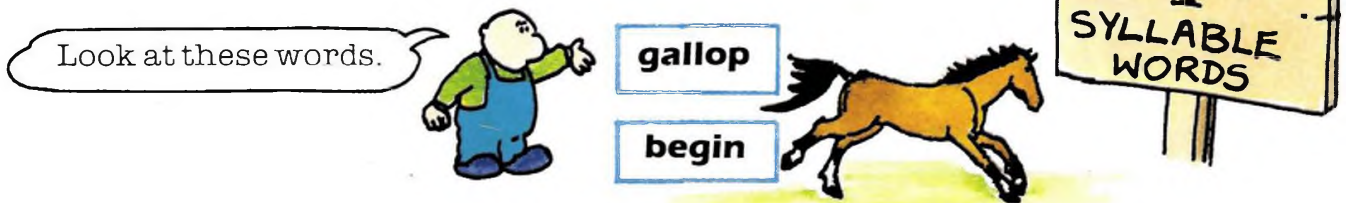


If a one syllable word has *two* vowels or ends in *two* consonants you just add the suffix.



## Doubling in long words

Words with more than one syllable sometimes follow the rule for one syllable words depending on how the word is pronounced.



They both have two syllables, but they still have *one final consonant* with *one vowel* before it. If you add the suffix *-ing* to these words *gallop* remains the same – *galloping*, but *begin* doubles the *n* – *beginning*. The reason for this is that they sound different. When you say “gallop” you stress the first syllable, but when you say “begin” you stress the second syllable.

So the rule is:

- If the stress is on the first syllable there is *one consonant* before the suffix.
- If the stress is on the second syllable there are *two consonants* before the suffix.



## Beware “l” ending

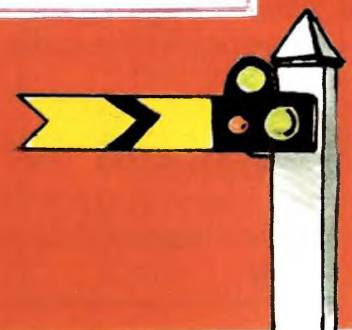
Words ending in “l” have a rule of their own.

Words of more than one syllable which end in *one “l”* after *one* vowel, double the “l” before adding a suffix beginning with a vowel – *no matter where the stress lies*.

Try to remember this.



<b>travel</b>	<b>travelling</b>
<b>signal</b>	<b>signaller</b>
<b>metal</b>	<b>metallic</b>
<b>rebel</b>	<b>rebellious</b>



# Final "e" words

There are a lot of words which end in a silent "e". (Sometimes this is called a magic "e" or lazy "e".)

A silent "e" is never pronounced, but its presence at the end of a word can change the sound of the other vowel letter in that word from a short sound to a long sound.\*



**hat + e = hate**

**cub + e = cube**

**pin + e = pine**



Adding a silent "e" can change one word into another.

## Dropping the "e"

When you add a suffix to a silent "e" word you have to decide whether or not to drop the "e".

Try to remember this rule:

Drop the "e" when the suffix you are adding begins with a vowel.

**hope**    **hoping**  
**forgive**    **forgiving**  
**love**    **loving**

Drop the "e" before a vowel.

Note. The letter "y" counts as a vowel when you add it as a suffix.

**simple**    **simply**  
**ease**    **easy**

This acts as a vowel here.

## When do you keep the "e"?

Keep the final "e":

- a. When a word ends in *ge* or *ce* before a suffix beginning with *able* or *ous*. You do this to keep the consonant sound soft.

**notice**    **noticeable**  
**courage**    **courageous**

- b. To prevent confusion.

**dye**    **dyeing**  
**die**    **dying**

- c. When the endings *ye*, *oe* and *ee* come before the suffix.

**eye**    **eyeing**  
**hoe**    **hoeing**  
**agree**    **agreeing**

## What about "ie"?

When a word ends in *ie*, change the "ie" to "y" before adding *-ing*.

**die**    **dying**  
**tie**    **tying**  
**lie**    **lying**

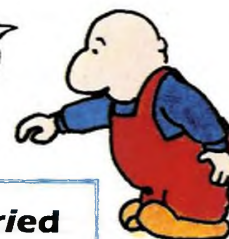
# Final "y" words

If you want to add a suffix to a word which ends in "y" you do have to follow certain rules.

If there is a *consonant* before the "y" change the "y" to an "i" and then add the suffix. If there is a *vowel* before the "y", just add the suffix.

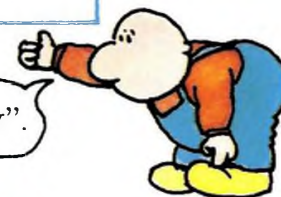
Consonant here, change to "i".

**marry married**  
**pity pitied**  
**enjoy enjoyed**



Vowel here, leave the "y".

**study studing** ✗  
**study studying** ✓



But if the suffix begins with "i", keep the "y" because you don't want two "i"s together.



Change the "y" to *ie* when you add an *s*.

**beauty beauties**  
**apology apologies**

## Beware

Words that are only *one* syllable *usually* keep the "y", except before *es* and *ed*.

**fly flyer**  
**sky skywards**  
**dry dryness**  
**but dries dried**



## Silent "e" quiz

What happens to the "e" when you join these words to the suffixes in brackets?

1. stone(y)
2. declare(ing)
3. excite(ment)
4. love(ing)
5. observe(ant)
6. manage(able)
7. advantage(ous)
8. lone(ly)
9. amaz(ing)
10. inquire(y)
11. hate(ful)
12. stare(ed)

Use the information on these pages to help you.



## What about the "y"?

Can you add the suffix -ed to each of the words below remembering what should happen to the "y"?

1. copy
2. deny
3. dry
4. delay
5. ally
6. supply
7. obey
8. cry
9. prophesy
10. dismay
11. apply
12. stay

# Double or single "l"?

It is often difficult to know when to write double or single "l", but there are some points to help you.



## The -ful ending

a. Look at these sentences:

Emma felt *full of hope* when she started her new job.

Emma felt *hopeful* when she started her new job.

Notice that:

When you add *-full* to the end of a word you drop the last "l".

**hand + full = handful**  
**joy + full = joyful**

There are two words which drop other letters as well.

**awe + full = awful**  
**skill + full = skilful**



Try to remember these.

b. When the suffix *-ly* is added to a word ending in *-ful* there will be a double "l".

**tearful tearfully**  
**careful carefully**

## Double or not?

When you want to add the suffix *-ing* or *-ed* to a word ending in "l" you should:



One vowel here.

Double the "l" if there is *one* vowel before it.

**pedal pedalling**  
**travel travelled**

But don't double the "l" if there are two vowels before it.



**fail failed**  
**feel feeling**

## Try these

Fill in the gaps.



Use the suffix *-ful* or *-fully* to complete the sentences?

1. Tom cheer . . . . . took the play . . . . . puppy for a walk.
2. Henrietta tear . . . . . gulped down a huge spoon . . . . . of the aw . . . . . medicine.
3. The bash . . . . . boy waited hope . . . . . for the beauti . . . . . girl to pass by.

## Doubling test

Can you join these words and suffixes correctly?

- |                |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. patrol(ing) | 6. feel(ing)    |
| 2. cool(ed)    | 7. expel(ed)    |
| 3. shovel(ing) | 8. wheel(ed)    |
| 4. marvel(ed)  | 9. toil(ing)    |
| 5. appeal(ing) | 10. fulfil(ing) |





# Tricky endings

It is easy to muddle up the endings of some words because they sound so similar. Some of them just have to be learnt but with others there are some useful tips to help you.



**-able**

**-ible**

These are two of the endings most often confused.

## 1. -able

- Words ending in *-able* can often be divided into separate words which make sense on their own.
- Words that have "i" before the ending usually take *-able*.
- You often use *-able* after a hard "c" or hard "g".
- When you add *-able* to a word that ends in "e", you usually drop the "e".



These two words both make sense as they are.

**able + drink = drinkable**  
**able + adapt = adaptable**

**reliable enviable sociable**

**educable**  
**navigable**  
**amicable**



These are hard letters.

**love + able = lovable**  
**value + able = valuable**



## 2. -ible

- Words ending in *-ible* cannot be divided so that the words make sense on their own.
- Most words with "s" or "ss" before the ending take *-ible*.
- You often use *-ible* after a soft "c" or soft "g".

These words don't make sense on their own.



**sens + ible = sensible**  
**vis + ible = visible**

**responsible permissible possible**

**legible**  
**eligible**  
**invincible**



These are soft letters.

## Beware

There are some words that don't follow the above rules.

Can you remember these? Some are quite difficult.



formidable  
inevitable  
portable  
memorable  
indomitable

contemptible  
resistible  
collapsible  
flexible

# More tricky endings

## -ery -ary

Words ending in *-ery* are often obvious when spoken.

But there are some tricky *-ery* words.

People often miss the *e* sound out when they say these words.

Don't confuse **stationery** (paper, pens, etc.) and **stationary**

**cemetery**  
**monastery**  
**stationery**

**very**      **bakery**  
**brewery**   **nursery**



Watch out for these words.

(not moving).\*

**stationary**



If in doubt about which ending to choose use *-ary*. It is more common.

**January**      **dictionary**  
**February**   **secretary**

## -er -or -ar -re -ure

These suffixes often sound similar and it is difficult to know which to choose. There are no rules to follow, but there are some helpful hints.

**-or** This is usually used when the word means "someone who" or "that which".

**A visitor is someone who visits.**

**-er** This occurs most at the end of everyday words.

**mother**  
**father**  
**water**  
**brewer**  
**sinner**



**professor**  
**survivor**



## -ance -ence -ent -ant

a. You will usually find that the endings *-ant* and *-ent* are used for adjectives, while *-ance* and *-ence* are noun endings.

**An important matter.**

**The importance of the matter.**

**A different opinion.**

**A difference of opinion.**

These are adjectives.

These are nouns.



b. Certain consonants tend to be followed by *a*. The letters "t" and "v" often take *-ance*.

**accept**   **acceptance**  
**import**   **importance**  
**relev-**   **relevance**



Try to remember this rule. It may help you.

Every English verb which ends in *r* preceded by *one* vowel, and with a stress on the last syllable, forms a noun with *-ence*.

**confér** – **conference**  
**refér** – **reference**  
**occúr** – **occurrence**

**-ceed -sede -cede**

- a. Most words which end in this sound have the suffix *-cede*.
- b. Only one word ends in *-sede*.
- c. Very few words end in *-ceed*.

**precede**  
**recede**  
**concede**

Only *one* word ends in *-sede*.

**supersede**

**succeed** **proceed**

**-ify -efy**

Only four words end in *-efy*. All the rest end in *-ify*.

**stupefy**  
**rarefy**  
**putrefy**  
**liquefy**

Only 4.

**-ise -ize -yse**

Many of these endings come from Old French, Latin or Greek. If in doubt use the suffix *-ise*. It is far more common than the other two.

**surprise**  
**exercise**  
**disguise**

**size**  
**prize**

**analyse**  
**paralyse**

**-le -el**

Most words with this sound end in *-le*.

**battle**  
**nibble**  
**trouble**  
**table**

75% end in *-le*.



but

**unravel**

**travel**  
**barrel**

**-ick -ic**

Words of two or more syllables end in *-ic* not *-ick*.

**-ick**  
(one syllable)  
stick  
thick  
lick  
trick  
sick



**-ic**  
(two or more syllables)  
tonic  
comic  
static  
artistic  
fantastic

**Fill in the ending**

Can you add the right ending to the words below? Use your dictionary when in doubt.

*-ary/-ery*

1. confection . . .
2. annivers . . .
3. cemet . . .
4. comment . . .
5. fin . . .

*-ify/-efy*

1. ident . . .
2. stup . . .
3. fort . . .
4. spec . . .
5. liqu . . .

*-ent/-ant*

1. observ . . .
2. compet . . .
3. defend . . .
4. superintend . . .
5. brilli . . .

# Other useful rules and tips



Here are some more words which are often mixed up because they sound or look similar.

accept

except

**I *accept* your kind invitation.  
Everyone went to the party *except* Doris.**

diary

dairy

**Tom always wrote everything down in his *diary*.  
The farmer's wife collected milk from the *dairy*.**

quiet

quite

**It was very *quiet* in the country cottage.  
Ben was *quite* good at football.**

legible

eligible

**James wrote the note in capital letters so that it  
was more *legible*.  
Jane was *eligible* for the job as she had all the right  
qualifications.**

affect

effect

**The shortage of water will *affect* everyone.  
The medicine did not have any *effect* for a week.**

lightning

lightening

**The thunder roared and the *lightning* flashed.  
She changed the picture she was painting by  
*lightening* the background.**

principal

principle

**The *principal* of the college had no *principles*.**

## One word or two?

These are words which seem to confuse everybody:

Always two

Always one

thank you  
on to  
in front  
in fact

today  
tomorrow  
together  
tonight

Either one or two depending  
on the meaning

all ways  
may be  
no body  
any one  
all together  
in to  
some times  
every one

always  
maybe  
nobody  
anyone  
altogether  
into  
sometimes  
everyone

Can you make up sentences to show how these words should be used.



## Did you know?

1. The letter "q" is always written as

"qu". It never stands by itself.

**queen  
quarrel  
require  
inquest**



2. No English word ends in the letter "j".

3. No English words ends in the letter "v" except the word spiv.

4. No English word ends in the letter "i" except for taxi (short for taxicab) and some words borrowed from Italian, e.g. macaroni, spaghetti and vermicelli.



# Spelling games and puzzles

## Crazy spelling

You can have fun taking words you already know how to spell and working out other logical ways of spelling them from the list of vowel sounds on pages 42 and 43, and consonant sounds on page 40.

A good example of this is:



What does this mean?

**We had ghuiti on phrighdeigh.\***



gh as in cough  
ui as in build  
ti as in nation



ph as in photo  
igh as in high  
eigh as in weigh

Try making up crazy spellings for the following words and then show them to your friends to see if they can guess the real spelling:

juice	flesh
cufflink	fluff
siphon	giraffe
coffeebeans	permission
golf	cashew

## Computer games



There are now spelling games available to play on your own computer. Some of the most interesting ones are:

1. *Starspell* (BBC Machine, price £6.00)
2. *Witches Brew* (TRS 80 and BBC Machine, price £10.00)
3. *Spelling Builder* (TRS 80, price £12.50)

## Dictionaries



Whatever game or puzzle you are playing, you will need to have a dictionary at hand to check your answers. Some useful dictionaries are:

1. *A Basic Dictionary* (Schofield & Sims Ltd)
2. *Oxford Elementary Learner's Dictionary of English* (O.U.P.)
3. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (O.U.P.)

\*The answer is on page 63.

## Palindromes

What do the words below have in common?

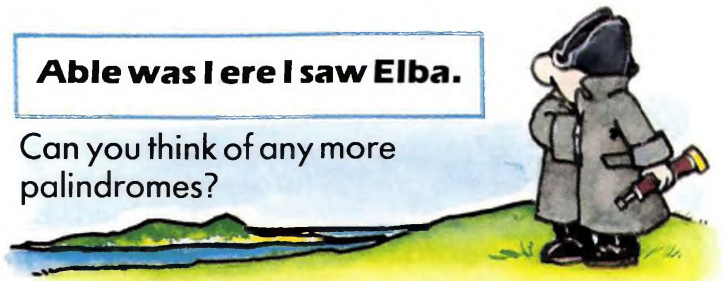
<b>madam</b>	<b>minim</b>
<b>level</b>	<b>noon</b>
<b>rotator</b>	<b>radar</b>
<b>deed</b>	<b>civic</b>

They are all *palindromes*. A palindrome is a word, phrase or sentence which reads the same backwards as it does forwards.

Here is a sentence palindrome. Some people think Napoleon could have said it.

**Able was I ere I saw Elba.**

Can you think of any more palindromes?



## Word crosses and word squares

Look at the cross below. It is made up of two five-letter words which both have the same letter in the middle.

```

      S
      P
B U I L T
      L
      T
    
```

How many word crosses can you make?

You can also make word squares using four five-letter words.

```

C L E A R
L       A
O       I
T       N
H A N D S
    
```

The word at the top and the word on the left begin with the same letter (C), the last letter of the word on the left (H) gives you the first letter of the bottom word, and so on.

See how many more you can think up. Make up clues to the words and ask your friends if they can answer them.

# Answers



## What is the real spelling? (page 39)

- |              |                  |
|--------------|------------------|
| 1. ache      | 5. knowledge     |
| 2. behaviour | 6. precious      |
| 3. business  | 7. carriage      |
| 4. foreign   | 8. scissors      |
|              | 9. stomach       |
|              | 10. handkerchief |

## Try these (page 44)

1. "Come over *here*," called Fred, but Alice was so busy she didn't *hear*.
2. No-one *knew* the people who had moved into the *new* house.
3. "*No*, I don't *know* the answer to your question.
4. The girl *passed* out as her favourite pop star went *past*.
5. Most people *write* with their *right* hand.
6. Even the *weatherman* couldn't tell *whether* it was going to be wet or fine.
7. The silly *witch* forgot *which* spell to use.
8. He told us he *would* be moving to a house on the edge of a *wood*.
9. She didn't know *where* they were going, or what she should *wear*.
10. *Two* of the boys were *too* young to go *to* the football match.

## Spot the mistakes (page 45)



1. Cynthia had such a *pain* in her *heel* it *made* her *groan*.
2. Fred was so greedy he ate a *whole* *currant* cake without offering anyone else a *piece*.
3. Tom had such huge *muscles* he could lift *two* cars with his *bare* hands.
4. The drunkard spent the night in a prison *cell* and was *fined* for using *fou* language.

## Test yourself (page 46)

- |              |               |             |            |              |
|--------------|---------------|-------------|------------|--------------|
| 1. addresses | 5. wishes     | 9. pitches  | 13. taxes  | 17. torches  |
| 2. gardens   | 6. marches    | 10. dishes  | 14. tables | 18. splashes |
| 3. cases     | 7. lashes     | 11. ships   | 15. arches |              |
| 4. losses    | 8. princesses | 12. crashes | 16. houses |              |

## Add the right ending (page 47)

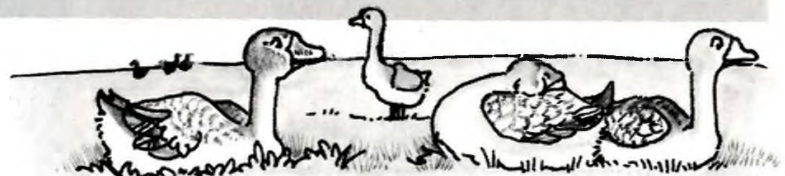
- |             |             |              |             |               |
|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| 1. toys     | 3. donkeys  | 5. countries | 7. memories | 9. trays      |
| 2. miseries | 4. deputies | 6. quays     | 8. jellies  | 10. robberies |



## Which of these pairs are wrong? (page 48)



- |                   |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 4. calf calves    | 15. elf elves      |
| 6. knife knives   | 19. gulf gulfs     |
| 7. leaf leaves    | 21. loaf loaves    |
| 13. shelf shelves | 22. belief beliefs |



## Puzzle it out (page 49) Plural endings:

- |             |                      |                |
|-------------|----------------------|----------------|
| 1. antennae | 5. mottos or mottoes | 9. geese       |
| 2. cargoes  | 6. brothers-in-law   | 10. pianos     |
| 3. axes     | 7. women             | 11. tomatoes   |
| 4. salmon   | 8. buffaloes         | 12. men-of-war |

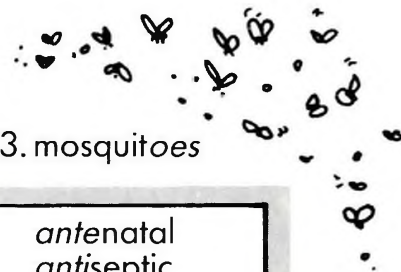
## Puzzle it out (page 49) Singular endings:

- |            |                  |                  |
|------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1. leaf    | 5. echo          | 9. city          |
| 2. holiday | 6. kangaroo      | 10. hippopotamus |
| 3. radish  | 7. court-martial | 11. abscess      |
| 4. patch   | 8. opportunity   | 12. oasis        |



## Spot the mistakes (page 49)

- |             |           |                |              |
|-------------|-----------|----------------|--------------|
| 1. Kennedys | 4. buses  | 7. butterflies | 10. bushes   |
| 2. puppies  | 5. leaves | 8. puppies     | 11. lunches  |
| 3. lorries  | 6. roofs  | 9. donkeys     | 12. tomatoes |
13. mosquitoes



## Test 1 (page 50) Add the right prefixes



<i>depart</i>	<i>mistake</i>	<i>antenatal</i>
<i>disagreement</i>	<i>misunderstanding</i>	<i>antiseptic</i>
<i>delay</i>	<i>displease</i>	<i>anticlimax</i>
<i>disobedient</i>	<i>dissatisfied</i>	<i>antechamber</i>
<i>illegal</i>	<i>indiscreet</i>	<i>proceed</i>
<i>immoral</i>	<i>unreliable</i>	<i>prepare</i>
<i>illogical</i>	<i>inexpensive</i>	<i>precaution</i>
<i>impossible</i>	<i>unimportant</i>	<i>provide</i>

## Test 2 (page 51)

*advance* – towards  
*descend* – down  
*supervise* – above (over)  
*bilingual* – two

*submerge* – under  
*malformation* – bad  
*entrance* – in  
*exit* – out

## Test 3 (page 51)

*unemployment*  
*misfortune*  
*disrespectful*  
*unpleasant*

*disappear*  
*irresponsible*  
*nonalcoholic*  
*impatient*



## Silent "e" quiz (page 55)

- |               |               |                 |             |
|---------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------|
| 1. stony      | 4. loving     | 7. advantageous | 10. inquiry |
| 2. declaring  | 5. observant  | 8. lonely       | 11. hateful |
| 3. excitement | 6. manageable | 9. amazing      | 12. stared  |

## What about the "y"? (page 55)

- |           |             |               |              |
|-----------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1. copied | 4. delayed  | 7. obeyed     | 10. dismayed |
| 2. denied | 5. allied   | 8. cried      | 11. applied  |
| 3. dried  | 6. supplied | 9. prophesied | 12. stayed   |

## Try these (page 56)

- |                                   |
|-----------------------------------|
| 1. cheerfully, playful.           |
| 2. tearfully, spoonful, awful.    |
| 3. bashful, hopefully, beautiful. |

## Doubling test (page 56)

- |               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| 1. patrolling | 6. feeling    |
| 2. cooled     | 7. expelled   |
| 3. shovelling | 8. wheeled    |
| 4. marvelled  | 9. toiling    |
| 5. appealing  | 10. fulfilled |

## Fill in the ending (page 59)

- |                  |             |                    |
|------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| 1. confectionery | 6. identify | 11. observant      |
| 2. anniversary   | 7. stupefy  | 12. competent      |
| 3. cemetery      | 8. fortify  | 13. defendant      |
| 4. commentary    | 9. specify  | 14. superintendent |
| 5. finery        | 10. liquefy | 15. brilliant      |

## Crazy spelling (page 61)

We had fish on Friday.

# Index/glossary

- abbreviation, 36 The shortened form of a word using some of the letters or just the initials: e.g. Feb. – February, C. A. Wilson.
- adjective, 36, 52, 58 Describing word which gives a fuller meaning to a noun: e.g. *pretty* girl, *vicious* dog.
- adverb, 36 Word which “modifies” or tells you more information about a verb. Usually answers the questions. How? When? Where? or Why? in connection with the verb.
- apostrophe, 44 Punctuation mark which shows: (1) that one or more letters have been missed out: e.g. didn’t; (2) possession.
- conjunction, 36 Word used to connect clauses or sentences; or to connect words within a clause, e.g. and, but, or.
- consonant, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 42, 47, 52, 53, 55, 58, 61 Any letter of the alphabet that is not a vowel (a e i o u). [When combined with a vowel forms a syllable.]
- etymology, 34 Study of how words are formed and where they come from.
- homophone, 44, 45 A word which sounds the same as another word but is spelt differently.
- hyphen, 37, 48 Punctuation mark used to link two or more words together to make one word or expression.
- negative prefix, 50 A prefix which, when added to the front of a word, gives it the opposite meaning: e.g. possible – impossible (see prefix).
- noun 36, 45, 58 Word used as the name of a person, thing or place: e.g. dog, man.
- palindrome, 61 Word, phrase or sentence which reads the same backwards as it does forwards: e.g. level.
- phonetics, 39 System of spelling words by representing sounds by symbols.
- prefix, 36, 50 Small addition to a word made by joining on one or more letters at the beginning: e.g. ex, pre, anti.
- plural, 46, 47, 48, 49 A plural word refers to more than one thing: e.g. books, women, lilies.
- pronunciation, 38, 39 The way you say words.
- “received pronunciation”, 39 The standard pronunciation “without any accent” used in this book and most dictionaries.
- silent letters, 37, 38, 41 Letters which are present in a word, but are not sounded when the word is pronounced: e.g. knife.
- singular, 46 The name referring to one thing or group of things: e.g. man, book, flock.
- suffix, 36, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56 A letter or group of letters added to the end of a word to change the way you use it: e.g. cowardly
- syllable, 35, 38, 39, 53, 55, 58 A combination of one or more vowels and consonants which can make one short word, or part of a longer word: e.g. cat, won-der-ful.
- verb, 36, 45, 58 Word which shows some kind of action or being: e.g. run, jump, think, is, was, were.
- vowel, 35, 37, 38, 39, 42, 47, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 58, 61 There are five vowels in the alphabet – a e i o u. All the rest are consonants.

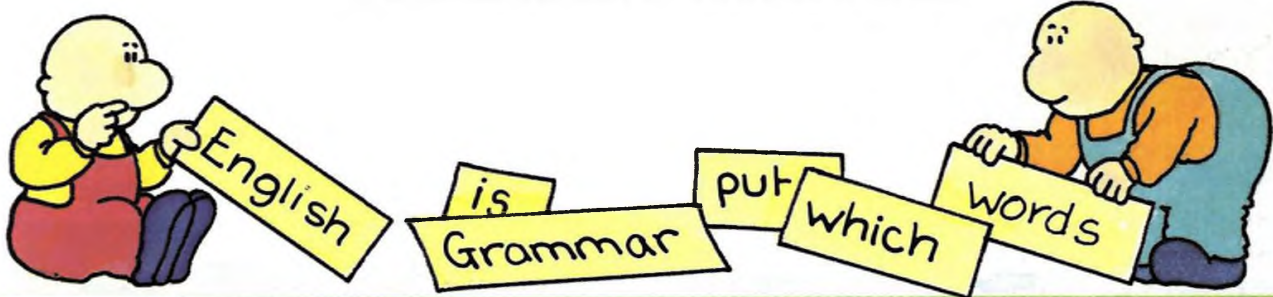
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The definition *reindeer* is reproduced from the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (7th edition 1982) with kind permission of Oxford University Press.



# ENGLISH GRAMMAR

Consultant: Diccon Swan



## English Grammar: Contents

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# What is grammar?

Grammar is a set of rules and guidelines to help you use language correctly. If you want to learn a trade or skill you have to know how to handle the tools of the trade. If you want to express yourself well you have to know how to handle the tools of language.

## Why should we have rules?

Rules always seem boring, dull and pointless, and breaking rules is fun. But imagine you were playing a game of cricket. Like all games it is based on a set of rules. If some of the players in the team decided to break the rules and do what they wanted, the game would become chaotic. You would not know what was happening and everyone would become confused.



This can also happen with language. If you do not follow the guidelines it will lose its meaning and people will not understand what you are trying to communicate.

## How can grammar help?

Most of us ignore grammar in our everyday speech and in writing quick messages. It is, however, important to be accurate, clear and formal in certain aspects of life:

### 1. Jobs

Nowadays it is difficult to find a job. No matter how talented or well-qualified you are at something, there always seem to be hundreds of other people just as suitable.

If you apply for a job sending a letter which is full of grammatical mistakes, the employer will give preference to someone with the same qualifications who has expressed himself correctly.

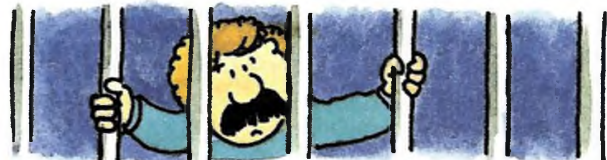


## 2. Other kinds of letters and communications

Sometimes you may want to write or speak to someone in authority. It could be to explain a situation, complain about something or even to make someone see your point of view.



If you can express yourself clearly and concisely the point you are making will be easily understood. If, however, you write or speak in a rambling, unintelligible way which does not convey your point of view, people may take advantage of you or misinterpret what you say.



## 3. Creative writing

There are times when you may want to write something creative, like a poem, a story, or even just your thoughts. Many people feel that in this case it is not important to write correctly as it prevents you from writing spontaneously. This can be true. If, however, you want to add style and variety to this kind of expression, and to convey it effectively to others, it will help if you have some knowledge of how the English language works.



Most famous writers, artists and musicians have based their creative talents on some kind of rules.



# Parts of speech

What we say is called speech. Speech is rather like a train. It can be in one long burst, or it can be lots of short ones (little trains going in different directions).



Like a train it is made up of carriages or trucks which by themselves do not do very much, but, when linked together to form the train, they are very useful.

The trucks are like the words in speech – they can be individual things but they need others to make them into a useful whole.



The whole train is like a sentence – a group of words that makes sense and gets us somewhere. Trains also have to keep on the lines in order to get anywhere, and the track is like grammar; it lays down the direction and makes sure the train gets somewhere.

In this book you will find all the different parts of speech you can use, and how to join them into different kinds of sentences. You will also find tips on how to avoid common mistakes in English, and hints on how to write English clearly and with style.

As you read you may well come across words you have never met before. If so, try looking in the index/glossary where there is an explanation of some of the harder words.



Grammar will keep you on the right lines.

## The parts of speech – brief guide

There are eight different parts of speech:

### 1. Noun

Word used for naming a person, animal, place or thing (e.g. William, mouse, shop, ladder).

### 2. Pronoun

Word used to refer to a person or thing without giving a name. Takes the place of a noun (e.g. he, she, them, him).

### 4. Adjective

Word used to describe a *noun* or *pronoun* (e.g. fat, dangerous, new, wooden).

### 4. Verb

Often called a “doing” word. Word used to describe action or existence (e.g. run, was, kicked, are).

### 5. Adverb

Word used generally to modify (tell you more about) a *verb*, but can tell you more about any word other than a noun or pronoun (e.g. quickly, soon, very, rather).

### 6. Preposition

Word used for showing what one person or thing has to do with another person or thing – usually where they are in relation to one another (e.g. with, under, on).

### 7. Conjunction

Word used to join words and clauses (e.g. and, but, when).

### 8. Interjection (or Exclamation)

Word used to express exclamation (e.g. Oh! Hello).

# Nouns

A noun is a word used for naming a person, an animal, a place or a thing.

These words are all nouns.

**bird** **ladder** **windowcleaner** **shop**

To decide whether a word is a noun, ask yourself, "Does it tell me something's name?" If the answer is, "Yes", the word is a noun.

**under** X

**table** ✓

Does it tell me the name of something?

Nouns can usually have "the", or "a", or "an" in front of them. Try putting "the" in front of the words on the right to find out which of them are nouns.

**saucepan** **heat**  
**finger** **daffodil**  
**happy** **never**  
**rocket** **sky**  
**sometime** **have**

Can I say "the never"?

Names of particular people are nouns, even though you can't put "the" in front of them.

**Alice**

**Albert**

**Ethel**

## Spot the nouns

Can you pick out the nouns in the list of words below?

ugly  
 box  
 David  
 wonderful  
 dog  
 bottle

under  
 slowly  
 in  
 cup  
 when  
 silly

How many nouns can you find in the sentences below?

1. Boris, the cat, ran across the road.
2. Cynthia was wearing a beautiful red dress.
3. Tom had a dog, a hamster, a white rabbit and a budgerigar.
4. Mary has sold her old car in favour of a new bicycle.
5. The poor old man had only a bed, a table and one chair.

## Singular or plural

Nouns can be either singular (referring to one single person or thing):

**bat** **box** **berry**

Is this singular or plural?

It is singular.

or plural:

**bats** **boxes** **berries**

**leaf**

# Four kinds of nouns

There are four different kinds of nouns. These are: 1. *proper nouns*, 2. *common nouns*, 3. *collective nouns*, 4. *abstract nouns*.

1. A *proper noun* is a noun that refers to a particular person or thing, rather than a general class of thing.

**Samson  
Mexico  
Monday  
August  
Gulliver's Travels**



Proper nouns have capital letters.

You can't usually put "the" or "a" with proper nouns.

2. A *common noun* names a kind of person or thing. It is called "common" because the name is common to all persons or things of the same kind.

**man  
country  
day  
month  
book**



Compare these words with the proper nouns shown above.

3. A *collective noun* describes a group or collection of people or things.

These words are all collective nouns.

**army (a collection of soldiers)  
bunch (a collection of flowers)  
team (a collection of players)  
pack (a collection of hounds)  
swarm (a collection of bees)**

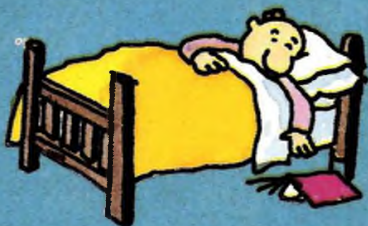


Some collective nouns describe a definite number of something. "Pair" and "dozen" are both collective nouns.



4. *Abstract nouns* describe things that cannot actually be seen, heard, smelt, felt or tasted.

**sleep  
honesty  
boredom  
freedom  
power**



# Gender A noun is either masculine, feminine, common or neuter in gender.

<b>actor</b>	<b>actress</b>	<b>teacher</b>	<b>book</b>
<p>Common (either masculine or feminine)</p>		<p>Neuter (neither masculine nor feminine)</p>	
<p>Masculine</p>	<p>Feminine</p>		

# Pronouns

Sometimes you refer to a person or thing not by its actual name, but by another word which stands for it. The word you use to stand for a noun is called a pronoun (which means "for a noun").



**Jack plays his oboe every evening.  
He is learning very fast.**

"He" is a pronoun. In this sentence it stands for Jack.

To decide if a word is a pronoun ask yourself, "Does it stand for a noun?"



You use pronouns so that you do not have to repeat the same nouns over again. They make speaking and writing much quicker and clearer. Compare the two sentences below.



**When Barnaby stroked the cat and listened to it purring softly, he felt calm and peaceful.**

If there were no pronouns you would have to say this.

**When Barnaby stroked the cat and listened to the cat purring softly, Barnaby felt calm and peaceful.**

Pronoun



The words in the boxes below are all pronouns. They can all stand instead of the name of a person, place or thing.

The words in the pink column are singular and stand for singular nouns.

The words in the blue column are plural and stand in the place of plural nouns.

"I" is the only pronoun that is always spelt with a capital letter.

The words along the top are used when the pronoun is the subject<sup>1</sup> of a sentence.

The words in the middle are used when the pronoun is an object<sup>2</sup> in a sentence.



I you he she it	we you they
me you him her it	us you them
mine yours his hers its	ours yours theirs



The words along the bottom are used to show that something belongs to someone.

<sup>1</sup> & <sup>2</sup>. To find out about subjects and objects in a sentence see page 74

## Problems with "I" and "me"

In some sentences it is difficult to decide whether to use "me" or "I".

Would you say this?

Or this?



**Carol and me are going on holiday.**

**Carol and I are going on holiday.**



Whenever you find it difficult to decide, try splitting the sentence into two short sentences, like this:

**Carol is going on holiday.**

You could not say this, could you?

**I am going on holiday.**

**Me am going on holiday.**



**Carol and I are going on holiday.**



This sentence was the correct one.

After prepositions\* you always use the object form of the pronoun.

Would you say this?

**It is a secret between Jo and I.**

or this?

**It is a secret between Jo and me.**

"between" is a preposition.

This one is right.

## Other types of pronoun

The pronouns shown in the chart on the opposite page are called personal pronouns and are probably used more than any others. But there are several other types of pronoun. Here is a list of some of the different types:

1. **Personal pronouns** (I, you, etc.).
2. **Reflexive pronouns** (myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, themselves). These are called reflexive because they *reflect* back to an earlier noun or pronoun.
3. **Relative pronouns** (who, whom, whose, which, that, what). These pronouns help to connect or *relate* one part of a sentence to another.
4. **Interrogative pronouns** (who, whose, whom, which, what). These pronouns help to ask questions or *interrogate*.
5. **Demonstrative pronouns** (this, that, these, those). These point out a person or thing specifically.
6. **Indefinite pronouns** (words like any, each, several, some, and many more). These refer to people or things generally rather than specifically.

## Find the pronouns

Can you find the pronouns in these sentences?

1. She went out to find them.
2. We asked him if he was feeling better.
3. "I think this is yours," she said.
4. You should ask her if she wants to join us.
5. It isn't yours, it's mine!
6. They took me home with them.

\*See pages 82 and 83

# Adjectives

An adjective is a word which "qualifies" (tells you more about) a noun or pronoun. It answers the question, "What is it like?"

This tells you about the jacket.



**The burglar was wearing a black jacket, a furry hat and a large mask over his face.**

This tells you more about the hat.



This word tells you more about the mask.



An adjective usually comes before a noun but sometimes it can be separated from its noun and come afterwards.



**Ben looked frightened.**



**The traffic warden in our area is very fierce.**

## Different types of adjectives

1. "Asking" adjectives (interrogative)

**Which hat do you prefer?**

"What" is another asking adjective.



2. Possessive adjectives – these show ownership.

**Sue never brushes her hair.**



This shows you *whose* hair it is.

Other possessive adjectives are:

my our their his your

3. Adjectives of number or quantity – these deal with the *amount* of something.

All numbers are adjectives.

**She invited five friends for breakfast.**

**She did not have any food left.**

Here are some adjectives of quantity:

much more most little less least no some any enough  
sufficient all whole half quarter

4. "Pointing-out" adjectives (demonstrative)

These are singular.



**That man stole this handbag.**

**Those apples and these pears are bad.**



These are plural.





# Comparing things

1. There are three forms of any adjective that you can use when you describe a noun or pronoun. Look at the sentences below:



**She is tall.**

The word *tall* is an ordinary adjective.

You use a comparative adjective when you are *comparing* two people or things.

**She is taller than her sister.**

The word *taller* is a comparative adjective.



**She is the tallest in her family.**

The word *tallest* is a superlative adjective.



You use a superlative when referring to at least three people or things.



The comparative adjective is made by adding *-er* to the adjective, and the superlative is made by adding *-est* to the adjective and putting *the* in front of it.

2. Some adjectives have to change their spelling slightly to form their comparatives and superlatives.

a. If the adjective ends in an "e", you just add *-r* for the comparative and *-st* for the superlative.

**large larger largest**



b. If the adjective ends in "y", this letter is changed to "i" before adding *-er* and *-est*.

**pretty prettier prettiest**

"y" changes to "i".



c. Some adjectives double their final letter before adding *-er* and *-est*.

**thin thinner thinnest**

3. Where adding *-er* and *est* would make an adjective sound awkward, you form the comparative and superlative by putting *more* and *the most* in front of it.



**She is beautiful.**

**She is more beautiful.**

**She is the most beautiful.**



Longer words often sound awkward if you add *-er* or *-est* to them.

4. Some of the most common adjectives form their comparatives and superlatives in an odd or "irregular" way that does not follow the normal rules.

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
good	better	best
bad	worse	worst
little	less	least
much	more	most
many	more	most

# Verbs

A verb is a word, or a group of words, that tells you what a person or thing is being or doing. It is often called a *doing word*: e.g. running, eating, sitting.

A verb is the most important word in a sentence; without it a sentence does not make any sense.



**He drank his tea.**

**He his tea.**

These don't make sense at all.

**She went to the shops.**

**She to the shops.**

All sentences have a *subject* and a *verb*. The subject is the person or thing doing the action.

**Cats purr.**



**The wind blows.**



**Birds fly.**



Some sentences can be just the subject and the verb, but in some sentences the verb has to have an *object* as well.

**Cats chase mice.**



**Alice liked Ben.**



**King Alfred burnt the cakes.**



The object tells you "what" or "whom" the verb affects.

King Alfred burnt what?  
King Alfred burnt *the cakes*.

Think of all the actions you can do. These are all verbs.



## Transitive and intransitive verbs

When a verb takes the action from the subject across to the object it is called a *transitive* verb.

**Squirrels collect nuts.**



Here the squirrel is doing the action to the nuts.

**Tom polished his shoes.**



The verbs that don't have any objects are called *intransitive* verbs.

**Your socks smell.**



**The boat sank.**



**The telephone rang.**



Intransitive verbs make sense on their own they do not need an object.

Some verbs can be both transitive and intransitive.

**He smells.**  
**He smelt the burning toast.**

**She is playing.**  
**She is playing the piano.**

## The infinitive

The infinitive is *the name* of the verb, e.g. go, catch, run, sleep. It usually has "to" in front of it, but you can use it without.

to wish

**She began *to wish* she had never set out.**

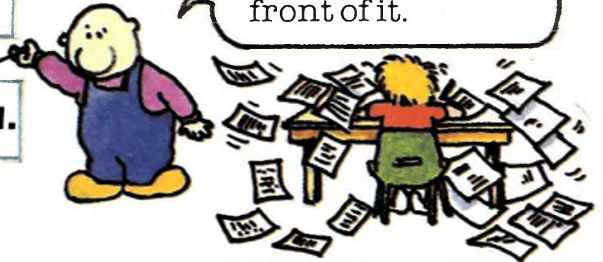
to go

**Bill did not know where *to go*.**

(to) work

**Our teacher makes us *workhard*.**

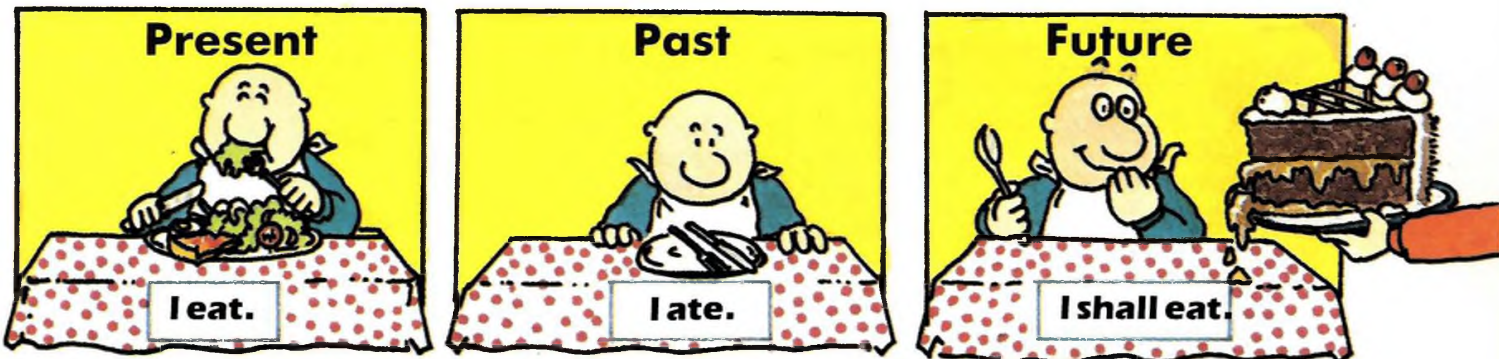
This would sound odd with "to" in front of it.



## Tenses

The word "tense" comes from the Latin word "tempus" – meaning time. The tense of the verb tells you the time at which the action takes place.

There are three main tenses:



Look at the chart below. It will help you sort out how the verbs and tenses work. The verb "to stay" is used as an example.

Subject	Present	Past	Future
I	stay (am staying)	stayed (was staying)	shall stay (shall be staying)
you (singular)	stay (are staying)	stayed (were staying)	will stay (will be staying)
he/she/it	stays (is staying)	stayed (was staying)	will stay (will be staying)
we	stay (are staying)	stayed (were staying)	shall stay (shall be staying)
you (plural)	stay (are staying)	stayed (were staying)	will stay (will be staying)
they	stay (are staying)	stayed (were staying)	will stay (will be staying)

The verbs in brackets are another version of the verb above them. This is called the *continuous* tense because it shows that the action is going on for some time.

# Auxiliary (helping) verbs



**to be** **to have**

A verb is often made up of more than one word:

**He is talking.**

**They have worked.**

**We shall be running.**

The actual verb-word is helped out by parts of the special verbs: the verb *to be* and the verb *to have*. These helping verbs are called *auxiliary* verbs. They help to form the tenses.

**I was eating.**



**I have slept.**



**shall** **will**

1 *Shall* and *will* are also parts of verbs. They help to make the future tense. *Shall* is used with *I* and *we*; all the other pronouns \* use *will*.

**I shall return.**

**You will be late.**

2 You can use *shall* and *will* to show a command, a promise or an expression of determination. In order to do this you change the rule around.

instead of:

**I shall go out.**

you use:

**I will go out.**

instead of:

**He will get up soon.**

you use:

**He shall get up soon.**



## Spot the verb

Can you spot the verbs below?:

1. Diana cleaned the floor.
2. The dog is barking.
3. Dad has made the tea.
4. Jo will be watching the match.
5. Mum has crashed the car.
6. The chef is tossing a pancake.

## Fill in the missing verb

Can you fill in the missing verb?

1. We . . . . going on holiday soon.
2. The baby . . . . been crying all day.
3. They . . . . be late if they don't hurry.
4. I . . . . miss you when you go.
5. I . . . . *not* do as you say!
6. Tom . . . . mending the fuse.
7. They . . . . working for hours.

# Active and passive

You can use verbs in two different ways. These are often called "voices".



## 1. The active "voice"

Look at this sentence.

**Tom *kicked* the ball.**

Here Tom (subject) is doing the action of kicking. *Kicked* is an *active* verb.

## 2. The passive "voice"

You can say the above sentence the other way round.

**The ball *was kicked* by Tom.**

Here the ball (subject) is having the action done to it. *Was kicked* is a *passive* verb.

The active "voice" is stronger and more direct than the passive "voice". The active is used much more often because it is usually shorter and easier to read.

These are much easier.



### Active

**James *caught* ten fish.**

**Mum *baked* five cakes.**

### Passive

**Ten fish *were caught* by James.**

**Five cakes *were baked* by Mum.**



If you use the passive voice it can give a different kind of emphasis to your sentences. For example, when you see public notices they are often written in the passive because it is less aggressive and abrupt than the active.

These are less hostile.



**Smoking *is not allowed*.**

**Dogs *must be kept* on a lead.**

not

not

***We do not allow* smoking!**

***Keep your dog* on a lead!**

## Change around

Can you change these sentences so that the verbs are in the *passive* voice?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. The cat ate a huge, black spider.         | 5. Jo threw the rubbish into the dustbin. |
| 2. Doris cleans the silver every fortnight.  | 6. The groom brushed the horse.           |
| 3. Mum mowed the lawn early this morning.    | 7. The gardener waters the plants.        |
| 4. The burglars hid the money under the bed. | 8. He ordered a taxi to take her home.    |

# Participles

Participles are parts of a verb. They are called participles because they "participate", or take part, in forming the verb. They usually follow the auxiliary verbs "to be" and "to have".<sup>1</sup>

Participles help to form the tenses of verbs, but they can also act as other parts of speech as well. There are two kinds of participle: past and present.



## Past participle

The past participle helps to make the past tense of a verb. It usually follows "has", "have", "had" or "was".

The past participle usually ends in *-ed*, *-d*, *-t*, *-en* or *-n*.

Kim **was bitten** by a mosquito.

Tom **had fallen** out of bed.

Harriet **has walked** home.

heard  
learnt  
chosen  
moved



dug  
bought  
begun  
gone

But here are some examples of irregular endings.

## The past participle as an adjective

The past participle can be used as an adjective as well as a verb.

These are verbs.

Jane **wore a creased** dress.

Jane's dress **was creased**.

Jim **could not write** with his **broken** pencil.

Jim's pencil **had broken**.

These are adjectives.

Can you see which nouns the adjectives are describing?

## Present participle

The present participle is the part of the verb which ends in *-ing*.

The baby **is crying**.



Although it is called the *present* participle it is used to form *all* tenses with the help of the auxiliary verbs, "to have" and "to be".

Doris **has been cleaning** the house all day.

Graham **is working**.

We **will be going** tomorrow.



Verbs using the present participle are said to be in the continuous tense<sup>2</sup> whether past, present or future.

<sup>1</sup>See page 76

<sup>2</sup>See page 75

# The present participle as an adjective

In the sentences below the present participle is used as an adjective.

**She painted a picture of the *rising* sun.**

**She could not sleep for the noise of *chirping* birds, *braying* donkeys, *howling* dogs and *whining* mosquitoes.**



Can you think of any more participles that can be used in this way?

## Beware

It is very easy to get confused when using the present participle as an adjective or in adjectival phrases. People often use it wrongly.

Look at this sentence:



**Driving along the road, a cow appeared in front of me.**



This means a cow was driving along the road.

When the participle is acting as an adjective it qualifies a noun or pronoun like any other adjective. In the sentence above the adjectival participle is qualifying "cow" which creates the wrong impression.

If you are not sure whether you have used a participle correctly, try to re-phrase the sentence to avoid the problem.

**As I was driving along the road, a cow appeared in front of me.**



# The present participle as a noun (gerund)

The present participle can be used as a noun. When it is used in this way it is called a *gerund*.

**Edward did not approve of the *hunting* of animals and the *shooting* of birds.**

**The *giggling* of the girls annoyed the boys.**

Notice that you can put "the" in front of it like any other noun.



A gerund acts just like any other noun, therefore it can be described by an adjective.

**The *awful wailing* of tom-cats went on all night.**

**The *vicious killing* of the old man shocked everyone.**



## Beware

You always use a possessive *adjective* instead of a pronoun with a gerund.

**People regretted *his* going.** ✓  
**not People regretted *him* going.** ✗

Remember.

**I don't like *your* being here.** ✗  
**not I don't like *you* being here.** ✓



# Adverbs

An adverb modifies (makes more precise) any word in a sentence other than a noun or a pronoun. Usually it tells you more about the verb.

An adverb nearly always answers the questions How? When? Where? or Why?

Look at this sentence:

**Ben returned.**

It makes complete sense on its own, but you don't know how, when, where or why Ben returned. You can say more about Ben's return by using adverbs, or adverbial phrases.<sup>1</sup>



**Ben returned *home* (where) *quickly* (how), *yesterday* (when), *to watch the match* (why).**



Adverbs can be one word or a group of words. When there is a group of words not containing a verb, it is a *phrase*. If the group of words contains a verb but does not make complete sense on its own, it is a *clause*.<sup>2</sup>

## Adverbs of degree

All the adverbs above modify the verb "returned". But adverbs can also modify adjectives and other adverbs. These are sometimes called *adverbs of degree*. All adverbs of degree answer the question *How?*

It was **too hot** to play tennis.

Here the adverb tells you more about the adjective.

Mum looked **very different** with her new hairstyle.

Tom got up **remarkably early** this morning.

He painted the garden wall **rather carelessly**.

Here the adverb modifies *another* adverb.

## Forming adverbs

Most adverbs in English end in *-ly* and come from adjectives.

**soft** – **softly**  
**right** – **rightly**

*Note!* If the adjective ends in *-y*, e.g. *pretty*, you change the "y" into "i" before adding the *-ly*.

**busy** – **busily**  
**weary** – **wearily**

## Beware

Don't confuse adverbs with *adjectives* that end in *-ly*.

If you want to make an adverb out of adjectives like these, you turn them into adverbial phrases.

**He chatted *friendlyly*.**

**prickly, manly, friendly**

You can't do this.

**He chatted *in a friendly way*.**

<sup>1</sup> See page 88

<sup>2</sup> See page 89



## Sentence adverbs

Adverbs can appear in a sentence on their own. They can change the whole meaning of that sentence. These are called *sentence adverbs*.

Here are some sentence adverbs.

nevertheless still moreover  
however on the other hand



**She felt, *however*, that he was not entirely honest.**

**He was, *nevertheless*, a loyal friend.**

## Placing the adverb

Make sure that you place adverbs in the sentence correctly, otherwise the meaning of the sentence may change or become confused.

These *common adverbs* are often put in the wrong place.

only just almost even mainly also

These should be placed immediately *before* the word they modify.

Look at this sentence:

**Pat gave Polly a pound.**



Try inserting "only" in every possible position in the sentence. How many different meanings can you make?

## Adverb or adjective?

Some words can be either adverbs or adjectives depending on what they do in a sentence, e.g. fast, hard, late.

If they answer the questions How? When? Where? or Why? they are adverbs: but if they answer the question "What is it like?" they are adjectives, and will be telling you more about a specific noun.

**Life is *hard*. (adjective)**

**Kim works *hard*. (adverb)**

**The train arrived *early*. (adverb)**

**I took an *early* train. (adjective)**

Can you think of any more adverbs that can be used as adjectives?

## Worn-out adverbs

Nowadays people tend to use certain adverbs of degree to stress what they are saying, when in fact they add little or nothing at all to the meaning of the sentence.

This letter will give you an idea of what to avoid.



Dear Sarah,  
Thank you awfully for your note.  
I had an absolutely fabulous holiday, got terribly brown and met some incredibly interesting people.  
We went to some frightfully expensive restaurants and had some superbly delicious meals!  
We must meet soon,  
love Claude.



The adverbs underlined do not add much to the meaning of the sentence and lessen the effect of the adjectives.

# Prepositions

Prepositions are words which show the relationship of one thing to another. They often tell you *where* one thing is in relation to another, or the "position" that it is in. They are always attached to a noun or pronoun.



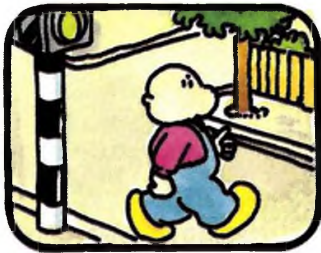
**The boots are *on* the table.**

Where are the boots? – *On* the table.

**Fred goes running *before* breakfast.**

*On* is a preposition which shows the relationship between "the table" and "the boots".

Here are some more examples of prepositions:



***across* the road**



***over* the fence**



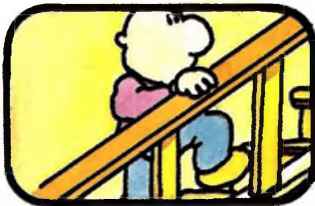
***into* the garden**



***past* the dustbins**



***under* a tree**



***up* the stairs**



***in* the bath**



***down* the bannisters**

## Preposition or adverb?

Words that are prepositions can also do the work of adverbs. It is often difficult to sort out which is which. The best way to decide is to remember that a preposition is *always* followed by a noun or a pronoun.



**The cat climbed *up* the tree.**

*Up* is a *preposition* which tells you the relationship between "the cat" and "the tree".

**The cat climbed *up*.**

*Up* is an *adverb* which tells you *where* the cat climbed.

Here are some of the prepositions which can be used as adverbs:

in on before behind near  
below along through down over under

# Prepositions and pronouns

If a preposition is followed by a pronoun the pronoun is always in its *object form*.<sup>1</sup>



✓ **She sat near *me*.**  
✓ **He gave it to *her*.**

**She sat near *I*.** ✗  
**He gave it to *she*.** ✗



Sometimes a preposition is followed by two words linked by *and*.

Look at these sentences:

**A strange thing happened to *me*.**

**A strange thing happened to *David and me*.**

**A strange thing happened to *David and I*.** ✗



If you changed the noun David to a pronoun, *both* pronouns would be in the object form.

**A strange thing happened to *him and me*.**

## Who and whom?

The pronoun<sup>2</sup> *who* changes to *whom* after a preposition.

**They are the people *to whom* I spoke.**



**He is someone *for whom* I have great respect.**

## Prepositions often confused

### in/into

*In* is used to indicate a position.

*Into* is used with a verb of motion to show entrance.

**The children are *in* bed.**

**He is *in* the swimming pool.**

**The children climbed *into* bed.**

**He fell *into* the swimming pool.**



### to/till/until

a. The word *to* can be used for place *and* time; *till* and *until* can be used for time only.

**We work from 8.00 a.m. *to* 6.00 p.m.**  
or **We work from 8.00 a.m. *till* 6.00 p.m.**

If there is no *from*, you use *till* or *until* instead of *to*.

**We worked *until* dawn.**

b. The word *to* is used for place.

**He drove *to* the crossroads.**

You can't write:



**He drove *until* the crossroads.**



<sup>1</sup> See pages 70-71    <sup>2</sup> See page 71

# Connecting words (Conjunctions)

Words used to connect other words are called conjunctions. They join together words, phrases, clauses and sentences. Below you can see four conjunctions, each joining two words together.

**Bill and Ben**

**sad but true**

**young yet wise**

**friends or enemies**



Conjunctions are connecting words.



Conjunctions are important for linking sentences together. Without them speech and writing would sound very jerky.

Look at these sentences:

**Jim turned round.**

**Jim bumped into the fat lady.**

**Jim turned round and bumped into the fat lady.**



Jim is the subject of both sentences so you can leave out the second Jim when you join the two sentences together

## Conjunction pairs

Conjunctions often appear in pairs.

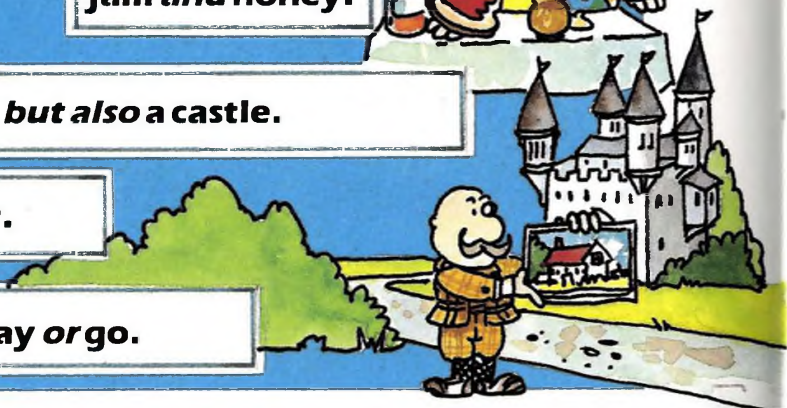
**He likes both jam and honey.**



**Cedric owns not only a house but also a castle.**

**Joanne is neither good nor clever.**

**They cannot decide whether to stay or go.**



## Beware

When you use these pairs of conjunctions you have to make sure you put the conjunctions *before* the words they join.

**Rod not only played the guitar but also the drums.**

**Rod played not only the guitar but also the drums.**

**She neither was at home nor at work.**

**She was neither at home nor at work.**



## Different kinds of conjunctions

1. Certain conjunctions are used to join two sentences of equal importance. These are called *co-ordinating* conjunctions.

and but for or yet however  
as well as so nor both therefore

**Simon likes coffee.**

**Anna likes tea.**

**Simon likes coffee, *but* Anna likes tea.**



These two sentences are just as important as each other.

**She went to the shops.**

**She bought a box of chocolates.**

**She went to the shop *and* bought a box of chocolates.**



2. Sometimes you join two sentences together so that one of them contains a major statement (main clause)\*, and the other contains a minor statement (the subordinate clause)\*. The conjunctions used to do this are called *subordinating* conjunctions.

These are the main statements.

**He was angry *because* I was late.**

**Emma cleaned her teeth *before* she went to bed.**

like before if while until  
though because  
although unless since  
as where  
whenever wherever



3. When you want to join two contrasting statements you can use particular conjunctions which add weight to the point you are making.

though although however but  
nevertheless

**Kim was very tired, *nevertheless* she worked all weekend.**

**She did not stop to rest *although* she felt ill.**



### What is missing?

Can you fill in the missing conjunctions in the sentences below?

- Henry got up late . . . . he was on holiday.
- He wanted to have a bath . . . . the water was cold.
- He did not know . . . . to wear his jeans . . . . his shorts.
- He ate a plateful of bacon . . . . eggs, . . . . drinking five cups of tea.

### Which pair?

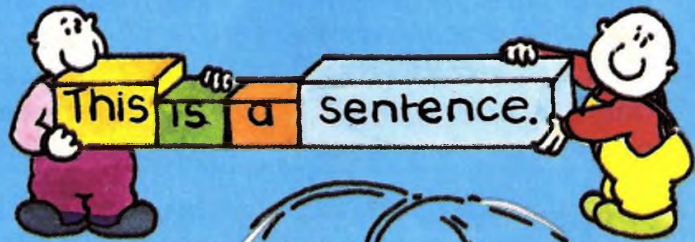
Can you put the correct pair of conjunctions into these sentences?

- Celia could not decide . . . . it was true . . . . not.
- They owned . . . . a Mercedes . . . . a Range Rover.
- This child is . . . . laughing . . . . crying.
- Alice is . . . . tall . . . . short; she is average height.
- Sam has . . . . a car . . . . a motorbike.

# Sentences

A sentence is a group of words which makes complete sense on its own.

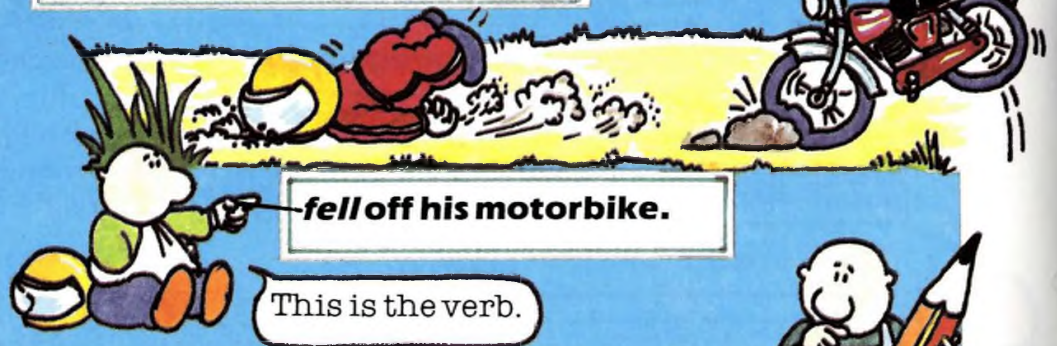
A sentence has two parts – the person or thing which the sentence is about, called *the subject*; and what is written or said about the subject, called *the predicate*.



Look at this sentence:

**James fell off his motorbike.**

James is the subject of the sentence; the rest of the sentence is the predicate.



The predicate always includes the verb of the sentence.

Sometimes the subject can be a group of words:

**James, tired and weary from so much work, fell off his motorbike.**



Who fell? "James, tired and weary from so much work," fell and is the *subject*.

The subject of the sentence is not always found at the beginning, it can also be in the middle or at the end. If it were always in the same place what we say and write would sound very boring.

**The aeroplane flew over the mountains.**

**Over the mountains the aeroplane flew.**

**Over the mountains flew the aeroplane.**



## Sentences with a purpose

The sentences above are straightforward statements, but sentences can have different purposes:

1. **Statements** – sentences which state facts.
2. **Questions** – sentences which ask for an answer.
3. **Commands** – sentences which give orders or requests. (The subject of these sentences is usually understood and therefore not mentioned.)
4. **Exclamations** – sentences which express a strong feeling of emotion.
5. Greetings and sentences which don't have any definite form.

**It is very hot.**

**Are you hot?**

**"(You) do not go out into the sun!"**

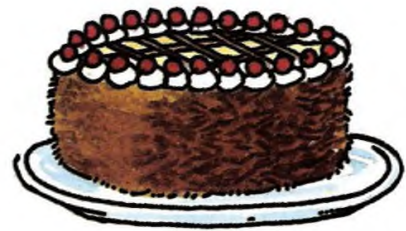
**My goodness, it's hot!**

**Good morning.  
Many happy returns.**



# Simple sentences

A simple sentence has only *one* subject and *one* predicate.



**The chef (subject) made a cake (predicate).**

It could take the form of a question:

**Did the chef make a cake?**

or a command:

**Make a cake!**

You can add any amount of adjectives<sup>1</sup> to the nouns:

**The jolly, fat chef made an enormous chocolate cake.**

or any amount of adverbs<sup>2</sup> or adverbial phrases:<sup>3</sup>

**The chef happily made a cake in the kitchen after midnight. (N.B. How? Where? When?)**

or both:

**The jolly, fat chef happily made an enormous chocolate cake in the kitchen after midnight.**



Despite all the added description the sentence still has only *one subject* and *one verb*. It is still a simple sentence.

# Compound sentences

If you used *simple* sentences all the time your writing and speech would sound very jerky. It is important to join sentences together to add variety to your language and make it flow.

A *compound* sentence is made up of two or more simple sentences joined by a conjunction<sup>4</sup> or separated by a comma, semi-colon or colon.

Here are two simple sentences.

**The ship hit the rocks.**

**It sank to the bottom of the sea.**

If you join them together with the conjunction "and" you can make a compound sentence.

**The ship hit the rocks and it sank to the bottom of the sea.**

or,

**Jane likes swimming.**

**Fred likes to play tennis.**

**Tom does not like to do anything at all.**



Join them with commas and a conjunction:

**Jane likes swimming, Fred likes to play tennis, but Tom does not like to do anything at all.**

Note that the separate parts of the compound sentence still make complete sense if you take away the conjunction or punctuation.



<sup>1</sup> See pages 72 and 73

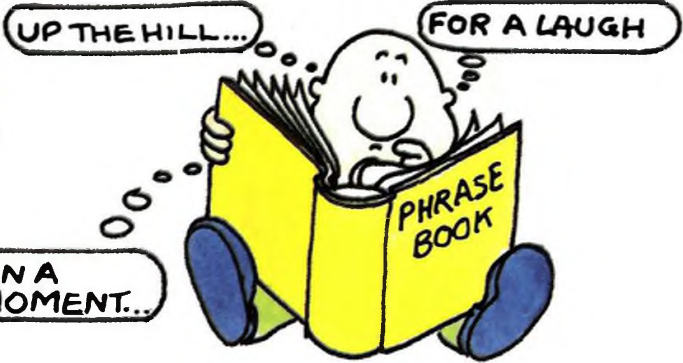
<sup>2</sup> See page 80

<sup>3</sup> See page 88

<sup>4</sup> See pages 84 and 85

# Phrases

A phrase is a group of words which does not make complete sense on its own and *does not* contain a verb. It is not a complete sentence.



**up the mountain**

This does not make complete sense.



If you add a subject and a verb to this phrase you can make a complete sentence.

**The climber (subject)**

**struggled (verb)**

**The climber struggled up the mountain.**

If you want to write longer and more interesting sentences you can use phrases instead of adjectives, nouns and adverbs.



## Adjectival phrases

In these sentences the phrases are used instead of adjectives.



**The man *with the bow-tie* danced with the lady *in the red dress*.**

**Matilda, *refreshed by a long holiday in Greece*, felt she could dance all night.**

Can you see which nouns they are describing?

## Adverbial phrases

In the sentences below the phrases act as adverbs answering the question *How?* *When?* and *Where?* about the verb.

**The bull charged *angrily across the field*.**

Can you see which phrases answer the question how?

**They climbed over a gate *as soon as possible* and ran *like the wind*.**



## Noun phrases

These phrases are acting as nouns in the sentences. They can do *all* the things that nouns can do.

Here they are the subject of the sentences.



***All the people in the audience* began to clap at the brilliant speech.**

***The terrier with short ears* was well-trained by his master.**





# Clauses

A clause is a group of words which *does* contain a verb. It is part of a sentence.

**MAIN**

**SUBORDINATE**

**when she went shopping**

This does not make sense.

If, however, you add another clause to the one above, it does make sense in the sentence.

This is another clause

**Sue bought a new dress when she went shopping.**

Above there are two kinds of clauses: 1. *Main clause*. 2. *Subordinate clause*.

They are divided into two kinds according to the job they do in a sentence.

The most important clause is the *main clause*. This can stand by itself and make complete sense. It could be a sentence.

**Richard ate five cream cakes**

A *subordinate* clause is dependent on the main clause for its meaning.

**because he was hungry**

Clauses, like phrases, can do the work of adjectives, nouns and adverbs in a sentence. They make what you write more detailed and interesting.

## Adjectival clause

These often begin with *who*, *which*, *that* or *whom*.

These are the nouns the clauses are describing



**The boy *who had the longest legs* won the race.**

**David was a person *whom everyone respected*.**

## Adverbial clause

An adverbial clause does the work of an adverb (i.e. it answers the questions How? When? Where? or Why?).

How?

**He ran *as fast as he could*.**



When?

**They sang *as they walked along*.**

Where?

**Robbers break in *where they see valuables kept*.**

Can you see which verbs the clauses are describing?

Why?

**I missed the train *because I was late*.**



## Noun clause

A noun clause can take the place of a noun. It can be the *subject* or *object* of the verb.

Here it is the subject.

***That there is life after death* is impossible to prove.**

**I want to know *what you have been doing* all day.**

Here it is the object.

# Complex sentences

SUBORDINATE

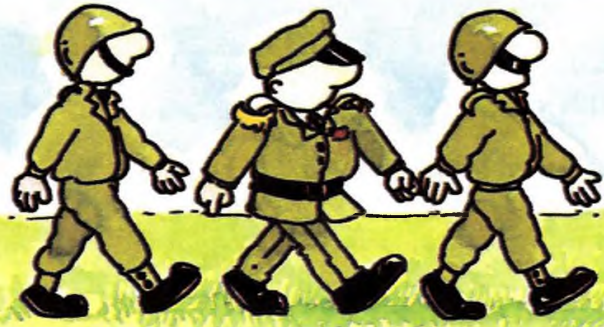
MAIN

SUBORDINATE

A complex sentence is made up of a main clause<sup>1</sup> with one or more subordinate clauses.<sup>2</sup> Each clause always contains a verb.

The subordinate clauses can be noun, adjectival or adverbial clauses,<sup>3</sup> and each one follows a preposition<sup>3</sup> or a conjunction.<sup>4</sup>

Look at the sentence below. The words in italics are verbs.



The man *limped* because his leg *hurt*.

The man *limped* (main clause)

because his leg *hurt* (subordinate clause)

This is an adverbial clause saying why he limped.

This makes sense on its own.

Now look at the next sentence. It has two subordinate clauses. Again, the verbs are in italics.

Rose, who was a greedy girl, ate five cakes when she came home from school.

Rose ate five cakes (main clause)

who was a greedy girl (subordinate clause)

when she came home from school (subordinate clause)

This is an adjectival clause describing Rose.

Notice that each clause contains a verb.

This is an adverbial clause modifying ate.

Subordinate clauses can come at the beginning or end of a sentence. The subordinate clauses below are in italics.

She took her dog with her wherever she went.

Wherever she went she took her dog with her.



You can have a subordinate clause at the beginning, the main clause in the middle and the other subordinate clause at the end.

When Tom got up he put on his brown suit, which was very smart.

This is the main clause.

<sup>1</sup>See page 89.

<sup>2</sup>See page 89.

<sup>3</sup>See page 82.

<sup>4</sup>See page 84.

# Direct and reported speech



When you are writing sentences that contain somebody's speech you have to think carefully whether it is *direct* or *reported (indirect)* speech.

## Direct speech

If you are writing down the exact words that someone is saying, or has said, it is called *direct* speech. The words actually spoken are put inside inverted commas (sometimes called quotation marks).

**"I am feeling ill, Mum," said Fred.**

I am feeling ill.



**"What have you been eating?" she asked.**

## Reported (indirect) speech

You can, however, report what someone said in your own words. This is called *reported* or *indirect* speech. In this case you do not need inverted commas.

**Fred told his Mum *he was feeling ill*.**

**She asked him what *he had been eating*.**



Some of the verbs in the above sentences are in italics. These are the verbs included in the speech. If you look at the verbs in the *reported* speech you will notice that they are in the past tense. This is because you are writing down what happened in the past. The action is now over.

Direct speech

Remember the *tense* of each verb in reported speech goes back *one stage in time*.

**"I am happy." – (He said) he *was* happy.**

**"I saw it." – (He said) he *had seen* it.**

Reported speech

The future changes like this:

**"I shall do it." – (He said) he *would* do it.**

## Could you be a reporter?

Can you re-write Lady Bloggs' speech in your own words?

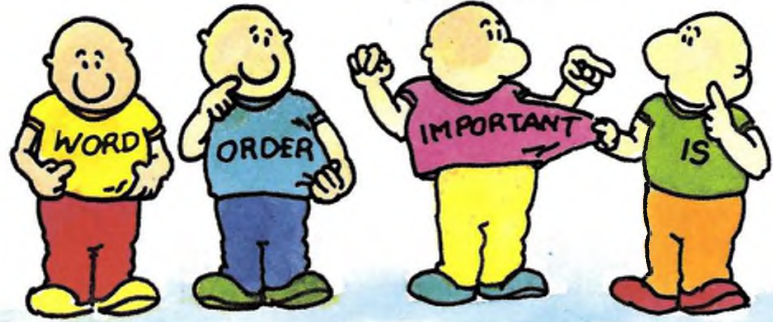


"Welcome everyone! It is wonderful to see so many of you here today supporting our Charity Bazaar. I do hope you will all give generously to this worthy cause. Last year we made two thousand pounds at the same event and I hope we may make *even* more this year. There are many stalls and attractions which I am sure you will find entertaining..."



# Word order in sentences

The meaning of a sentence depends not only on the words you use but also the order in which they appear. Most of the time you put words in the right order without even having to think about it, but there are one or two tricky instances when it is easy to make mistakes.



## Misplaced words

When you use common adverbs\* you need to think quite carefully about where you place them. They should be immediately before the words they modify. The word *just* is a good example of one of these adverbs. Notice the difference in meaning between the sentences below.

**I *just* told my mother what I had seen.**

(I recently told my mother.)

**I told *just* my mother what I had seen.**

(I told only my mother.)

**I told my mother *just* what I had seen.**

(I told my mother exactly what I had seen.)

**I told my mother what I had *just* seen.**

(I told my mother what I had recently seen.)



## Misplaced phrases

Sometimes whole phrases can get into the wrong position in a sentence. This can make the meaning unclear or ridiculous.



**The teacher kept the child who misbehaved *in the corner*.**

Did the child misbehave in the corner?



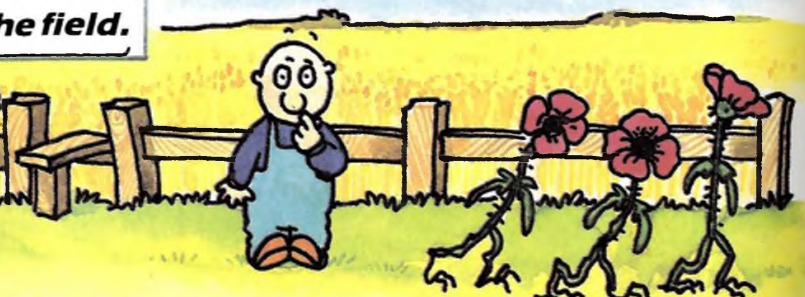
Or was the child kept in the corner because he misbehaved?



Try to put phrases as close as possible to the word or words they relate to most closely. This is particularly important when you are dealing with phrases that have verbs ending in "-ing" or "-ed".

**We saw some poppies walking round the field.**

Put this phrase at the beginning of the sentence. It describes "we", not the "poppies".



# Misplaced clauses

Clauses which describe someone or something should be placed as near as possible to the person or thing they describe.

**I heard the seagulls near the cliffs that were screeching.**

This word order makes it sound as though the cliffs were screeching.

This clause needs to go nearer to the seagulls.



## Split infinitives

An infinitive is the part of the verb that has "to" in front of it.

**to hop  
to skip  
to jump**



These are all infinitives.

It is nearly always a mistake to split "to" from the verb if you are using an infinitive.

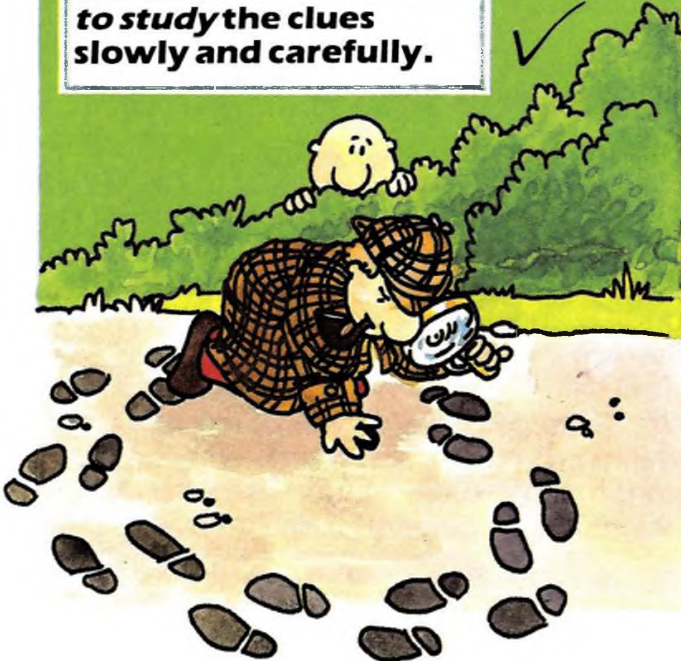
**The detective decided to slowly and carefully study the clues.**



"To" and "study" should be next to each other.



**The detective decided to study the clues slowly and carefully.**



## Split verb and subject

The subject of a sentence should not be too far away from the verb because the meaning of the sentence can then become hard to follow.

**Albert, after upsetting the basket and cracking all the eggs, hid in the cupboard.**



"Albert" needs to be nearer "hid".



**After upsetting the basket and cracking all the eggs, Albert hid in the cupboard.**



## Wrong order

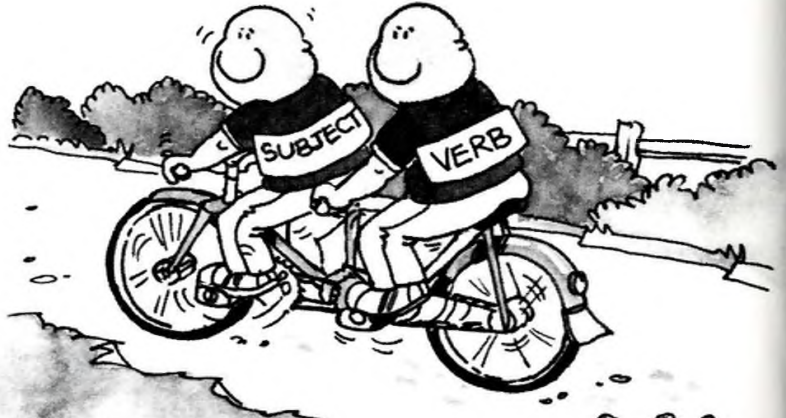
Can you spot the mistakes in the sentences below?:

1. I saw a frog fishing by the river.
2. The policeman arrested the man who was drunk quickly.
3. I saw the dog with its owner which was barking.
4. Ben, after eating ten chocolate bars, was sick.
5. She decided to gradually acquire a suntan.



# Making the subject and verb agree

The subject of a sentence is who or what the sentence is about. It is in charge of or "governs" the verb. A singular subject means that the verb must be singular; a plural subject means that the verb must be plural.



Singular subject

**This cake is stale.**

Singular verb



**These cakes are stale.**

Plural subject



Plural verb

This is called making the subject and verb agree.

## A group of words as a subject

If the subject is a group of words, rather than just one word, it is easy to make a mistake. Here the phrase "of potatoes" describing the subject can be mistaken for the subject itself.



**A sack of potatoes were lying in the shed.**

Subject phrase

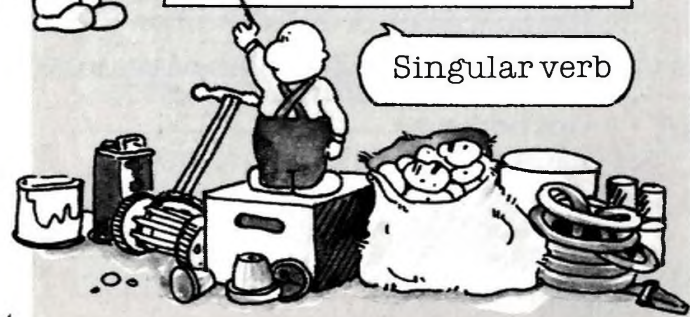


Decide which word is the subject by asking yourself *who* or *what* performed the action. Then think whether it is singular or plural and make the verb agree with it.

Singular subject

**A sack of potatoes was lying in the shed.**

Singular verb



## More than one verb

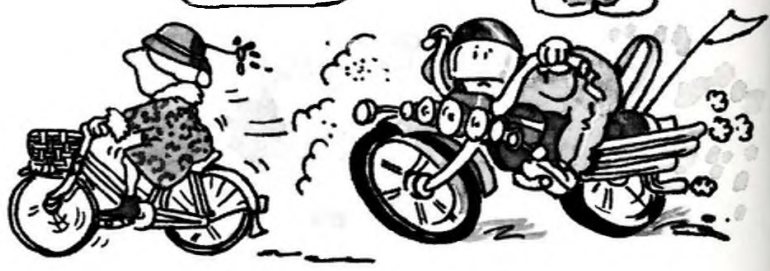
Sometimes one subject governs more than one verb. Make sure that all the verbs governed by a subject agree with it.

**This kind of motorbike looks impressive but actually do not go very fast.**



This should be *does* because the subject is "kind".

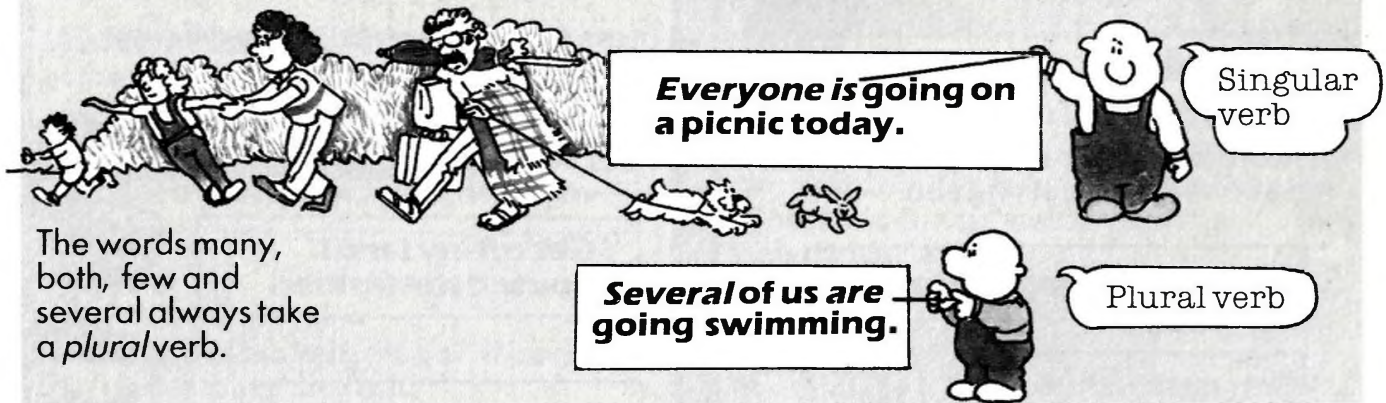
Don't make mistakes like this.



Whenever you have difficulty deciding whether a verb should be singular or plural, find the subject and ask yourself whether it is singular or plural.

## More common mistakes

1. Words like *anyone*, *everyone*, *someone*, *no one*, *each* (indefinite pronouns), are singular and should take a *singular verb*.



2. When you use "neither ... nor" in a sentence it can be difficult to decide what to do with the verbs. If both the subjects are singular use a singular verb.

**Neither the dog nor the cat likes the way Tom plays his violin.**



If one or both subjects are plural, the verb is plural.

**Neither Ben nor his brothers like having a bath.**

3. Collective nouns (words which describe groups of persons or things) usually take a *singular verb*.



**Class 4B  
Ted's family  
This football team  
Tony's gang** } *is brilliant.*

4. When a sentence has more than one subject joined by "and" the verb should be *plural*.

**Here come Annie and her sister.** ✓

**Here comes Annie and her sister.** ✗

There are two subjects so the verb is plural.

## Spot the mistakes

Can you spot the wrong agreement in these sentences?

- This dog are vicious.
- These tomatoes is ripe.
- A box of chocolates are sitting on the table.
- Rod's gang are very large.
- James and Lucy is going away today.
- Neither Sid nor his friends is coming to my party.
- Here comes the bride and groom.
- Class 2B are very noisy.
- Here are two apples: both is ripe.
- A few of us is here.



# Words easily confused

**passed**

**past**



**passed**

The word *passed* is a verb. It can only be used as a verb and nothing else.

**I have *passed* my exams.**

**Ben *passed* her house every day.**

**past**

The word *past* can be used in four ways:

a. As an *adjective*

**She has come in late three times in the *past* week.**

b. As a *noun*

**In the *past* they had many servants.**



c. As a *preposition*

**He hurried *past* the graveyard.**



d. As an *adverb*

**The crowds cheered as the Queen went *past*.**



**off**

**of**

These two words mean totally different things.

**off**

**"Get *off* my land!" shouted the farmer.**

**She rubbed the dust *off* her shoes.**

**of**

This sounds like *ov* when you say it because of the one "f".

**She climbed out *of* bed sleepily.**

**Three *of* them wore hats.**



Try not to confuse *of* with the word *have*.

Look at the sentence below:

***I should have gone with them.***

Sometimes the words in italics are shortened to *should've*. This often sounds like *should of*.

Watch out for the words below:

could've (could have)  
would've (would have)  
might've (might have)  
must've (must have)  
may've (may have)

Never say or write could of, etc.



**we're**

**were**



**we're**

*We're* is a shortened form (contraction) of the pronoun *we* and the verb *are*.

***We're* going away tomorrow.  
*We are* going away tomorrow.**

**were**

This is part of the verb "to be". It is part of the past tense of the verb.

***They were* very happy to be going away.**



*Helpful hint:* If you cannot remember which of these words to use, think: "Can I replace it with two words?" If you *can*, you use the shortened form "we're". It's the same with "who's".



**who's**

**whose**



**who's**

This is the shortened form (contraction) of the pronoun *who*<sup>1</sup> and either the verb *is* or the verb *has*.

***Who's (who is)* coming to the party?  
*Who's (who has)* been drinking my wine?**



**whose**

This word can be two parts of speech:

- a. A *relative pronoun*<sup>2</sup> which shows ownership on behalf of the noun it relates to.

**This is the man *whose* dog bit me.**

"Whose" refers back to the noun "man".



- b. A *possessive adjective*<sup>3</sup> which refers to the noun it is next to.

***Whose* dog is this?**



**affect**

**effect**



**affect**

The word *affect* is a verb which means "to cause a change in something".

**Sue changed her job because it *affected* her health.**

**effect**



This is a noun which means "result" or "consequence".

**The change in job had a good *effect* and she was no longer ill.**

but

The word *effect* is sometimes used as a verb which means "to bring something into being".

**The doctor hoped he could *effect* a cure for the disease.**



<sup>1</sup>See pages 70-71

<sup>2</sup>See page 71

<sup>3</sup>See pages 72-73

# Words often misused

teach

learn

teach

A teacher "teaches" someone how to do something. He gives out knowledge.

**Jim is teaching me how to play the guitar.**



learn



This word means "to take in" knowledge.

**I learned to play the guitar very quickly with Jim as a teacher.**



You *cannot* "learn" someone how to do something.

lend

borrow

lend



This word means "to hand out" for a certain period of time.

**"I will lend you a ruler," said Ben.**



borrow

This word means "to take from" for a certain period of time.

**She borrowed Ben's ruler for a few minutes.**

You lend *to* someone and borrow *from* someone.



saw

seen



saw

This word is a verb. It makes sense on its own.

**I saw a film last night.**



seen



This word is only *part* of a verb. It needs an auxiliary verb\* with it to help to make sense.

**I have seen three films this week.**



You cannot write:

**I seen three films this week.**



did

done

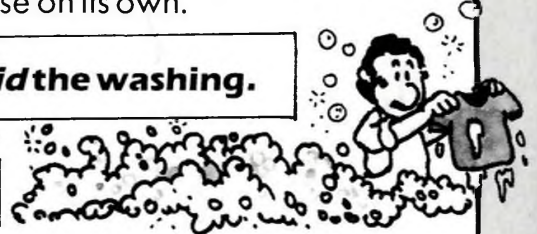


did

The word *did* is a complete verb which makes sense on its own.

**Dad did the washing.**

done



The word *done* is only part of a verb. It needs an auxiliary verb\* to make sense.

**Dad has done the washing.**

not

**Dad done the washing.**

"done" needs a *helping* verb with it.



as like



as

This word always needs a verb to follow it.

**She did it *as* I told her to.**

like

This word is followed by a noun or pronoun only.

**She looks *like* him.**

**That man is driving *like* a madman.**

Do not write:

**She did it *like* I told her to.** X

who which

These words are relative pronouns.\* This means they take the place of a noun and join two phrases or clauses.

*Who* is always used to refer to people. *Which* is always used to refer to animals or things.

who

Look at these two sentences:

**I have two brothers.  
My brothers are fat.**



You can join these sentences together with a relative pronoun.

**I have two brothers *who* are fat.**

"Who" takes the place of the noun "brothers".



which

The same applies to the word *which*.

**She has three cats.  
The cats are Siamese.**

**She has three cats *which* are Siamese.**

"Which" takes the place of the noun "cats".



can may might

can

This word means "capable of doing".

**I *can* go out now.**

**I *can* speak French well.**



may

This word is used in two ways:

1. To ask permission to do something.

**May I go out now?**

Although nowadays people often say or write:

**"Can we have lunch now?"** X

You should say:

**"May we have lunch now?"** ✓



2. You also use the word *may* when there is a fair possibility that something will happen.

**The princess *may* visit this town tomorrow.**

This means it is quite possible.

might

This is used when there is less possibility of something happening.

**The princess *might* visit this town tomorrow.**

This means there is a possibility but that it is not very likely.



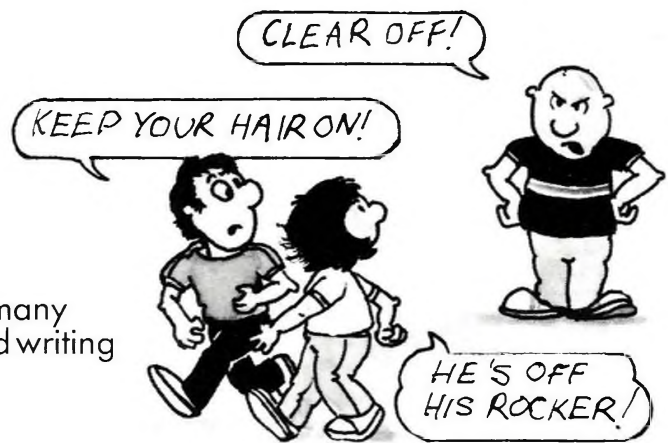
\* See page 71

# Other problems

Here are some common mistakes which seem to crop up frequently in written and spoken English.

## Slang

Everyone talks in "slang" sometimes. There are many words and phrases used in everyday speech and writing which are called slang. They are often funny expressions but should not be used in formal speech or writing.



## Spot the slang

The sentences below are written in slang. Can you re-write them in formal English?

1. I'm fed up with this job, I'm going to pack it in.
2. John is keen on a bird up the road.
3. We thought Jane was stuck up but she was just feeling out of sorts.
4. Tim's father is in the nick because someone grassed on him.
5. Mum has flipped her lid because Bill has pushed off without telling her.
6. I'm so hard up I can't get to the movies.
7. Dad went round the bend when I told him to get lost.
8. She slogs her guts out working for a boss who's a pain in the neck.



## Double negatives

A *negative* is a word which gives the meaning of "no" or "not". If you put *two* negatives in one sentence they will cancel each other out and you will lose the negative meaning altogether.

Look at this sentence:

X **I don't want nothing.**

There are *two* negatives here.

You should write:

**I don't want anything.** ✓

or

**I want nothing.** ✓

**He's not seen neither of them.** X

or

**He's not seen either of them.** ✓

**He's seen neither of them.** ✓



## Jumping tenses

When you write a sentence or a passage you should always be consistent about the tense of the verb. If you start to write about something in the past, you must keep to the past all the way through. If you start to write in the present then you must continue in the present.

Look at the sentences below:

**They walked through the forest and breathed in the scent of pine. It *is* cool and fresh and they *feel* as if they could stay forever.**

What should the words in italics really be?



All the verbs are in the past tense except for *is* and *feel*. The tenses of these verbs have jumped to the present. This makes the passage rather confusing to the reader.

# Odds and ends

**hardly**    **scarcely**

When these words mean "no sooner than" they are always followed closely by *when* or *before*, not the word *than*.

**He had scarcely left the house when the telephone rang.**

**She had hardly eaten a mouthful before she felt sick.**

No "than" here.



**them**    **those**

Sometimes people use the word *them* as an adjective instead of *those*.

*Them* is the object form of the pronoun *they*. It can never be used as an adjective.

**Give it to *them*.**

*Those* can be used as a demonstrative adjective\* or as a pronoun. Here it is an adjective.

***Those* flowers are pretty.**

Do not write or say:



**Pass me *them* books.** X

It should be:



**Pass me *those* books.** ✓



**between**

The word *between* is always followed by *and* not *or*.

**She had a choice between a white dress *and* a black one.** ✓

not

**She had a choice between a white dress *or* a black one.** X



**to try to**

**to try and**

You normally use the word *to* after the verb to try. It is a common mistake to put the word *and*.

✓ **I am going to try *to* save money this year.**

X **I am going to try *and* save money this year.**



**literally**

This word means "exactly to the letter" or "in actual fact". You cannot write:

**Celia was *literally* rooted to the spot.** X

This is possible.



You can write: ✓ **Celia *literally* fainted with shock.**



**unique**

This word means the only one of its kind. You cannot say something is *quite* unique or *very* unique, it is either unique or not unique.

✓ **This precious vase is *unique*.**

**This precious vase is *quite* unique.** X



\* See pages 72 - 73

# Tips on writing good English

Good writing should be clear, simple and concise. This does not mean that the sentences you write should be abrupt and full of short, uncomplicated words. It is important to use a variety of words and ways of expressing things. But it is also important to make sure that each word you use contributes something to the meaning of the sentence.



## Planning

First of all it will help if you spend some time planning what you are going to write before you start writing. List all the points or ideas that you want to include and think carefully about how you are going to link or contrast them. Read through what you have planned, to see if you have forgotten anything.



## Paragraphs

The way you arrange words on a page and the amount of space you leave around them also helps your reader to understand the exact meaning of your words.

Divide your writing into paragraphs to help your reader. A paragraph is a set of sentences. There is no rule about how many sentences there should be in a paragraph; just use as many as makes a digestible piece of reading. But do try to end one paragraph and begin another at a point where it is logical to have a slight break.

You usually start a new paragraph when introducing into the story:

1. A person.
2. A new place.
3. A change of time.
4. A change of idea.

The first line of a paragraph is set inwards from the margin (indented) to make it easier to see where each paragraph begins.



If you are writing down a conversation you always start a new paragraph every time one person stops speaking and another person starts. This makes it easier for the reader to tell who is speaking which words.

Take special care with the opening and closing paragraphs of what you write. The opening paragraph will decide whether you capture your reader's interest; the closing paragraph will determine the impression he is left with.

## Reading through



As you read through, you may also spot some spelling mistakes or missing punctuation.

When you have finished writing, read through what you have written. Think about your reader or readers. Try to put yourself in their position and see whether you can understand what you have written. Ask yourself whether it will hold their interest and whether it states accurately what you want to tell them.

## Things to avoid

1. **Repetition.** Your writing can become very boring for your reader if you keep repeating the same words or phrases unnecessarily.

The same word is used too many times.



2. **Overworked words.** Certain words tend to be used too much, so that their meaning becomes vague and woolly. They can be acceptable when used in just the right place, but it is better to think of a more precise alternative to replace them.

nice lovely fantastic terrific great  
incredible horrible funny dreadful fine  
good get

There are lots of other overworked words.



3. **Clichés.** These are phrases that have been used over and over again until all their freshness and originality has disappeared. Try to think of your own way of expressing something instead of resorting to stock phrases.

*In this day and age I think it is important for each and every one of us, right across the board, to stand up and be counted.*



4. **Ambiguity.** This is when there is more than one meaning to a sentence and there is no way of telling which one the writer intended. This often happens when a word or phrase is put in the wrong position.

**The fire was put out before any damage could be done by the fire brigade.**

It can also happen when you use pronouns without making it quite clear to whom they refer.

**If the baby does not eat its supper, throw it away.**



5. **Tautology.** This is the use of an extra word or phrase which pointlessly repeats an idea in the sentence.

**The annual party at Castle Crum is held every year.**

“Annual” is the same as “every year”.

You could say either:

**There is an annual party at Castle Crum.**

or

**The party at Castle Crum is held every year.**



6. **Verbosity.** Using too many words where plain, straightforward language would be more effective, will make what you write sound pompous and unnatural. Try not to use long words where short ones are just as effective, or more words than are necessary to express your meaning.

**At this moment in time I am of the opinion that it is of the utmost importance to labour diligently at whatsoever matter may fall to your lot.**

**I now think that it is very important to work hard at whatever you do.**

# Test yourself

## How many pronouns?

Can you spot all the pronouns in these sentences?

1. I don't know which of them is going to help with this
2. She collected the parcel herself.
3. "To whom does that belong?" he asked angrily.
4. "These are ready, but those aren't," I said.
5. "Who do you think will be coming tonight?" she asked.
6. He has a car which he will lend us.

Don't forget! There are different *kinds* of pronouns. See page 71.



## Which kind of noun?

In the eight sentences below there are 31 nouns. Can you find them all and decide which kind they are? (common, proper, collective or abstract?)

1. Everyone lived in fear of Charlie and his gang of thugs.
2. A flock of sheep ambled across the road, causing a huge traffic-jam.
3. Mary ran down the High Street to catch the bus, which was stopping outside the Odeon Cinema.
4. Claude was a Frenchman who came from Paris.
5. The jury took a long time to decide whether or not the prisoner had told the truth.
6. A fleet of ships sailed out of the harbour at great speed.
7. The farmer asked the vet to have a look at his herd of cows.
8. The crocodile gobbled up a shoal of fish.



See page 69 if you are stuck.



## Comparing things

Can you fill in the missing words or letters below?

1. Jane is pretty but Sarah is even prett . . . .
2. Of the three boys, James is the fat . . . . .
3. My house is large, Tom's is larg . . . , but Dan's house is the larg . . . .
4. John's behaviour is bad, but Tim's is . . . . .
5. The old lady had only a little money, her friend had even . . . . ., but the man round the corner had the . . . . .





## Phrase or clause?

In the sentences below, the words in italics form either a phrase or a clause. Can you sort out which is which?

1. The women *in the audience* began to faint.
2. They travelled wearily *across the desert*.
3. *When she was young* Doris was very attractive.
4. Tom ran *along the road, round the corner and into the house*.
5. James bought a new cassette *when he went shopping*.
6. The man *in the dark glasses* looked very mysterious.
7. Kim, *who is an eccentric person*, collects extremely unusual teapots.
8. Peter was a bully *whom everybody feared*.
9. Sue kept a goat *in her front garden*.

Remember, a phrase does not have a verb in it.



## Spot the mistakes

There are 13 mistakes in the sentences below. Can you find them all?

1. "Who's book is this?" she asked.
2. "Whose coming to the party?" asked Sarah.
3. "I don't know whether these pills will have any affect," said the doctor.
4. She fell of her bicycle because off the hole in the road.
5. "You shoud of known better," said the teacher.
6. "Mum, will you learn me how to cook that dish?" she asked.
7. "Can I lend your car, Jim?" asked Jo.
8. "I seen four burglars come out of that house," she told the police.
9. Tom did the job like I told him to.
10. Jane done four hours' work last night.
11. She has four sisters which are all younger than her.
12. Henrietta has five white mice who are all female.



## Participles quiz

Test yourself

Verb, adjective or noun? Can you work out how the participles have been used in the sentences below? (The participles are in italics.)

1. Alfie has *learnt* to walk already.
2. The acrobats performed an amazing *balancing* act.
3. The neighbours have *moved* out this week.
4. "That's seven years' bad luck," she said as she looked at the *broken* mirror.
5. *The fighting* in the playground worried the headmaster.
6. The *screaming* girls chased the filmstar down the road.
7. The baby next door is *teething*.
8. *The singing* in the chapel was a delight to her ears.



## Missing prepositions

Can you think of suitable prepositions to fill the gaps below?

Charlie got . . . . early. He put . . . . his clothes and went . . . . the stairs . . . . the kitchen. He sat . . . . the table . . . . the window and looked . . . . the garden and saw his father sitting . . . . a tree. When he had finished eating he went . . . . the door, . . . . of the house and . . . . the garden to join his father. He sat . . . . him on the ground and looked seriously . . . . his eyes. "Can you lend me some money, Dad?" he asked.



## What can you find?

There are 15 verbs, 27 adjectives and 10 adverbs in this story. Can you find them all?

In the middle of a dark, forbidding forest lived a strange, old man. His home was a rickety little shack which had two cracked windows and a creaking door.

The man lived quite alone except for the company of a thin, bedraggled cat, and a large, lazy dog.

Each day he wandered off among the tall pine-trees and whistled softly to himself. He only returned to his humble home late in the evening when the sun had gone down.

Then he would sit quietly by the flickering fire and warm his gnarled hands; or he would talk gently to the animals as he tossed them scraps of his meagre supper.

Despite his simple existence, the old man was content. He troubled no one, and no one troubled him.



# Answers

## Spot the noun (page 68)

Pick out the nouns

box  
David  
dog  
cup  
bottle



How many nouns?

18 nouns. Cynthia rabbit bicycle  
dress budgerigar man  
Boris Tom Mary bed  
cat dog car table  
road hamster favour chair

## Find the pronouns (page 71)

1. She, them.
2. We, him, he.
3. I, this, yours, she.
4. You, her, she, us.
5. It, yours, it, mine.
6. They, me, them.



## Spot the verb (page 76)

1. cleaned
2. is barking
3. has made
4. will be watching
5. has crashed
6. is tossing



## Fill in the missing verb (page 76)

1. are
2. has
3. will
4. shall
5. will
6. is, or was
7. were, or are  
will be, have been.

## Change around (page 77)

1. A huge, black spider *was eaten* by the cat.
2. The silver *is cleaned* by Doris every fortnight.
3. The lawn *was mowed* by Mum early this morning.
4. The money *was hidden* under the bed by the burglars.
5. The rubbish *was thrown* into the dustbin by Jo.
6. The horse *was brushed* by the groom.
7. The plants *are watered* by the gardener.
8. A taxi *was ordered* by him to take her home.



## What is missing? (page 84)

1. because, as, since *or* while
2. but
3. whether, *or*
4. and, as well as.

## Which pair? (page 84)

1. whether . . . *or*
2. not only . . . *but also*
3. either . . . *or*
4. neither . . . *nor*
5. both . . . *and*



## Could you be a reporter? (page 91)

Possible answer: (Words in italics show change of tense.)

Lady Bloggs *welcomed* everyone. She said that it *was* wonderful to see so many people there supporting their Charity Bazaar and *hoped* they *would* all give generously to the worthy cause. She went on to say that last year they *had made* two thousand pounds at the same event and *hoped* that they *might* make even more this year. There *were* many stalls and attractions which she *was* sure they *would* find entertaining.



## Wrong order (page 93)



1. Fishing by the river, I saw a frog.
2. The policeman quickly arrested the man who was drunk.
3. I saw the dog which was barking, with its owner.
4. Ben was sick after eating ten chocolate bars.
5. She decided to acquire a suntan gradually.

## Spot the mistakes (page 95)

1. This dog *is* vicious.
2. These tomatoes *are* ripe.
3. A box of chocolates *is* sitting on the table.
4. Rod's gang *is* very large.
5. James and Lucy *are* going away tomorrow.
6. Neither Sid nor his friends *are* coming to my party.
7. Here *come* the bride and groom.
8. Class 2B *is* very noisy.
9. Here are two apples: both *are* ripe.
10. A few of us *are* here.



## How many pronouns? (page 104)

- 19 pronouns.
- |                          |                       |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. I, which, them, this. | 4. These, those, I.   |
| 2. She, herself.         | 5. Who, you, she.     |
| 3. Whom, that, he        | 6. He, which, he, us. |



## Which kind of noun? (page 104)

1. *Common*: thugs, sheep, road, traffic-jam, bus, prisoner ships, harbour, farmer, vet, look, cows, crocodile, fish.
2. *Proper*: Charlie, Mary, High Street, Odeon Cinema, Claude, Frenchman, Paris.
3. *Collective*: gang, flock, jury, fleet, herd, shoal.
4. *Abstract*: fear, truth, speed, time.



## Comparing things (page 104)

1. Jane is pretty but Sarah is even *prettier*.
2. Of the three boys, James is the *fattest*.
3. My house is large, Tom's is *larger*, but Dan's house is the *largest*.
4. John's behaviour is bad, but Tim's is *worse*.
5. The old lady had only a little money, her friend had even *less*, but the man round the corner had the *least*.

## Phrase or clause (page 105)

1. phrase
2. phrase
3. clause
4. 3 phrases
5. clause
6. phrase
7. clause
8. clause
9. phrase

## Spot the mistakes (page 105)

1. *Whose* book is this? she asked.
2. "*Who's* coming to the party?" asked Sarah.
3. "I don't know whether these pills will have any *effect*," said the doctor.
4. She fell *off* her bicycle because *of* the hole in the road.
5. "You should've (have) known better," said the teacher.
6. "Mum, will you *teach* me how to cook that dish?" she asked.
7. "Can I *borrow* your car, Jim?" asked Jo.
8. "I *saw* four burglars come out of that house," she told the police.
9. Tom did the job *as* I told him to.
10. Jane *did* four hours' work last night.
11. She has four sisters *who* are all younger than her.
12. Henrietta has five white mice *which* are all female.



## Participles quiz (page 106)

1. verb
2. adjective
3. verb
4. adjective
5. noun (gerund)
6. adjective
7. verb
8. noun (gerund)



## Missing prepositions (page 106)

up, on, down, into (to), at, by  
(near or beside), across  
(into), under, through, out,  
into, beside (near), into



## What can you find (page 106)

Verbs – 14, lived (× 2), was, had, wandered, whistled, returned, had gone, would sit, warm, would talk, tossed, was, troubled (× 2).

Adjectives – 27, dark, forbidding, strange, old (× 2), rickety, little, two, cracked, creaking, thin, bedraggled, large, lazy, each, tall, humble, flickering, gnarled, meagre, simple, content, his (× 5).

Adverbs – 10, quite, alone, off, softly, only, late, down, then, quietly, gently.

# Literary terms – More tips on writing English

If you want to write in an interesting and lively way you may want to include some of the following:-

## Similes

A simile compares two things, bringing out a point of "likeness" between the two things.

**She was shaking like a leaf.**

The most common words which introduce a simile are:

as, like, as if, as though, as . . . as.

## Metaphors

A metaphor is like a simile except that it compares two things by saying that one thing *is* something else. It does not use the word "like" or "as".

**That man is an ass.**



## Alliteration

This is the repeating of a particular letter or sound (usually consonants at the beginning of words) to produce an interesting effect.



**She sat sipping soda in the sizzling sun.**

## Onomatopoeia

This is the use of words which imitate or suggest the sound of what they describe.



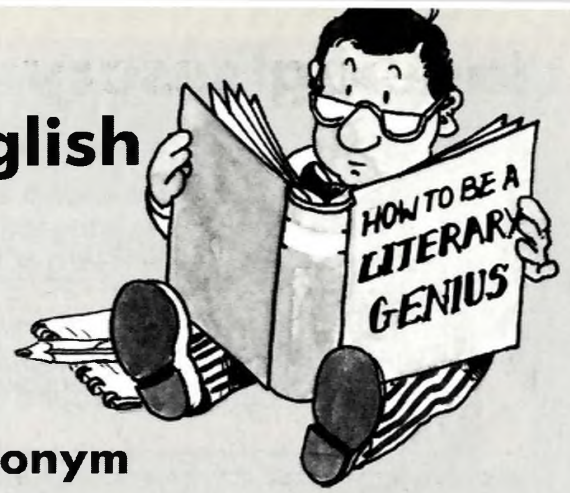
**The ducks quacked and splashed in the water.**



If you say these words aloud you can *hear* how similar they are to the noise they describe.



This use of words can intensify the meaning of what you write. It is often used in poetry.



## Synonym

This is a word that has almost the same meaning as another word. Here are some

small – tiny, little, minute

If you need to describe the same thing twice but want to avoid repetition you should use a synonym. It is a "stand-in" for the word it replaces.

**Cynthia had large feet. In fact her feet were so immense she had to have huge shoes especially made for her.**



If you use a synonym or an antonym it must be the same part of speech as the word it replaces.

## Antonym

This is a word which has a meaning opposite to another word.

slow – fast work – relax

You may want to use an antonym to add a contrast in feeling or description.

**All day Jane behaved like an angel, but her brother Sam was more like a devil.**



# Index/glossary

- abbreviation, 36 The shortened form of a word using some of the letters or just the initials: e.g. Feb.—February.
- abstract noun, 69 Noun which describes things that cannot actually be seen, heard, smelt or tasted: e.g. love, hate.
- active voice, 77 The “voice” of the verb which shows that the subject of the sentence is performing the action.
- adjectival clause, 89 Clause which acts as an adjective and therefore describes a noun or pronoun.
- adjectival phrase, 88 Phrase which acts as an adjective and therefore describes a noun or pronoun.
- adjective, 9, 20, 36, 52, 58, 67, 72, 73, 78, 79, 80, 81, 96, 101 Describing word which gives a fuller meaning to a noun: e.g. *pretty* girl.
- adverb, 36, 67, 80, 81, 82, 96 Word which “modifies” or tells you more information about a verb, adjective or other adverb. Usually answers the questions How? When? Where? or Why? in connection with the verb.
- adverbial clause, 89 Clause which does the work of an adverb.
- adverbial phrase, 80, 88 Phrase which does the work of an adverb.
- adverb of degree, 80 Adverb which can also modify adjectives and other adverbs. Always answers the question How much? e.g. She worked *very* hard.
- alliteration, 110 The repeating of a particular letter or sound at the beginning of words to produce an interesting effect.
- ambiguity, 103 When a sentence or passage has more than one meaning and the reader has no way of telling which one the writer intended.
- antonym, 110 Word which has the opposite meaning to another word: e.g. hot-cold.
- apostrophe, 15, 22, 44 Punctuation mark which shows: (1) that one or more letters have been missed out: e.g. didn’t; (2) possession.
- auxiliary verb, 76, 95, 99 A “helping” verb. Some verbs are made up of more than one word: e.g. he *is* *whistling*, they *are* *eating*. The verbs “to be” and “to have” are auxiliary verbs.
- brackets, 18 Two punctuation marks used to enclose words or figures to separate them from the main part of the text.
- capital letters, 4, 12, 23 Upper case letters used: (1) to start a sentence; (2) for proper nouns: e.g. people’s names.
- clause, 9, 80, 85, 89, 90, 93 Group of words containing a subject and a verb. There are two kinds: (1) main clause; (2) subordinate clause. The main clause makes complete sense on its own, but a subordinate clause is dependent on the main clause for its sense: e.g. He ate a loaf of bread (main clause) because he was hungry (subordinate clause).
- cliché, 103 Phrase which has been used over and over again until all its freshness and originality have disappeared.
- collective noun, 69, 95 Noun which describes a group or collection of people or things: e.g. team, pack, swarm.
- colon, 17 Mark of punctuation usually used before a quotation or contrast of ideas.
- comma, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 16, 18 Punctuation mark representing shortest pause in a sentence.
- command, 86 A sentence which gives an order or request. (The subject is usually understood and not mentioned.)
- common adverb, 81, 92 Adverb used for emphasis. Must be placed near the word it modifies to avoid confusion.
- common noun, 69 Word used as the name of a person, thing or place: e.g. dog, man.
- comparative adjective, 73 Adjective used to *compare* two people or things. Usually ends in -er.
- complex sentence, 90 A sentence which is made up of a main clause with one or more subordinate clauses. Each clause always contains a subject and a verb: e.g. The teacher *helped* the child (main clause) who *did not understand* (subordinate clause).
- compound sentence, 87 A sentence made up of two or more simple sentences joined by a conjunction or separated by a comma, semi-colon or colon.
- compound word, 20 Word made up from two or more other words.
- conjunction, 9, 17, 36, 84, 85 Word used to connect clauses or sentences; or to connect words within a clause: e.g. and.
- consonant, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 42, 47, 52, 53, 55, 58, 61 Any letter of the alphabet that is not a vowel (a e i o u). (When combined with a vowel it forms a syllable.)
- continuous tense, 75, 78 The tense of the verb which shows that the action is going on for some time.
- contraction, 22, 97 Shortened form of two words, using an apostrophe: e.g. we are — we’re.
- co-ordinating conjunction, 85 Conjunction used to join two sentences of equal importance: e.g. and, but, or, yet.
- dash, 19 Punctuation mark which marks a pause or break in the sense of the text.
- demonstrative adjective, 72 Adjective which “points out” something: e.g. *this* child.
- demonstrative pronoun, 71 Type of pronoun which points out a person or thing specifically: e.g. *this*, *that*, *these*, *those*.
- direct question, 6 The kind of question which expects an answer in return.
- direct speech, 12, 91 The exact words that someone speaks: e.g. “How are you?”
- double negative, 100 This is when two negatives are used together, with the effect of cancelling each other out. The negative meaning is then lost.

- etymology, 34 Study of how words are formed and where they come from.
- exclamation, 67, 86 Word or sentence used to express strong feeling or emotion.
- exclamation mark, 4, 7 Punctuation mark used at the end of a sentence or phrase, when the content conveys a strong feeling or emotion.
- full stop, 4, 5, 16, 18 Strongest punctuation mark making the most definite pause. Used at the end of all sentences which are not questions or exclamations.
- gender, 69 The classification of words according to whether they are masculine, feminine or neuter.
- gerund, 79 A participle used as a noun. It acts like any other noun, therefore it can be described by an adjective. It can be the subject or object of the sentence.
- homophone, 44, 45 A word which sounds the same as another word but is spelt differently.
- hyphen, 20, 21, 37, 48 Punctuation mark used to link two or more words together to make one word or expression.
- indefinite pronoun, 71 Pronoun which refers to people or things generally, rather than specifically: e.g. any, each, several.
- indirect question, 6 This kind of sentence does not ask a question but tells you what question was asked.
- indirect speech, 91 See "reported speech".
- infinitive, 75, 93 The *name* of the verb. It usually has "to" in front of it, but you can use it without.
- interjection, 67 Word used to express exclamation: e.g. Oh!
- interrogative adjective, 72 Adjective which "asks" something about the noun: e.g. *Which* book are you reading?
- interrogative pronoun, 71 A pronoun which helps to ask a question or "interrogate": e.g. who? whose? which?
- intransitive verb, 74 Verb which does not carry the action on to an object.
- inverted commas, 12, 13, 14, 15, 91 Punctuation marks used to show the exact words that someone has spoken.
- main clause, 89, 90 See "clause".
- metaphor, 110 A phrase or sentence which compares two things by saying that something *is* something else: e.g. Her face was a picture.
- negative, 100 A word which gives the meaning of "no" or "not".
- negative prefix, 50 A prefix which, when added to the front of a word, gives it the opposite meaning: e.g. possible – *impossible* (see prefix).
- noun, 4, 20, 36, 45, 58, 68, 69, 70, 79, 88, 89, 96, 99 See "common noun".
- noun clause, 89 Clause which can take the place of a noun. It can be the subject or object of the verb.
- noun phrase, 88 Phrase which acts as a noun.
- object, 74, 83 This tells you "what" or "whom" the verb in a sentence affects.
- onomatopoeia, 110 Use of words which imitate or suggest the sound of what they describe.
- palindrome, 61 Word, phrase or sentence which reads the same backwards as it does forwards: e.g. level.
- paragraph, 23, 24, 102 Passage or section of writing marked off by indenting the first line.
- parenthesis, 18 Another word for brackets. Words inside brackets are also called parenthesis.
- participle, 20, 78, 79 Part of a verb. Can be past or present. (1) Present participle is a part of the verb that usually ends in -ing: e.g. making, laughing, working; (2) Past participle is the part of the verb which follows "has" or "have" in the past tense.
- passive voice, 77 This is the "voice" of the verb which shows that the subject is having the action done to it.
- personal pronoun, 71 The kind of pronoun used most often. Usually stands instead of someone speaking, being spoken to, or spoken of: e.g. "I was waiting for *you* with *him*."
- phonetics, 39 System of spelling words by representing sounds by symbols.
- phrase, 10, 88, 92, 94 Small group of words without a verb which is not a complete sentence.
- plural, 46, 47, 48, 49, 68, 94, 95 This means more than one person or thing: e.g. books.
- possessive adjective, 72, 79, 97 Adjective which shows ownership: e.g. *my* pen.
- predicate, 86, 87 A sentence can be divided into subject and predicate. The *predicate* is what is written or said about the subject. It always contains a verb: e.g. Flossie (subject) *baked a cake* (predicate).
- prefix, 21, 36, 50 Small addition to a word made by joining on one or more letters at the beginning: e.g. ex, pre, anti.
- preposition, 82, 83, 96 Word used for showing what one person or thing has to do with another person or thing – usually where they are in relation to one another.
- pronoun, 22, 70, 71, 83, 99, 101 Word which stands instead of a noun. There are many kinds of pronoun including *possessive*, *reflexive* and *personal* pronouns.
- pronunciation, 38, 39 The way you say words.
- proper noun, 69 Noun which refers to a particular person or thing, rather than a general class of things: e.g. Paris, David.
- question, 86 A sentence which asks for an answer: e.g. Is it raining?
- question mark, 4, 6 Punctuation mark used at the end of a sentence which asks a question.
- quotation, 4, 14, 16 One or more words or sentences borrowed from another piece of text.
- quotation marks, 91 See "inverted commas".
- "received pronunciation", 39 Standard pronunciation, i.e. without any accent.



- reflexive pronoun, 71 Pronoun which *reflects* back to an earlier noun or pronoun: e.g. myself, yourself, himself.
- relative pronoun, 71 Pronoun which helps to connect or relate one part of the sentence to another: e.g. who, that.
- reported speech, 12, 91 Speech which is "reported" back in your own words (indirect speech). It is not accompanied by inverted commas: e.g. She said that she was late.
- semi-colon, 16 Punctuation mark indicating a longer pause than a comma, but less than a colon or a full stop.
- sentence, 4, 9, 74, 84, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 92 A word or group of words which makes complete sense on its own.
- sentence adverb, 81 Adverb which is inserted into a sentence to alter the meaning in some way: e.g. moreover, nevertheless, however.
- silent letters, 37, 38, 41 Letters which are present in a word, but are not sounded when the word is pronounced: e.g. knife.
- simile, 110 A phrase which compares two things, bringing out a "point of likeness" between them: e.g. as white as snow.
- simple sentence, 87 A sentence with only *one* subject and *one* predicate.
- singular, 46, 68, 94, 95 This means one single person or thing: e.g. man, book.
- slang, 100 General words and phrases that are in common use, but are not considered to be part of standard English.
- split infinitives, 93 This is when an adverb or phrase comes between "to" and the rest of the verb: e.g. *to* completely *deny*, *to* badly *need*. They should be avoided.
- statement, 86 A sentence which states a fact.
- subject, 74, 86, 87, 88, 94, 95 The person or thing doing the action in a sentence.
- subordinate clause, 85, 89, 90 See "clause".
- subordinating conjunction, 85 A conjunction which introduces a subordinate clause and links it to the main clause: e.g. because, if, while.
- suffix, 36, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56 A letter or group of letters added to the end of a word to change the way you use it: e.g. cowardly.
- superlative adjective, 73 Adjective used to indicate the highest degree of comparison. Refers to at least three people or things.
- syllable, 35, 38, 39, 53, 55, 58 A combination of one or more vowels and consonants which can make one short word, or part of a longer word: e.g. cat, won-der-ful.
- synonym, 110 A word which has almost the same meaning as another word.
- tense, 75, 76, 78, 91, 100 The tense of a verb tells you the time at which the action takes place. There are three main tenses: past, present and future.
- tautology, 103 This is the use of an extra word or phrase which pointlessly repeats an idea in the sentence.
- transitive verb, 74 Verb which takes the action of the sentence from the subject to the object.
- verb, 4, 36, 45, 58, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 94, 95, 98 Word which shows some kind of action or being: e.g. run, jump, think, is.
- verb of saying, 13 Verb which is another way of expressing "says" or "said" depending on the context: e.g. whisper, mutter, etc. Usually comes before or after speech in inverted commas: e.g. "Who are you?" she *asked*.
- vowel, 35, 37, 38, 39, 42, 47, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 58, 61 There are five vowels in the alphabet – a e i o u. All the rest are consonants.

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