

What is a Sentence?

In simple terms, a **sentence** is a set of words that contain:

1. a **subject** (what the sentence is about, the topic of the sentence), and
2. a **predicate** (what is said about the subject)

Sentence		
Subject	predicate	
	Verb	
1. you	Speak	English
2. amina	Speaks	English when she's working

The above example (sentence1) is very short. Of course, a sentence can be longer (sentence2) and more complicated, but basically there is always a subject and a predicate.

Note that the predicate always contains a verb. Sometimes, in fact, the predicate is only a verb.

So we can say that a sentence must contain *at least* a **subject** and **verb**.

There is one apparent exception to this – the imperative. When someone gives a command (the imperative), they usually do not use a subject. They don't say the subject because it is obvious - the subject is YOU!

Clauses and Phrases

- A **clause** is a group of words containing a subject and verb. An **independent clause** is a simple sentence. It can stand on its own.

Examples:

She is hungry.

I am feeling well today.

- A **dependent clause** cannot stand on its own. It needs an independent clause to complete a sentence. Dependent clauses often begin with such words as although, since, if, when, and because.

Examples:

Although she is hungry ...

Whoever is hungry ...
Because I am feeling well ...

Dependent

Although she is hungry,
Whatever they decide,

Independent

she will give him some of her food.
I will agree to.

- A **phrase** is a group of words without a subject-verb component, used as a single part of speech.

Examples:

Best friend (this phrase acts as a noun)

Needing help (this phrase acts as an adjective)

With the blue shirt (this **prepositional phrase** acts as an adjective; see Prepositions)

For twenty days (this prepositional phrase acts as an adverb)

THE BASIC STRUCTURE OF A PHRASE

Phrases consist of minimally of a **head**. This means that in a one-word phrase like (children), the head is children. In longer phrases, a string of elements may appear before the head. This string is called the pre-head string.

(The small **children** in class) should watch less television

(The small **children**)

A string of elements may also appear after the head, and we will call this the post-head string:

(The small **children** in class)

So we have a basic three-part structure:

Pre-head string **head** post-head

(The small **children** in class)

Of these three parts, only the head is obligatory. It is the only part which cannot be omitted from the phrase.

Types of phrases:

1. Noun phrase: she bought (NP **a glass full of water**).
2. Verb phrase: he (VP **is eating**) an apple.
3. Adjective phrase: Susan is (AP **clever**)
4. Adverb phrase: he graduated (AdvP **very recently**)
5. Prepositional phrase: I met John when I was (PP **at the bank**)

1- Noun phrases:

A noun phrase includes a noun –a person, place, or thing- and the modifiers either before or after which distinguish it. The main word in a noun phrase is a noun or a pronoun. The structure of the typical noun phrase may be represented schematically in the following way:

determiners	Pre-modifiers	Noun	Post-modifier
A Some the	New Large old	Edition Sheets Man	Of the book Of paper Who lives near us

The structure of noun phrases :

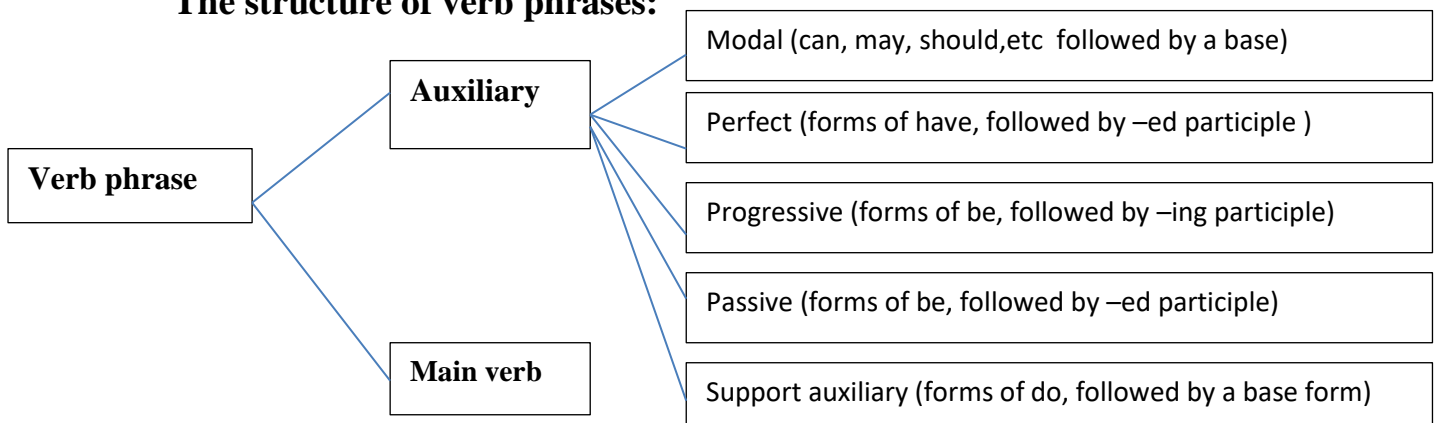
NOUN PHRASES			
A Noun Phrase is a phrase which includes a Noun and optional Modifiers.			
MODIFIERS	NOUN PHRASE IS...	STRUCTURE	EXAMPLES
PRE MODIFIER	A noun or a pronoun	Noun + Pronoun +	Noun: People like to have money. Pronoun: It is getting late.
	A determiner and a noun	Determiner + noun	Our friends have bought a house in the village.
	A quantifier and a noun	Quantifier + noun	Some people like to have a lot of money.
	A determiner, an adjective and a noun	Determiner + adjective + noun	Our closest friends have just bought a new house in the village.
	A quantifier, a determiner and a noun	Quantifier + determiner + noun	All those children go to school here. Some people spend a lot of money.
	A quantifier, a determiner, an adjective and a noun	Quantifier + determiner + adjective + noun	Both of my younger brothers are married. Two of his brilliant students fared well.
POST MODIFIER	A prepositional phrase	Noun + prepositional phrase	The boy in the blue shirt is my student. The house on the corner belongs to me.
	An -ing phrase	Noun + -ing phrase	The man standing over there is my friend.
	A relative clause	Noun + relative clause	The house that Jack built costed him a lot.
	A 'that' clause	Noun + 'that' clause	She got the idea that people didn't like her.
	A to-infinitive	Noun + to-infinitive	You should take something to read when...

2- Verb phrases:

Verb phrases function as predicators within the clause. The verb phrase may be just one verb, or may be made up of several verbs. The VP has two constituents: the auxiliary (aux) and the main verb (MV)

VP → Aux+ MV

The structure of verb phrases:



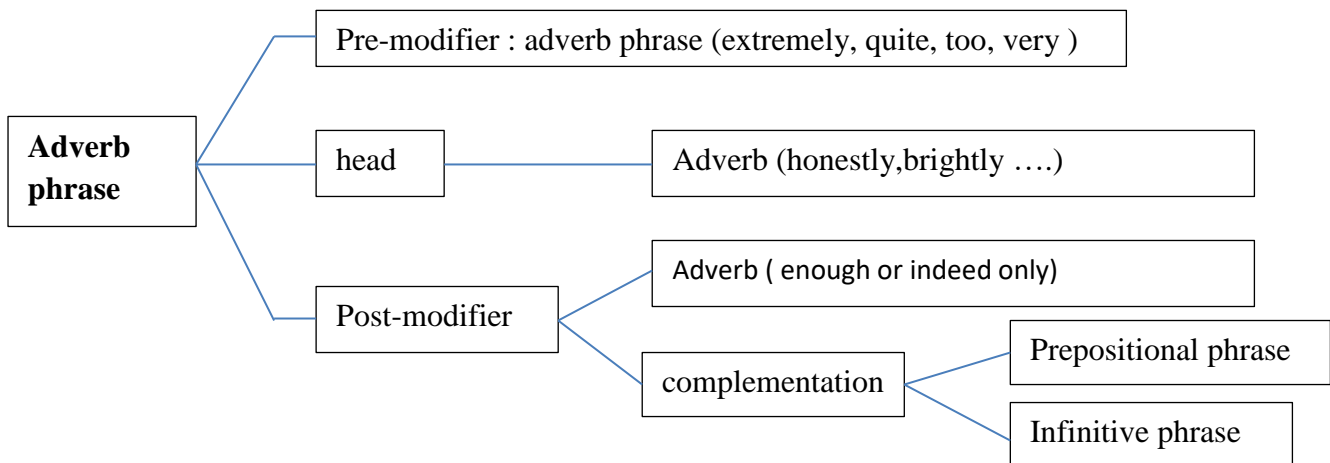
3- Adjective phrases:

The main word in an adjective phrase is an adjective. The adjective phrase in English has four functional constituents:

- Pre-modification, those modifying, describing, or qualifying constituents which precede the head. Eg: yesterday was a **very usually hot** day (**Adv**)
- The head, which is an adjective or participle serving as the focus of the phrase. The head can be an adjective (she is a nice cat), past participle (it was very excited) or present participle (it was surprising)
- Post-modification, that modify constituent which follows the head. Eg: this fruit isn't **ripe enough** to eat (**Adv**)
- Complementation (the major subcategory of post modification here) that constituent which follows any post modification and completes the specification of a meaning implied by the head. (it can be a prepositional phrase –for me- or infinitive clause –to see-

4- Adverb phrases:

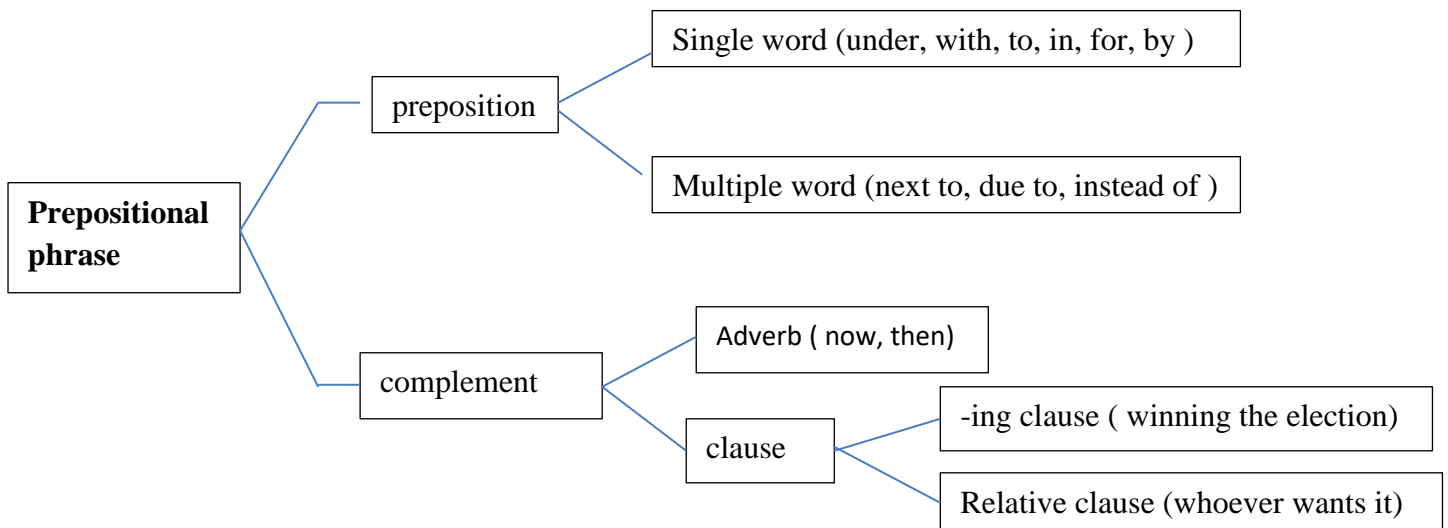
The adverb phrase in English is nearly identical to the adjective phrase, with only the expected changes in form. In the adverb phrase, an adverb functions as head.



5- Prepositional phrase:

A group of words that begins with a preposition and usually ends with a noun or pronoun called the object of preposition.

The prepositional phrase is a non-head construction in English since no one constituent functions as the center of the phrase, the center on which the other elements depend.



Types of sentences

Simple Sentences:

A simple sentence contains a subject and a verb, and it may also have an object and modifiers. However, it contains only one independent clause.

Key: **bold** = subject; underlined = verb, *italics* = object, regular font = prepositional phrase

Here are a few examples:

- **She** wrote.
- **She** completed *her literature review*.
- **He** organized *his sources* by theme.

They studied *APA rules* for many hours.

Compound Sentences:

A compound sentence contains at least two independent clauses. These two independent clauses can be combined with a comma and a coordinating conjunction or with a semicolon.

Key: independent clause = **bold**; coordinating conjunction = underlined

Here are a few examples:

She completed her literature review, and **she created her reference list**.

He organized his sources by theme; then, **he updated his reference list**.

They studied APA rules for many hours, but **they realized there was still much to learn**.

Complex Sentences:

A complex sentence contains at least one independent clause and at least one dependent clause. Dependent clauses can refer to the subject (who, which) the sequence/time (since, while), or the causal elements (because, if) of the independent clause.

If a sentence begins with a dependent clause, note the comma after this clause. If, on the other hand, the sentence begins with an independent clause, there is not a comma separating the two clauses.

Key: independent clause = **bold**; dependent clause = *italics*

Here are a few examples:

Although she completed her literature review, **she still needed to work on her methods section**.

- Note the comma in this sentence because it begins with a dependent clause.

*Because he organized his sources by theme, **it was easier for his readers to follow.***

- Note the comma in this sentence because it begins with a dependent clause.

They studied APA rules for many hours *as they were so interesting.*

- Note that there is no comma in this sentence because it begins with an independent clause.

Compound-Complex Sentences:

Sentence types can also be combined. A compound-complex sentence contains at least two independent clauses and at least one dependent clause.

Key: independent clause = **bold**; coordinating conjunction = underlined; dependent clause = *italics*

- **She completed her literature review, but she still needs to work on her methods section** *even though she finished her methods course last semester.*
- *Although he organized his sources by theme,* **he decided to arrange them chronologically, and he carefully followed the MEAL plan for organization.**
- *With pizza and soda at hand,* **they studied APA rules for many hours, and they decided that writing in APA made sense** *because it was clear, concise, and objective.*
- Pay close attention to comma usage in complex-compound sentences so that the reader is easily able to follow the intended meaning.