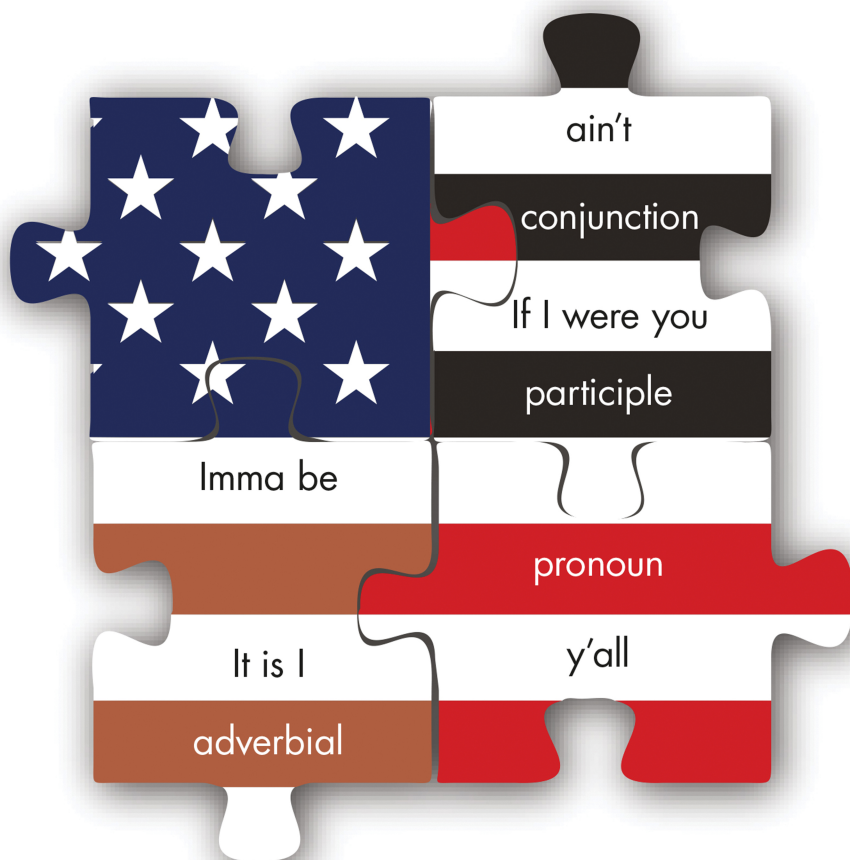


AMERICAN ENGLISH GRAMMAR

An Introduction

SETH R. KATZ

Second Edition



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Seth R. Katz is Professor Emeritus in the Department of English at Bradley University, USA



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American English Grammar

An Introduction

Second Edition

Seth R. Katz

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To my family and my students.



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Preface to the Second Edition

This book and the course we teach with it are challenging. After five more years of teaching with the material in this book, I remain convinced that what I have always believed is true: any third- or fourth-year undergraduate or beginning graduate student who aspires to be a teacher of language arts, or to have a career in a profession that involves reading, writing, and the oral presentation and reception of ideas and information (that is, speaking and listening) should have a good deal of curiosity about and interest in learning how to analyze and think about the guts and mechanics of language—and should be capable of engaging with those guts and mechanics—their complexities, ambiguities, contradictions, as well as their communicative and social effects and implications—at a more detailed and sophisticated level than they did in high school or their general education college courses.

In this new edition, in response to generous reviews of the first edition by faculty and students who have used the book in class, I have added some new features, including

- Many more discussions of the distinctive features of sentences produced by speakers and writers whose first language (L1) is not English. The sentence-level oddities of those who use English as a Foreign Language (EFL) commonly result from L1 interference. For these discussions, I am particularly indebted to Ron Cowan's excellent book, *The Teacher's Grammar of English: A Course Book and Reference Guide* (Cambridge UP, 2008).
- Frequent inclusion of explanations labeled, "So What?" These brief summaries are intended to help students see the point, especially in the denser sections of the book.
- Hundreds of new real-world examples, even more than in the first edition, drawn from the same enormous range of formal and informal genres and contexts. I have been fascinated and pleased to find that many language structures that I struggled to find examples of for the first edition—particularly those used in non-White-Mainstream-English (WME) varieties—are now quite common and easily found, for example the Black Language usage *imma*.

I take this to result from two changes: first, **many** more people are putting their writing up on the web in blogs and social media posts. More writing means more examples. Second, I take this as a sign that the written language is changing rapidly. We knew it was changing: it's always changing. But more people feel more comfortable writing in these new media, and writing in their home varieties, their everyday vernacular language, rather than feeling constrained to use the formal WME they learned to write in school. And the more instances we see of people writing this way, the greater the number of people who feel secure in doing so, and their online, personal, informal writing practice will inevitably be reflected back into more formal contexts.

- Many new exercises based on real-world published texts.
- At the end of Chapter 10: Clauses, discussion of sentence fragments, the most maligned and overlooked of the stylistic devices commonly used by the “best writers.”
- And a general cleaning up of various errors, thanks to my students who get to discover that they actually are keen editors of other people's texts, and that even the professor can't catch 'em all.

Seth R. Katz

Introduction

Language Variety and Grammar

A book like this one—a “grammar book”—is typically expected to deal with one variety of English, often called “Standard English” (SE). People tend to think of the Standard variety as “proper” or “grammatically correct” or “the best English.” But SE is just one variety of English: a variety commonly associated with school and professional life, with very formal contexts of speaking and writing, and with the speech of formally educated middle- and upper-class people. But it is certainly not, in every situation, “the best English.” If I were to speak my best professor-in-the-classroom SE—or write it in a text message—to my family or friends, they would wonder what’s wrong and if I am angry at them. Similarly, African Americans from predominantly Black working-class communities who speak SE among their friends and family risk being accused of “talking White” and acting “uppity,” so much so that a growing number of scholars are referring to “Standard English” as “White Mainstream English” (WME)—as I will do in this book. Think how odd it would be if the old folk song,

*It ain't gonna rain no more, no more,
It ain't gonna rain no more,
How in the heck can I wash my neck
If it ain't gonna rain no more?*

were instead sung,

*It is not going to rain anymore, anymore,
It is not going to rain anymore,
How do you suppose that I will be able to wash my neck
If it is not going to rain anymore?*

Clearly, different varieties of English are appropriate for different rhetorical situations: we speak and write different versions of English depending on who our

audience is, the message we are delivering, and our purpose in delivering it. English has many varieties, all of which are a significant part of how we perform in, and thereby prove our membership in, different groups, including our families, friend groups, ethnic groups, faith communities, professional colleagues, and teammates. We also vary our language to perform other individual roles and relationships, whether with the boss, the people who work under us, the checker at the grocery store we see weekly, the checker we have never met before, the friend we are happy to run into, the stranger we bump into accidentally—the list goes on and on. Think about it: you don’t tell the same story the same way to your best friend and to your parents. You will change pronunciation, articulation, word choice, and even grammar.

Non-WME varieties of English have often been denigrated as “broken,” and people who speak non-WME varieties are often regarded—even by members of their own speech communities!—as sounding “uneducated.” Just start using the word “ain’t” routinely in class, or among formally educated middle-class people, and see what happens. The reality, however, is that people who speak non-WME varieties can communicate their interests and needs to those who speak WME varieties, and they certainly have no trouble making themselves understood in their own speech communities. Indeed, members of those speech communities are expected to use the non-WME variety within the group; if they don’t, they mark themselves as different from the group, outside of its norms, or even rebellious against the group. Just think of the teen who drops an f-bomb at the family dinner table or a teen who will not use the f-word with a group of friends who routinely do so.

Far from being “broken,” all varieties of English are equally rule governed and orderly—that is, equally grammatical—and each variety partakes of exactly the same blueprint; indeed, that grammatical blueprint, and the resulting mutual intelligibility despite variation, is the very definition of a “language.” No native speaker of any variety of English would find the following acceptable as an intelligible sentence: *bought bicycle a red girl the*. There are languages in which this sentence order is accommodated by the blueprint, putting the verb first, followed by the direct object and ending with the subject, and placing adjectives and articles after the noun they are connected to. But not English. Likewise, any native speaker of any variety of English will answer the following question in the same way: given the following words, how would you assemble them into a single noun phrase?

girls, young, the, French, three

Native speakers will, with little hesitation, respond that *the three young French girls* is “the correct” phrase. This is evidence of just one of the many “rules of English”—lines marking firm walls on the blueprint of the language—that all native speakers internalize. As we shall see, people learning English as a foreign

language (EFL) routinely produce non-WME errors in English according to consistent patterns, patterns that are directly related to their applying the blueprint of their first language (L1) to how they construct English sentences.

Varieties of the language are possible because, although the walls of the blueprint can't be changed, some features of the interior are not fixed in place. While many people may "know" that *Him and me went to the store* is not "Standard," it remains perfectly intelligible even to people who would never say it. Likewise, with *I ain't got no money*, no native speaker of English takes the "double negative" as implying the positive meaning *I have money*. But rules on when to use subject (*he; I*) versus object (*him; me*) pronouns, and whether or not multiple negation is acceptable, are flexible among varieties of English (in fact, these two sentences are acceptable in more varieties of English than not). Unlike hard rules, as in the examples of the *bicycle* and the *girls* above, these walls are not yet established within the English blueprint—as much as some language authorities would like them to be.

People who speak non-WME varieties also have no trouble communicating their interests and needs to those who speak WME varieties because the number of ways in which non-WME varieties differ from WME varieties is very small. For example, out of thousands upon thousands of grammatical rules in English, there are only about forty ways in which the grammar of Black Language (BL)¹ varieties may differ from WME. The fact that some of these forty differences are so distinctive to speakers of other varieties of English is a mark of both how discerning our ear for language is, and of how quick we are to judge people we regard as different from us, as not part of "our group." As many have noted, the judgments we make about other people's language are not primarily about the language at all, but about the people speaking. Such negative judgments stem from a type of implicit bias, and often from outright social prejudice or bigotry.

It is useful to learn to use the variety of English that is correct or most appropriate for any situation and audience. Students who write, *I ain't got no money*, in a formal classroom paper may well not be awarded a good grade, no matter how brilliant their ideas. Likewise, the employee in an office job who uses *ain't* in a spoken or written report to a client is unlikely to receive a positive performance review. There is nothing wrong with the varieties of English we use at home and in all of the day-to-day, comfortable, familiar contexts we encounter. But to succeed, to "get ahead" in the world, the more varieties of English we can self-consciously understand—and even use—the better off we will be. Are such demands for using "formal" WME or any variety of WME fair or rational? No. But they exist nonetheless. And if we choose to resist those demands, there will often be social costs.

Unlike most "grammar books," this one—*American English Grammar (AEG)*—will address not only the "rules" of written and spoken WME, and provide you with concepts and terminology to analyze, discuss, and argue the merits of sentences in WME, but it will also apply those concepts and terminology

to the most notable non-WME features of other varieties of English, including regional American Englishes, Black Language varieties, Chicano English, Native-American Englishes, the English varieties spoken by native speakers of other languages, advertising language, poetry, social media posts, informal varieties, and others so that you will understand the rules that underlie those distinctly non-WME features and be ready to analyze and discuss the grammatical structures of a much greater range of English sentences.

The Point of the Book

As far as I'm concerned, the object of studying grammar is to help you develop a command of grammatical concepts and terminology and their application. We apply that terminology in "parsing" sentences: taking sentences into their "constituent parts." Once you know how to identify and name the constituents of a sentence, you then have the ability to do a couple of things. First, you will be able to talk very precisely about what makes different varieties of English different and how the rules of different varieties work. And second, you will be able to talk about what makes a good or well-formed and rhetorically effective sentence versus a bad, poorly formed, or ineffective sentence. Learning how to talk about the details of sentence structure leads you to understand the conventions of speaking and writing that govern people's judgments of whether a sentence is good or bad. That ability to articulate why we judge sentences as good or bad leads you to be more conscious of your own speaking and writing: it leads you to see how to make your own sentences and paragraphs, both spoken and written, more effective for a particular communicative context.

While some of you may just enjoy the puzzle of parsing sentences, parsing is, in itself, about as useful as last Sunday's *New York Times* crossword: once you finish it, you throw it away. But as with learning the techniques, relationships, jargon, and concepts of any complex activity, learning to parse sentences helps us naturalize an activity that is otherwise unnatural. Ordinarily, though we often critique the language that other people use, we do not analyze the language we ourselves use. If we tried to parse our sentences as we were speaking or writing them, we would be unable to communicate; it would be much the same as if, while walking down the street, we tried to analyze all of the muscle interactions in our bodies: by being highly self-conscious about a complex but otherwise automatic activity, we would soon stumble and fall down. We live in language in much the same way that we live in our bodies, in air, or under the influence of gravity: it is unnatural—and therefore difficult—to try to separate ourselves far enough from these essential features of life to analyze them. Studying grammar allows us to denature the apparently natural process of producing and decoding language, the better to understand how it works, and so to improve on our own nature.

Traditionally, the study of grammar is exclusively about single, isolated sentences, not about paragraphs. I see this approach as wrongheaded: as we shall see very quickly, the sentences in a paragraph work together to guide how we interpret their structure and the meanings of their words. Later in the book, we will also see that there are grammatical elements in sentences that serve to connect sentences to one another within, and even between, paragraphs. The focus of traditional classroom grammar on single sentences is inadequate because some elements in sentences are always structured as they are to connect them to each other. And, in the real language world (as opposed to the ideal language world of most grammar books), we *never* use single sentences alone without any other context. For the most part, this textbook will use single-sentence examples only to illustrate basic points about sentence structure and to help you in learning to identify and analyze those structures. Exercises will use both artificial single sentences (the shallow end of the pool) and real-world texts taken from various sources (the deep end, where we usually swim effortlessly).

Something else we need to get out of the way: you may have been brought up to expect that a grammar book is a kind of rule book that contains all of the correct guidelines to which writers and speakers must conform.

As should be evident by now, *AEG* is not that kind of “grammar book.”

In talking about sentences and grammar, there are two major schools of thought. One is *prescriptive*, largely comprising sets of arbitrary rules about what one should and should not do in writing. Rules such as “never start a sentence with *because*,” or “never end a sentence with a preposition,” or “never use multiple negation,” or “always use *fewer* with count nouns but *less* with mass nouns,” or “never split an infinitive” are prescriptive rules, best thought of as rules of language etiquette. People who know and care about them will notice if you don’t follow them; but if someone doesn’t know the rule, or if you are in a situation where the rule simply doesn’t matter, then no one will notice if you don’t follow it. When you cheer for your team, or when you write a text message to a friend, it would be strange for someone to criticize you for splitting an infinitive.

The other school of thought, and the one we will mostly work with, is *descriptive* grammar. We will look at what people actually do in writing and speaking as we develop a set of terms and concepts that is broad enough and powerful enough to describe the vast majority of sentences in English. We will frequently find that there is more than one way to describe or analyze a sentence or phrase. Each different interpretation or analysis will have strengths and weaknesses that I will try to elucidate. I will try to give you multiple avenues of interpretation by way of being true to the reality of language and by way of emphasizing that parsing sentences is, like other systems of human thought and analysis (e.g. science, law, military or sports strategy, or debating the meaning of poetry) a matter of interpretation: how we identify the form and function of particular words within a sentence may depend wholly on our understanding of the speaker or writer’s *intention*, rather than on a pre-assigned form or function label. However, from

years of teaching experience, I know that students are often anxious to be “correct” according to prescriptive rules. So, along the way, I will at times explain the reasoning behind the sorts of prescriptive rules listed above. Such rules are invariably rooted in English grammar, but rather than reflecting the actual lines on the blueprint, they express someone’s idiosyncratic notion of correctness that, having been uttered and repeated with enough authority, have risen to the status of Rules, even though, far from being actual walls, they may really be no more than some people’s idea of how best to arrange the furniture.

A Summary of the Book

Now, some details. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the major features of sentences: subjects, predicates, and sentence-modifying adverbials that fall outside the subject-predicate structure but provide context for it. Chapter 1 also introduces lexical classes (a.k.a. “parts of speech”) and the phrases that are associated with them, such as nouns and noun phrases. Chapters 2 through 9 then focus on the individual lexical classes and their phrases. I have chosen to examine these lexical classes and their phrases using three lenses:

- The forms they can take.
- The functions they can perform in sentences.
- The kinds of meanings that we use those phrases to express.

I understand that the last of those three lenses—meaning—will set off alarm bells for some instructors who are considering whether to use this text, but I incorporate considerations of meaning as a deliberate choice for several reasons. First, it is the approach to understanding lexical classes that will be most familiar and comfortable to most students because it is the approach still routinely taken in K-12 instruction, as well as by many college composition instructors. Second, although the linguists’ scholarly pendulum has swung about as far away as possible from explicitly including considerations of word meaning (semantics) in discussions of sentence structure (syntax), there is some evidence that the pendulum may be beginning its inevitable swing back because we really can’t ever generalize the analysis of syntax to the point where it takes no consideration of how people actually use words to convey meaning. Much of the work of recent linguistics has come to focus primarily on “bottom-up” approaches to language, approaches that attempt to isolate, abstract, and generalize cognitive processes related to the production and recognition of phonetic (sound), phonologic (sound and meaning), morphologic (word building), and syntactic (sentence building) processes. These efforts to figure out the cognitive algorithms of language have tried to separate those processes from the messier businesses of semantics (meaning) and pragmatics (actual social use of language). I simply disagree with this approach, especially in that the interest of scholars who are searching for

those invisible algorithms is often driven by those messy realities and oddities of ordinary language use. And, recent progress in generative “artificial intelligence” notwithstanding, it is also those messy parts that stand in the way of our developing machines that can chat with us in ways that sound genuinely human. So while I will be taking advantage of many of the rich insights provided by the past seventy years of work in syntactic theory, I will be blending those ideas with a variety of other approaches, including not only some traditional ideas and terminology but also work in corpus-based linguistics, historical linguistics, cognitive linguistics (especially prototype theory), linguistic structuralism, dialectology, ethnolinguistics, pragmatics (especially linguistic politeness theory), language education, and guides to style and usage. I believe that this eclectic approach, which I have developed over my thirty-eight years as a college instructor in courses not only in grammar and linguistics but in literature and writing, provides students with a broader understanding of the mundanities, rigidities, complexities, and rich flexibilities of English and its grammar.

In this book, we will deal with eight parts of speech: nouns (N), prepositions (P), adjectives (ADJ), determiners (D), pronouns (PRON), verbs (V), adverbs (ADV), and conjunctions (CONJ). Of these parts of speech, the category of “determiners” is likely new to you; this part of speech comprises a set of words that function only in noun phrases (NP), appearing at the front of the NP, ahead of the noun and a preceding adjective (e.g. *that green book*). The most common and familiar determiners are the articles (*a, an, the*); indeed, *the* is the most commonly used word in English. Also, the chapter on conjunctions includes a detailed discussion of the forms and functions of punctuation, which primarily works to conjoin phrases and clauses.

Chapter 10 examines independent clauses (a.k.a. sentences) and dependent clauses. All clauses have subjects and predicates, but as their name implies, dependent clauses cannot stand alone, occurring as dependent constituents within other phrases and clauses, functioning like noun phrases (nominally), adjective phrases (adjectivally), or adverb phrases (adverbially). The emphasis on those three categories of dependent clauses leads us into Chapter 11, in which we will focus on all of the kinds of phrases and clauses that can function as nominals, adjectivals, and adverbials, and take a new approach to categorizing adverbials by their scope of reference and where they can be placed in a phrase or clause.

Chapter 12 deals with the most complex part of English grammar: participle and infinitive phrases, known collectively as non-finite verb phrases. These phrases look like predicates in that they contain verbs along with the phrases that commonly complement—complete the meaning of—the verb, but they can function as nominals, adjectivals, and adverbials. Many grammar textbooks simply avoid dealing with them at all, which annoyed me enough over twenty years ago that it started me down the road of writing this book. Non-finite verb phrases are a significant feature of English style, providing us with interesting ways to vary

our sentence structures. My experience has shown that upper-division college students are ready to handle this part of English grammar.

The book concludes with Chapter 13, in which students perform a Grand Review Exercise. For the exercise, the students are given a 750-word essay from a popular magazine and asked to identify, in succession, all of the types of phrases and clauses they have studied in this book. Students identify each complete example of each type of constituent, its form, function, and interior constituent structure, as appropriate. Although this review exercise is time consuming (it typically takes up the last three weeks of a semester-long course), these final rounds of repetition serve not only to reinforce what the students have studied, but to show them how much they have learned. Students who have not previously been confident about their mastery of the course material are reassured both by the repetition of the more common constituents and structures and by their ability to articulate possible parsings of more difficult or unusual structures. Students also start to see patterns in the grammatical structures and how particular sorts of patterns and repetitions in the grammar create prosodic and rhetorical effects.

Each chapter is accompanied by exercises, about which I have two sets of recommendations, one for students and one for instructors:

Students: Please do not think of doing the exercises as being about “getting a good grade” (in fact, if you read the next note, directed at instructors, you will see that I urge them NOT to grade the exercises)! Rather, doing the exercises is about diving in and struggling with the concepts so that you then have questions that you can ask in class and from which you and your classmates can learn. Learning involves changing your brain and, as with physical exercise, cognitive change and improvement in your ability only come from effort beyond where you are comfortable. In the process of learning, that state of discomfort is feeling uncertain and confused: those are the feelings that accompany the changes to your brain that are, in fact, you learning something new, moving away from old assumptions and toward a new understanding. If you genuinely want to learn something new, do not shy away from your confusion, but rather embrace it, work at it with patient diligence, and ask questions!

Instructors: Students must do the exercises in order to internalize the alien concepts and terms—indeed, the whole alien way of thinking—that a course in grammar comprises. For most students, if they don’t do the exercises and keep up with them, they will quickly drown in the alien bog of concepts and terms. However, grading such exercises is a drag for the instructor, and attaching a grade to the exercises is, in my experience, counterproductive: students tend to fixate on their grade rather than focusing on whether they understand the terms and concepts.

Here’s what I do: I assign the exercises and immediately provide my students with the answers. Students do the exercises, check their work before the next class

session, then come to class with questions. I devote the first portion of the next class session (sometimes most of the next class session) to addressing students' questions—which invariably overlap and help me identify things I need to explain better. And the discussion helps students to (1) engage more with the material; (2) practice using the terms and concepts; and (3) realize that they are not alone in their questions. As I walk students through the process of parsing sentence constituents, I model the thinking processes involved in grammatical analysis; we discuss a few of the pedestrian examples, but mostly students zero in on the problematic examples; thus—best of all—the discussion shows the students that grammar and sentence parsing are, in fact, matters of discussion and interpretation, rather than being based on God-given rules about what is “correct.”

The coverage of grammar in *AEG* is deliberately designed to be more thorough than that of most college grammar texts. I have been classroom testing this material in evolving drafts of this book since 2002, and my experience has shown me that my students, the majority of whom have been college juniors and seniors heading for careers in teaching and professions that will require skill in writing and editing, need a language that will help them understand, explain, teach, and apply concepts of grammar and usage. *AEG*, and the course I teach with it, are constructed so that concepts and terms build on each other, and between traversing the book *and* doing the “Grand Review Exercise,” students work through the complete material of the book twice. The goal of the unusual thoroughness of the coverage is that students should become more alert to and aware of language—and so learn how to *think* like grammarians. After about week six of the course, when the students start coming into class complaining that they can't avoid spotting adverb phrases, phrasal verbs, and puzzling constructions that they aren't sure how to parse *in their reading for other classes*, or in their text messages, or in their friends' TikTok videos, then I know that the class is working, that grammatical analysis has gotten under their skin, and that they are more ready to teach grammar or become editors, writers, and communicators who have the conceptual and technical vocabulary to discuss how and why sentences work.

Key Points

- Like all languages, American English has many varieties.
- All these varieties of English are mutually intelligible because they share a common blueprint.
- The grammatical differences among varieties, while distinctive, are relatively few.
- Even in their distinctively different features, all varieties are governed by grammatical rules.
- We each use multiple varieties of English, and we choose the variety of English we use to suit the rhetorical context (our audience, message, and purpose).

- As distinct from the grammatical rules—the walls of the blueprint—of English, *prescriptive* grammar focuses on “rules” that govern “correct language etiquette”: how the furniture is arranged.
- *Descriptive* grammar focuses on how people actually use language, in terms of both the blueprint and the furniture.
- Grammatical structures (phrases and clauses) can be understood, discussed, and interpreted in terms of form, function, and meaning.

A Guide to Non-WME and EFL American Varieties

Unlike most grammar textbooks, *AEG* incorporates substantial treatment of features of the grammars of non-WME and EFL American English varieties. And unlike those few books that offer some limited treatment of a few features of non-WME varieties, rather than placing those odd bits in a separate chapter on “Non-Standard English” or “Black English” or “English as a Foreign Language Varieties,” *AEG* includes non-WME variants in its more general discussions of those portions of English grammar. Thus, for example, the discussion of BL “habitual *be*” is included with the discussion of other WME and non-WME aspectual verbs.

Here follows a complete guide to all of the features of non-WME American English varieties discussed in *AEG* and where they are included in the book:

- Nouns: pluralization:
 - Plural *-s* deletion.
 - In EFL speech and BL (p. 32).
 - With plural demonstrative determiner *dem* in the Gullah English variety of the coastal islands of South Carolina and Georgia, and in BL (p. 32).
 - With nouns of measurement in Southern-based rural vernaculars (p. 32).²
 - Regularization of irregular plurals in most vernacular varieties of American English (p. 32–33).
 - Double marking pluralization by adding *-s* to irregular plurals in some American English vernacular varieties (p. 33).
- Nouns: reduplicated subject or predicate marker in BL and other varieties (p. 42).
- Prepositions:
 - BL *up* (p. 42).
 - Northeastern *wait on line* (p. 51)
 - Spanish L1 interference with prepositional idioms and with P + participle phrase or infinitive phrase (p. 51).
 - Age- and class-graded use of *on accident* and *based off of* (pp. 51–52).

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- Adjectives: comparatives and superlatives:
 - Regularization of irregular comparatives and superlatives in most American English vernaculars (p. 66).
 - Use of *-er* and *-est* on adjectives of two or more syllables, where the WME variety uses *more* and *most* (pp. 66–67).
 - Double marking of comparatives and superlatives in some American English vernaculars (p. 67).
 - EFL-related comparative and superlative use (p. 68).
 - Determiners:
 - Absent possessive suffix *'s* in BL (p. 73).
 - Use of the third-person plural pronoun *them* as a demonstrative determiner in American English vernacular varieties (p. 32, 76).
 - EFL-related determiner use:
 - Articles (p. 76).
 - Demonstratives (pp. 76–77).
 - Quantifiers and partitives (p. 77).
 - Pronouns:
 - EFL-related pronoun use: *it* for *this* or *that* by Korean L1 speakers (p. 87).
 - Regularization of the possessive pronoun *mine* in BL (p. 90).
 - Use of possessive forms ending in *-n* in Appalachian English and other rural varieties (p. 90).
 - Regularization of reflexive *himself* and *themselves* in many American English vernaculars, including BL and Chicano English (pp. 91–92).
 - Reflexive pronoun *myself* as the last in a series of conjoined names in subject and object position in many spoken varieties of American English (p. 92).
 - EFL-related pronoun use of reflexive pronouns (p. 92).
 - Object pronoun forms in subject position in many spoken American varieties (p. 92).
 - Plural *you* in American vernaculars, including Northern *youse*, Pittsburgh *yinz*, and Southern *y'all* (p. 93).
 - Personal dative use of object pronoun forms in Southern and other American vernaculars (p. 93).
 - Associative plurals in BL and some Southern varieties (p. 93).
 - Appositive pronouns in BL (p. 93).
 - EFL-related pronoun use with case, number, and gender by Farsi and Chinese L1 speakers (p. 98).
 - Verbs: tense:
 - Deletion of *-s* in third-person singular in many vernacular varieties, including BL (p. 112).

- Leveling of all present-tense forms of *be* to *is* and all past-tense forms to *was* in vernacular varieties (p. 113).
- Regularization of irregular verb forms in Chicano English (p. 113).
- Deletion of the past-tense marker *-ed* by L1 speakers of Vietnamese and Native American Indian English in the Southwest (p. 113).
- Unmarking of the verb in habitual contexts in Native American Indian English in the Southwest (p. 114).
- Historical present in European American vernaculars and BL (p. 114).
- Narrative tense in BL (p. 114).
- EFL-related tense use by L1 speakers of Chinese and Arabic (pp. 114–115).
- Verbs: modal auxiliaries and semi-modal verbs:
 - Future *be* in BL (pp. 120–121).
 - *Be fixin' to/finna/fidna/fitna* in Southern and BL varieties (p. 121).
 - *Imma* in BL (p. 121).
 - *(Sup)poseta* in some American varieties (p. 121).
 - *Need* + Past Participle in some Midwest varieties (p. 121).
 - Double modals in Southern vernaculars and other varieties (pp. 121–122).
 - EFL-related modal use by L1 speakers of Spanish, German, and Chinese (pp. 122–123).
- Verbs: aspect auxiliaries and aspectual verbs:
 - EFL-related V + to + V use by L1 speakers of Spanish and Portuguese (p. 128).
 - Completive *done* in Southern varieties and BL (pp. 128–129).
 - Modal completive, and resultative, *be done* in Southern varieties and BL (p. 129).
 - Imperfect aspect with completive *done* in BL (p. 130).
 - Imperfect aspect with reinforcing *like* in the ordinary speech of younger Americans (p. 130).
 - Habitual *be* in BL and some Southern varieties (pp. 130–131).
 - Remote time stressed *been* and unstressed *been* in BL (pp. 131–132).³
 - Perfective *be* in some varieties of American English (p. 132).
 - Indignant *come*, *go*, and *start* in BL and informal varieties (p. 133).
 - EFL-related aspect use by L1 speakers of German and French (pp. 133–134).
- Verbs: voice:
 - Passive *get* and *go* in vernacular American English varieties (p. 136).
 - EFL-related use of passive voice and ergative verbs by Korean L1 speakers (p. 137).
- Verbs: absent *be* or “zero copula” in BL and Southern American English; *be*—deletion in questions (pp. 146–147).

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- Verbs: leveling of subjunctive *were* to *was* with first- and third-person singular subjects in all varieties (p. 144).
 - Verbs: complementation: indirect objects:
 - EFL-related indirect object use by L1 speakers of Spanish and Korean. (p. 176).
 - Verbs: complementation: quotatives:
 - *Be like, go, and be all* among Americans under age 40, and BL *say* (pp. 171–172).
 - Subject-auxiliary inversion with quotatives in BL (pp. 185–186; 263–264).
 - EFL-related quotative verb use by L1 German speakers (p. 186).
 - Verbs: complementation: phrasal verbs:
 - EFL-related phrasal verb use by L1 speakers of Hebrew, Spanish, and Korean (p. 191).
 - Adverbs:
 - Absent *-ly* in Southern mountain varieties such as Appalachian and Ozark English (p. 204).
 - *Liketa* in Appalachian English (p. 209).
 - Intensifying adverbs (*right, plumb, slam, clean*) in some Southern vernaculars (p. 209).
 - *Steady* in BL (p. 209).
 - *Ain't but* and *don't but for only* in BL (p. 209).
 - *Fucking* in American vernacular varieties (p. 209).
 - EFL-related adverb use by L1 speakers of Spanish and French (pp. 209–210).
 - Adverbs: negation:
 - *Ain't* in all American vernacular varieties (pp. 211–213).
 - *Don't* with habitual *be* in BL (p. 213).
 - Multiple negation or “negative concord” in all American vernacular varieties, including negative auxiliary inversion in Southern varieties and BL (pp. 213–215).
 - EFL-related use of double negatives by L1 speakers of Romance languages (p. 215).
 - Leveling to *were* with negative past tense *be* in some coastal dialect areas of the American Southeast (pp. 215–216).
 - Leveling of *doesn't* to *don't* in virtually all vernacular American varieties (p. 216).
 - Placement of *no* before verbs in Hispanic English (p. 216).
 - Tag-question *no?* in Hispanic English (p. 216).
 - EFL-related use of negative adverbs of frequency by L1 speakers of Romance languages (pp. 216–217).

- Independent Clauses: interrogative sentences:
 - Interrogatives without inversion of the subject and auxiliary verb in BL (p. 263).
 - Interrogatives with auxiliary deletion in American informal varieties (p. 263).
 - EFL-related interrogative use by L1 speakers of Arabic, Farsi, Turkish, and Romance languages (p. 264).
- Independent Clauses: existential-*it* and *there* sentences:
 - Existential-*there* constructions in which the form of *be* does not agree in number with the agent in vernacular varieties of American English (p. 266).
 - *It* or *they* instead of existential *there* in vernacular varieties of American English (p. 266).
 - EFL-related existential-*there* sentence use by L1 speakers of Chinese (pp. 266–267).
 - EFL-related *tough*-movement sentence use by L1 speakers of Chinese and Korean (p. 268).
 - EFL-related simple existential sentence use by L1 speakers of Chinese, Spanish, and Italian (p. 268).
- Independent Clauses: inversion:
 - EFL-related inversion use by L1 speakers of Portuguese (p. 271).
- Adjective Clauses: relative pronouns:
 - *What* in place of *that*, *who*, or *whom* in all vernacular American varieties (p. 280).
 - *Which* as a coordinating conjunction in general American English (p. 280).
 - Relative pronoun functioning as a subject deleted from the adjective clause in Southern vernaculars and in BL (pp. 280–281).
- Adjective Clauses:
 - EFL-related adjective clause use by L1 speakers of Farsi, Arabic, and Turkish (p. 281).
- Noun Clauses:
 - *That*-clause: BL non-WME *that*-clause with subject-auxiliary inversion instead of a complementizer (p. 283).
 - *Wh*-clause: *whosever* as a variant of *whoever*’s (both as a pro-determiner and a contraction of *whoever is* and *whoever has* in American spoken varieties (p. 286).

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Abbreviations and Conventions

ACT	Active Voice	Adj	Adjective
ADJCL	Adjective Clause	ADJP	Adjective Phrase
ADV	Adverb	AdvC	Adverbial Complement
AdvCL	Adverb Clause	AdvP	Adverb Phrase
BL	Black Language	CConj	Coordinating Conjunction
CONJ	Conjunction	CORRELCONJ	Correlative Conjunction
D	Determiner	DO	Direct Object
DP	Determiner Phrase	EFL	English as a Foreign Language
F	Feminine Gender	GN	Gender Neutral
IND	Indicative Mood	INFP	Infinitive Phrase
INTERJ	Interjection	IO	Indirect Object
L ₁	First Language	LC	Locative Complement
M	Masculine Gender	MC	Manner Complement
MOD	Modifier	MV	Main Verb
N	Noun	N'	N-bar
NCL	Noun Clause	Nom	Nominative Case
NEU	Neuter Gender	NP	Noun Phrase
OBJ	Objective Case	OC	Object Complement
P	Preposition	PARTP	Participle Phrase
PASS	Passive Voice	PAST	Past Tense
PCOMP	Complement of a Preposition	PERF	Perfect Aspect
PHATIC	Phatic Expression	PL	Plural Number
POSS	Possessive Case	PP	Prepositional Phrase
PRED	Predicate	PRES	Present Tense
PROADJ	Pro-adjective	PROADV	Pro-adverb
PROD	Pro-determiner	PROG	Progressive Aspect
PRON	Pronoun	PRONP	Pronoun Phrase
PV	Phrasal Verb	QUOT	Quotation
RELPROADV	Relative Pro-adverb	RELPROCL	Relative Pro-clause

RELPROD	Relative Pro-determiner	RELPRON	Relative Pronoun
SC	Subject Complement	SConj	Subordinating Conjunction
SE	Standard English	SENT	Sentence
SENTMOD	Sentence Modifier	SG	Singular Number
SPEC	Specifier	SUBJ	Subject
TC	Temporal Complement	V	Verb
VC	Verb Complement	VP	Verb Phrase
WME	White Mainstream English		

Notes

- 1 I have chosen to use “Black Language” (BL) as an overarching term to name one set of varieties of American English, the term used by April Baker-Bell in her excellent book, *Linguistic Justice: Black Language, Literacy, Identity, and Pedagogy* (NCTE-Routledge/Taylor and Francis. 2020). I understand well that there are a number of contending terms, with African American Language, African American English, African American Vernacular English, Black English Vernacular, Black English, Ebonics, and most recently, Black Language, being the chief terms of use during the past fifty-five years, and that each term carries with it particular associations, affiliations, and political implications. I apologize for any dissatisfaction resulting from my choice.
- 2 I use the word “vernacular” as a formal linguistic term. A “vernacular” variety of a language is simply the everyday variety spoken and written within a group of people, as distinct from the “formal” varieties that are commonly associated with academic and professional settings.
- 3 For a unified treatment of the BL system for expressing time and events, see Lisa J. Green & Walter Sistrunk. “Syntax and Semantics in African American English.” *The Oxford Handbook of African American Language*. Ed. Sonja Lanehart. New York: Oxford UP. 2015. 355–370. For a detailed account of the system of tense, mood, and aspect in BL, see Charles E. DeBose. “The Systematic Marking of Tense, Modality, and Aspect in African American Language.” *The Oxford Handbook of African American Language*. Ed. Sonja Lanehart. New York: Oxford UP. 2015. 371–386.

Sentences; Parts of Speech and Their Phrases

1.1 Sentences: Subjects, Verbs, Verb Complements, and Sentence Modifiers

Traditionally, the study of grammar focuses on sentences without context, not on paragraphs or other sets of connected sentences, such as conversations. In actual use, sentences always work together with each other and the context (interlocutors, physical surroundings, experience, knowledge) to guide how we interpret their structure and the meanings of their words and phrases. For the most part, this textbook will use single-sentence examples only to illustrate basic points about sentence structure and to help you learn to identify and analyze those structures. Exercises will use both artificial single sentences (the shallow end of the pool) and extended real-world texts taken from various sources (the deep end, where we usually swim). In our study of grammar, we will take several different approaches to the same material, each one further refining how we analyze sentences. Here is a first approach.

Sentences typically comprise four major constituents: the subject, the verb, the verb complement, and sentence modifiers. In general, sentences must have a subject and a verb: these constituents are obligatory. Typically, you can't have a well-formed sentence in English without a subject and a verb.¹ Most verbs take some kind of complement: a constituent that completes the meaning of the verb. So, for example, in the sentence *Nancy likes avocados*, *avocados* is the complement. Without it, the sentence sounds incomplete: **Nancy likes* (the asterisk is a conventional way to mark that an example is not grammatical—that it does not fit the blueprint of English). For a subset of verbs—e.g. *smiles*—a complement is not required: *Nancy smiles* needs no complement.

Sentence modifiers are optional: with or without them, a sentence can still be grammatically well formed. In the sentence *Yesterday, Ed carried the groceries*, the word *yesterday* is a sentence modifier. It is optional in that we can remove it, and we will still have a grammatically well-formed sentence: *Ed carried the groceries*.

Let's drill down a little further. The easiest way to parse a sentence—to identify its constituent parts so as to analyze how it works—is to start with the verb,

the word that names the action being performed by the subject. In the preceding example about *Ed*, the verb is *carried*, the only word in the sentence that names an action. The verb in a sentence may comprise more than one word: in a sentence like *The groceries were being carried by Ed*, the complete verb is *were being carried*. We will sometimes differentiate between the complete verb (e.g. *were being carried*) and its constituents, the main verb (e.g. *carried*) and auxiliary verbs (e.g. *were* and *being*; see Chapter 6).

Once you have found the verb, the next step in parsing a sentence is to ask *Who or what did the action?* In the case of the sentence *Yesterday, Ed carried the groceries*, the question is, *Who or what carried?* The answer to that question—*Ed*—names the subject of the verb. The subject of a verb is always some kind of nominal and most commonly a noun phrase (NP). A “nominal” is any constituent (a phrase or clause) that is performing a function commonly associated with nouns and NPs (e.g. subject; direct object). An NP is a word or group of words comprising a noun (obligatory) and its dependent modifiers (optional). We will abbreviate the phrase “noun phrase functioning as a subject” by the shorthand NP:SUBJ, where the colon means “functioning as” and SUBJ is an abbreviation for “Subject.” We will define NPs in more detail in Chapter 2. The complete NP:SUBJ—the noun and its modifiers—we call the “complete subject”; when we isolate the noun from the NP:SUBJ, we call the noun by itself the “simple subject.”

A good test for locating the subject of the sentence is

The subject question test: Once you have identified a verb, ask *Who or what*, followed by the appropriate form of the verb. The answer will be the subject of the verb.

Taken together, the simple subject and the complete verb constitute the kernel sentence (e.g. *Ed carried*).

So what? It is often useful to identify the kernel sentence when we are puzzled as to what a sentence is about or when we are trying to revise a sentence for clarity or organization.

We must also distinguish between the form and function of sentence constituents. “NP” is a form, as are the categories identified by part-of-speech names (e.g. adjective, adverb, preposition, etc.). “Subject” is a function: a role an NP may perform within a sentence. In the sample sentence, *Ed* has the form of NP, and it functions as the SUBJ. As we will learn, NPs can have a great variety of different constituent structures: along with a noun, an NP can include a variety of modifiers with a variety of forms, but all NPs can fulfill the same functions within sentences. That is, part of what defines the form of an NP is the kind of functions it can perform.

Coming back to the example sentence, the phrase *the groceries* is, like *Ed*, an NP in form, comprising a noun (*groceries*) and a determiner (D) (*the*). The NP *the groceries* is functioning as a verb complement: it completes the sense or meaning of the verb *carried*. To identify the function of the NP *the groceries*, we need to ask, *What did Ed carry?* The answer to the question—in this case, *the groceries*—identifies a very common type of verb complement, a direct object (DO; see Chapter 7). We now have a first test for identifying verb complements:

The verb complement question test: Once you have identified a verb and its subject, ask, *Whom or what did the subject verb?* The answer will be the complement of the verb—more specifically, the direct object (DO).

When we ask, *Whom or what did Ed_[SUBJECT] carry_[VERB]?* the answer—*the groceries*—is the verb complement.²

Taken together, the verb and its complement (or complements, as some verbs take more than one; see Chapter 7) and modifiers (verbs can take modifiers, just like nouns can; see Chapters 6 and 8 and section 11.3) constitute a verb phrase (VP) functioning as the predicate of the sentence (VP:PRED). Sometimes we will refer to the verb and its complements and modifiers, taken altogether, as the “complete predicate,” while we will sometimes refer to the complete verb of a sentence, taken by itself, as the “simple predicate.”

Now you know how to identify the guts—the subject and predicate—of any sentence. You also know how to identify a common sort of verb complement. Many English sentences are about someone or something (named by an NP:SUBJ) doing something (an action named by a V) to someone or something (an NP:DO). English is thus often referred to as a Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) language, since that is our preferred and predominant sentence order. Other languages prefer a different order for the major sentence constituents.³ In our study of English grammar, parsing the vast majority of sentences or clauses (a set of words that includes a subject and a predicate) will begin with asking the question, *Who is doing what?* or *Who is doing what to whom?* Sentences in English most commonly comprise an NP:SUBJ and a VP:PRED.

While subjects and predicates are obligatory in sentences, and most verbs require complements, the fourth major part of sentences—sentence modifiers—are, as we noted above, optional. In our example sentence, *Yesterday, Ed carried the groceries*, the word *yesterday* is a sentence modifier. We know it is optional because, if we drop it from the sentence, the remaining string of words is still a grammatically well-formed sentence. In traditional grammar, *yesterday* would be analyzed as an adverb modifying the verb *carried*—telling when the carrying happened. But it’s not just that the *carrying* happened yesterday; it’s the specific incident of *Ed carrying the groceries* that happened *yesterday*. And, unlike the word *the*, which is tightly connected to the word *groceries* and cannot be moved away from *groceries*, the word *yesterday* is not “tied”

closely to the verb *carried*. In the grammar we will study here, a modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that shapes or limits the meaning of its head (the word, phrase, or clause it modifies) and that is tied to its head: within the sentence, the modifier has to be located close to the constituent it modifies. While *the* cannot be moved away from *groceries* and still be understood as related to *groceries*, *yesterday* can potentially appear in three different places in the sentence without altering the meaning of the sentence:

Yesterday, Ed carried the groceries.

Ed carried the groceries yesterday.

?Ed, yesterday, carried the groceries.

Sentence modifiers like *yesterday* can, usually, appear at the beginning of the sentence; at the end of the sentence; and, often, between the subject and the predicate. The last example, *?Ed, yesterday, carried the groceries*, is, admittedly, a trifle odd; the question mark indicates that native speakers might find the sentence strange, though not necessarily unacceptable (as noted above, a sentence that is outright badly formed or unacceptable within the English blueprint will be marked with an asterisk).

Now, though, consider these examples:

Because they don't think they're smart, too many kids quit science.

Too many kids, because they don't think they're smart, quit science.

Too many kids quit science because they don't think they're smart.⁴

Because they don't think they're smart, like *yesterday* in the sentence about *Ed*, functions as a sentence modifier. “Sentence modifier” is a function performed by the broad class of adverbials, which includes the part-of-speech category “adverb,” as well as other phrases and clauses that can function adverbially.

The function of a constituent will sometimes dictate how we label its form. For example, depending on its context of use, the form of the word *yesterday* can be either

- An adverb (e.g. in *Yesterday, Ed carried the groceries*; *yesterday* is an adverb functioning as a sentence modifier—ADV:SENTMOD).
- A noun (e.g. *Yesterday was a good day*; *yesterday* is an NP:SUBJ).

The form label (adverb; noun) is not simply an inherent feature of the word itself but arises from its context of use. *Because they don't think they're smart* is a dependent clause; specifically, it is an adverb clause (ADVCL), and, like *yesterday*, it is functioning as a sentence modifier (ADVCL:SENTMOD). “Dependent clause” and “adverb clause” are forms, just like “noun.” Throughout our study of grammar, we will find examples of a single word,

phrase, or clause—a single form—taking on different functions in different sentence contexts.

There are two good tests for identifying sentence modifiers:

The optionality test for sentence modifiers: Given a constituent word, phrase, or clause at the beginning or end of a sentence, or between the subject and the verb, a constituent that you think functions as a sentence modifier, if you can drop that constituent from the sentence, and the remaining words still constitute a well-formed sentence in English, then the constituent you have removed is probably a sentence modifier.

The movability test for sentence modifiers: Given a constituent word, phrase, or clause at the beginning or end of a sentence, or between the subject and the verb, a constituent that you think constitutes a sentence modifier, if you can move that constituent from its position to one or both of the other sentence modifier positions without changing the essential meaning of the sentence, then the constituent you have moved is probably a sentence modifier.

The movability test is, by itself, the better test for sentence modifiers. However, if both tests work (the constituent is optional, and it can be moved without altering the meaning of the sentence), then the constituent in question is a sentence modifier.

So what? It is important to be able to identify sentence modifiers because readers generally prefer to get to the subject and verb of a sentence quickly, and not to have the subject-verb connection interrupted. So, unless a sentence modifier is short, it is often best to put it at the end of the sentence.

1.2 Parts of Speech and Their Phrases

Traditional grammar books begin by defining what are called the “parts of speech”: classes of words, defined by the kinds of meanings they are used to convey. We will stick with this meaning-based (or “semantic”) approach to defining classes of words; it is also the approach that dictionaries commonly use, and sometimes the dictionary will be a helpful reference for figuring out which part-of-speech label to assign to a word or phrase. But we will add two other ways of thinking about classes of words. The first of these I have already mentioned: along with the semantic definitions, the parts of speech can be defined by the **function** of a word or phrase in the context of a sentence. We can take a single word (e.g. *play*) to provide a clear example:

play functioning as a verb: *I play baseball every day.*

play functioning as a noun: *She made a good play.*

We can identify *play* in the first sentence as a verb (lexical category) because it is filling a particular functional slot in the sentence, performing a function that we identify with verbs: naming the action performed by a subject (*I*) while filling the role of “head” in the verb phrase that functions as the predicate (VP:PRED). Likewise, in the second sentence, we can identify *play* as a noun because it is filling the slot—performing the function—of head of a noun phrase (being modified by *a* and *good*), and that noun phrase is, in turn, functioning as a direct object (NP:DO)—naming the thing acted upon—a sentence function we identify with nouns, NPs, and other nominals.

The other way we will talk about classes of words is in terms of **form**. One feature of form, at the level of words, has to do with inflections: the ways in which the words in a part-of-speech category can be changed, often by adding a suffix. So, for example, let’s make up a noun: *plek*, as in, *I went to Lowe’s to buy a plek*. To change the form to indicate that we are talking about more than one *plek*, you would readily tell me to “add an *-s*,” as in, *The clerk told me they were out of pleks*. As part of the knowledge native speakers of English acquire about nouns and how they work—even if we have never heard the term “noun”—we know that to pluralize a noun—to indicate we have more than one of a thing—we add the sound [s].⁵

Verbs commonly change form as well. Again, let’s make up a verb: *kadow*. Now let’s conjugate it—that is, let’s give all the forms it has in the present tense, as in the sentence *Today I kadow: I kadow; you kadow; he/she/it kadows; we kadow; you kadow; they kadow*. Once again, as a native speaker, you know to change the form with *he/she/it* from *kadow* to *kadows*. Likewise, if I ask you what form the verb takes in the following contexts, you would have no problem knowing how to change it:

Yesterday, we kadowed.
I can’t talk right now—I’m busy kadowing!
Of course I have kadowed before.

Only nouns change form by adding *-s* to mark the plural; only verbs change form by adding *-s* to mark the third-person singular or *-ed* and *-ing* to mark other forms and functions (see Chapter 6).

We need to pause here to consider a couple of further distinctions about words, forms, and part-of-speech labels. First, I proposed that the same word, *play*, might function as a verb or a noun, depending on the context in which it is used. Another way to think of this is that, whatever the common history of *play*_{VERB} and *play*_{NOUN} in current English, we have two homonymous-but-separate words. This makes sense in that *play*_{VERB} can take the addition of the present participle ending *-ing* (*I am playing*), while *play*_{NOUN} cannot; and *play*_{NOUN} can take the plural marker *-s* (*I made two key plays yesterday*), while *play*_{VERB} cannot. This idea is further bolstered by the variety of words ending in *-ing* that,

although they remain usable as verbs, also have clearly distinct homonymous adjectives, e.g. *boring* (meaning “causing boredom” or “dull”):

***boring* functioning as a verb:** *This book is boring me.*

***boring* functioning as an adjective:** *This is a boring book.*

The adjective is gradable (*a more boring book*), while the verb is not. Contrast this example with the participle *moseying*, which can be used as a verb (*He was moseying into town*) or an adjective (*the moseying horse*) but is ungradable (**the more moseying horse*). It seems that the adjective version of *boring* is better established in English than the adjective form of *moseying*. In *AEG*, I will do my best to treat pairs like *play*_{VERB} and *play*_{NOUN} and *boring*_{VERB} and *boring*_{ADJECTIVE} as separate homonyms, but in some instances, it will prove difficult to make a clear distinction. We will find that, far from being neat, separate boxes, the part-of-speech categories are radial, having clear, central, prototypical examples but becoming less distinct as we move away from those centers, and often overlapping with each other.

One more note about how the forms of words interact with how we might place them in lexical categories. Words can take two different kinds of affixes: inflectional affixes and derivational affixes. Inflectional affixes in English are all suffixes: endings added to words to help show that a word is a member of a lexical category and to alter—or “inflect”—a word’s meaning or function without changing that word’s lexical category. A word that can take an inflectional ending is, by definition, part of the lexical category of words that can take such endings. There are eight inflectional endings in English, all of which we will discuss at greater length in the chapter on the relevant part of speech:

Nouns

Plural -s (*the words*)

Possessive ’s (*Frost’s poem*)

Verbs

Third-person singular present -s (*She works well.*)

Present participle -ing (*She is working well.*)

Past tense -ed (*She worked well.*)

Past participle -en/-ed (*She has eaten/worked.)*

Adjectives and Adverbs

Comparative -er (*the bigger one; arrived sooner.)*

Superlative -est (*the biggest one; arrived soonest.)*

Note that inflectional affixes do not change a word's part of speech: *word* and *words* are still both nouns.⁶

Derivational prefixes change a word's meaning but do not change its part of speech (e.g. *lock_v*; *unlock_v*). Derivational suffixes change a word's meaning and typically (though not always) change its part of speech. Thus, while the word *arouse* is always a verb, when we add the derivational suffix *-al*, it becomes the noun *arousal*, a word that is always a noun. English has over 100 derivational prefixes and several hundred derivational suffixes.⁷ Here are a few more examples of derivational suffixes:

V → ADJ (*fix* + **able**)

V → N (*speak* + **er**)

N → N (*king* + **dom**)

N → ADJ (*cube* + **ic**)

N → V (*vapor* + **ize**)

ADJ → ADJ (*green* + **ish**)

ADJ → V (*modern* + **ize**)

ADJ → ADV (*quiet* + **ly**)

ADJ → N (*stupid* + **ity**)

The field of linguistics that deals with affixes and the rules of affixation—in short, how words are constructed—is called *morphology*. Although we do not have time to delve into English morphology, how words are constructed from smaller bits clearly overlaps with how they are organized to construct sentences, and concepts from morphology will be significant at other points in this book.

At the level of phrases, “form” involves what kinds of constituents a phrase may include and in what order. Determiners—for example, *the*—appear only in NPs and only before the noun. If we encounter the word *the*, we know that the form of the phrase in which it is a constituent is almost certainly an NP. Thus, along with the semantic and functional definitions of the parts of speech and their phrases, we will talk about form as a way of identifying the lexical categories of words and phrases.

So what? Form labels (e.g. noun phrase, verb phrase, adverb clause) and function labels (e.g. subject, predicate, direct object, sentence modifier) are not inherent in words and phrases; rather, those labels are interrelated and emerge from actual contexts of use.

I have now used the word “phrase” several times. Although most words can function alone as constituents within a sentence, all may, and some must, act as constituents within phrases. A phrase is a group of words that together form

a single, more complex constituent within another phrase or within a clause or sentence. We will see that for most of the parts of speech (e.g. “nouns”), there are related phrases (e.g. “noun phrases”). We will spend more time talking about phrases (e.g. “noun phrases”) than about single words (e.g. “nouns”).

In this text, we will deal with eight parts of speech: nouns (N); prepositions (P); adjectives (ADJ); determiners (D); pronouns (PRON); verbs (V); adverbs (ADV); and conjunctions (CONJ). Traditional grammar generally includes one more minor part-of-speech category: interjections (INTERJ). A brief discussion of interjections can be found at the end of 9.2.

Two distinctions are worth noting. First, these part-of-speech classes are commonly divided into two general subgroups: “content words” and “function words.” Content words are classes of words that are thought of as primarily conveying substantive meaning and include nouns (which name things), adjectives (which name qualities of things), verbs (which name actions), and adverbs (which name such qualities as manner, reason, and duration). Function words are classes of words that are usually thought of as relating content words to each other or nuancing the meaning of content words. The categories of function words include determiners (which “specify” the meaning of the noun in terms of definiteness, number, amount, possession, etc.), prepositions (which relate a following noun phrase to other content words), pronouns (which take, hold, or mark the place of a noun phrase or other nominal), some adverbs (such as intensifiers like *so* and *very* and negators like *not* and *never*), and conjunctions (which link together sentence constituents that have the same function).

Second, content words are commonly considered “open classes,” in that new members of those classes routinely enter the language. Speakers and writers create new nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs every day. Some gain a lasting place in the language (e.g. *email* as a noun, verb, and adjective), while some come and go quickly (e.g. the nouns *flivver* and *jalopy*, both referring to a cheap car in poor condition). Function words are commonly considered “closed classes,” in that we cannot create new members of the class, and we generally do not stop using existing members. It has been hundreds of years since English has adopted a new preposition, pronoun, adverbial negator, or conjunction.

The next several chapters will be devoted to each part of speech and its associated phrase. Of the eight parts of speech listed above, all but conjunctions commonly form the core or head of a phrase. We will see that there are tests for identifying members of most part-of-speech classes or types of phrase, tests that are based on the kinds of meaning that the members of the class may convey, the kinds of form that members of the class may take, and the kinds of functions that members of the class can perform. We will also think of the functions of words and phrases in terms of the “slots” a type of phrase can “fill” in a sentence.

Remember that the subject of a sentence always consists of a nominal, and the most common type of nominal is the noun phrase (NP). The first parts of

speech we will examine will be nouns and NPs, along with some of the other parts of speech and related phrases that can be constituents of NPs: prepositions and prepositional phrases; adjectives and adjective phrases; and determiners and determiner phrases. We will look at the meanings, forms, and functions of these parts of speech and their related phrases.

1.3 Key Points

- Sentences typically comprise four major constituents: the subject and verb (obligatory), the verb complement (obligatory for most verbs), and sentence modifiers (optional).
- The easiest way to parse a sentence—to identify its constituent parts—is to start with the verb, the word that names the action being performed by the subject.
- The answer to the question, *Who or what did the action named by the verb?* is the subject of the verb.
- The complete NP:SUBJ is the complete subject; the head noun of the NP:SUBJ is the simple subject.
- The VP:PRED comprises the complete verb, its complement(s), and modifiers; the complete verb, taken by itself, is the simple predicate.
- Sentence modifiers can appear at the beginning or end of the sentence and, often, between the subject and the predicate.
- There are eight parts of speech, also known as lexical categories; these lexical categories are subdivided into open classes of content words (nouns, verbs, adjective, and most adverbs) and closed classes of function words (prepositions, pronouns, determiners, some adverbs, and conjunctions).
- Members of each lexical category can be identified by their form, function, and meaning.
- Members of all lexical categories (except conjunctions) can form phrases; phrases commonly comprise a head word (obligatory) and may also include a complement/s (obligatory) and/or modifiers (optional) as dependent constituents.

1.4 Exercises: Sentences

Find the Subjects and Predicates 1: Made-up sentences⁸

- For each sentence A–J, identify the complete subject and the complete predicate.
 - For each sentence A–J, identify the simple subject and the simple predicate.
 - If you can, identify any sentence modifiers that appear in these sentences.
- A. The discovery of the vitamins was a major scientific achievement in our understanding of health and disease.

- B. In 1912, Casimir Funk coined the term “vitamin.”
- C. The major period of discovery ran from the early nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century.
- D. The puzzle of each vitamin was solved through the work and contributions of epidemiologists, physicians, physiologists, and chemists.
- E. Scientific work on vitamins proceeded through a slow, stepwise series of setbacks, contradictions, refutations, and some chicanery.
- F. Research on the vitamins began when the germ theory of disease was dominant.
- G. Soon clinicians recognized scurvy, beriberi, rickets, pellagra, and xerophthalmia as specific vitamin deficiencies.
- H. After many different kinds of studies, experimental physiology with animal models greatly shortened the period of human suffering from vitamin deficiencies.
- I. Ultimately the chemists isolated the various vitamins, deduced their chemical structure, and developed methods for synthesis of vitamins.
- J. Since the initial period of discovery our understanding of the vitamins has evolved because of the careful labor of innumerable scientists.

Find the Subjects and Predicates 2: A real text⁹

Use the same instructions as in “Find the Subjects and Predicates 1.”

- (A) As one of the most prolific authors ever to sit in the Oval Office, former President Jimmy Carter knows how to sell books. (B) As he hawks his 19th, *Sharing Good Times*, Carter reveals his secret to reaching the bestseller list: Pitch buyers at discount warehouses. (C) “Sam’s Club and Costco,” he says, “have a vast array of customers. (D) So they’re very valuable assets.” (E) Carter, who favors Costco for West Coast book signings and Sam’s in the East, says the warehouses draw a different audience than do bookstores. (F) “Barnes & Noble people go there almost by definition to buy books,” he says, “where at Sam’s they come in to buy different items . . . and as an aside a lot of them just come by and buy one of my books because they announce on the loud-speaker system that I’m there signing books.” (G) The customers are “not sophisticates,” though he adds, “Anybody who buys my books is a good person.” (H) Ditto from former President Bill Clinton, who sold *My Life* at the stores. (I) “I loved the book signings at Sam’s Club and Costco,” he tells us. (J) “I met thousands of people from all walks of life. (K) I hope to do more.”



Figure 1.1

Notes

- 1 I have just said “typically” and “in general” because the definition of “sentence” is controversial. Really. For example, imperative voice sentences (e.g. *Close the door.*) have no stated subject. Rather, the subject and a modal auxiliary verb are implied (e.g. *You must close the door.*). This example opens the question of whether, in parsing sentences, we should analyze just what is actually written or said, or we should also consider what is only implied. Also, as you will see in analyzing real-world written examples, very often a string of words punctuated as a “sentence” seems to comprise whatever an author wants to place between an initial capital letter and a final punctuation mark: for example, the second “sentence” of this footnote comprises a single word, “really,” which, while formally not a sentence, is in many contexts a stylistically acceptable “sentence fragment.” We will look at fragments in a little more detail in Section 10.3.
- 2 You will already be thinking, “But what about a verb like *be* in a sentence like *Ed is here*: in that case, the complement isn’t a *what*, it’s a *where*.” There are many different kinds of verb complements that we’ll get to in Chapter 7. Direct objects are just a very common type and easy to start with.
- 3 “According to a survey of 402 languages, the majority of languages are either SOV (44.78%) [e.g. *Ed the groceries carried*] or SVO (41.79%) [e.g. *Ed carried the groceries*]. VSO (9.20%) [e.g. *Carried Ed the groceries*] is much less frequent but still significant, and very few languages make use of VOS (2.99%) [e.g. *Carried the groceries Ed*], OVS (1.24%) [e.g. *The groceries carried Ed*] or OSV (0.00%) [e.g. *The groceries Ed carried*].” Russel S. Tomlin. *Basic Word Order*. Croom Helm. 1986. 22.

- 4 Alexandra Ossola. “Too Many Kids Quit Science Because They Don’t Think They’re Smart.” *theatlantic.com*. 3 Nov 2014.
- 5 Which is sometimes pronounced [z], as in *bugs*, or pronounced [əz] and spelled *-es* as in *buses*.
- 6 Actually, there is one exception: adding possessive ‘s to a N (*Frost’s*) or NP (e.g. *the famous poet’s*) changes the N or NP to a determiner (D) or determiner phrase (DP). See Section 4.2.
- 7 As of Dec 2025, good lists of derivational affixes can be found at www.fldoc.org/core/fileparse.php/16294/urlt/morphemeML.pdf, and lhncbc.nlm.nih.gov/LSG/Projects/lvg/current/docs/designDoc/UDF/derivations/suffixList.html. Dictionaries that provide the derivations of words are particularly useful for identifying derivational affixes.
- 8 Sentences based on Richard D. Semba. “The Discovery of the Vitamins.” *International Journal for Vitamin and Nutrition Research*. Oct 2012. 310.
- 9 Paul Bedard. “Jimmy’s Sales Tip: Sam’s, Costco.” *U.S. News & World Report*. 20 Dec 2004. 6.

Nouns (N) and Noun Phrases (NP)

2.1 Noun Features

Nouns are a category of content words. In traditional grammar, nouns are defined semantically as words that name things, whether concrete things (e.g. people, places, animals, or objects) or abstract things (e.g. ideas or qualities). Thus, nouns and noun phrases are constituents that tell *who* or *what*. Nouns are commonly also defined by four contrastive categories: proper/common; singular/plural; mass/count; and generic/specific.

- 1. Proper versus common nouns:** The main semantic distinction of proper nouns is that they name specific and, within the context of use, unique places (*Peoria*), people (*Taylor Swift*), things (*Peoria Journal Star*; *Empire State Building*), or events (*World War II*). The main formal distinction is that proper nouns are always capitalized. By contrast, common nouns are not usually capitalized, and most do not name unique places, people, or things; rather, they name classes or types of things (e.g. not *Peoria* but *city/cities*; not *Taylor Swift* but *singer/s*; not *Peoria Journal Star* but *newspaper/s*; not *Empire State Building* but *skyscraper/s*).
- 2. Singular versus plural nouns:** As the names imply, we use singular nouns to refer to single objects (e.g. *cat*) or groups considered as units (e.g. *audience*) and plural nouns to refer to a group of individuals (e.g. *cats*) or a group of groups (e.g. *audiences*). Plural nouns can also be used to refer (1) to the sum of all of a type of object present in some limited space: *Today in our store, balls are on sale* and (2) to the generic category of an object, as when we say *Dogs like to run*, meaning, “it is generically true of dogs that they like to run.” We usually turn singular nouns to plural nouns by a change in form: adding *-s* (*book/books*) or *-es* (*bus/buses*; *flurry/flurries*), with spelling conventions applying. There are a limited set of exceptional plurals that don’t take *-s* or *-es*, both from the Anglo-Saxon roots of English (e.g. *child/children*, *ox/oxen*, *woman/women*, *moose/moose*, *mouse/mice*), from Latin (e.g. *alumna* or *alumnus/alumni*; *datum/data*; *medium/media*), and from Greek (e.g. *schema/schemata*; *phenomenon/phenomena*).

Non-WME plurals: There are three distinct ways in which non-WME varieties of English form plurals that differ from those found in “general American English.”¹ In the first two, the plural marker *-s* can be deleted because a separate word—a determiner preceding the noun (see 4.2)—indicates that the noun is plural in reference and therefore the *-s* is semantically redundant.

First, for speakers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the plural suffix may simply be absent, as in *Lots of **boy_** go to the school. All the **girl_** liked the movie. Two **boy_** just left.* This “absent plural” is also found to a limited degree in BL,² but not often—only 1 to 10 percent of the time, according to studies done to date.³ While the *-s* plural marker may be absent “after a numeral or some other expression which clearly denotes plurality, where other modifiers do not so clearly point out plurality,” the *-s* plural marker will be used.⁴ Although it may occur in only a small percentage of instances in BL usage, to the ears of speakers of varieties that routinely include the plural marker on the noun, the absence may sound strange. So, while not using the plural *-s* marks the speaker as a member of one group, at the same time it marks the speaker as not being a member of other groups, often to the speaker’s disadvantage.

The plural demonstrative determiner *dem* (derived from *them*) is commonly used in BL varieties to mark plurality. And in the Gullah English variety of the coastal islands of South Carolina and Georgia, as in Caribbean English creoles,⁵ *dem* may appear before a noun with the plural *-s* deleted from the noun as being redundant, as in *dem **book_**.*⁶

Second, “in Southern-based rural vernaculars,” the absence of the plural marker is limited to “nouns of weights and measures” and even some nouns that name units of time that are preceded by a quantifying determiner or a cardinal number, as in *four pound; three ton; two foot; twenty mile; two year, five month; a lot of bushel:*

*The station is four **mile_** down the road. They hauled in a lotta **bushel_** of corn.*

Again, arguably, if the noun is preceded by a plural quantifier, then the plural marker *-s* on the end of the noun is redundant and therefore unnecessary.

In the third variety of non-WME pluralization, irregular plural noun forms are regularized to match the more general pattern of using *-s* to mark the plural in nouns:

*They saw the **deers** running across the field.
The **firemans** liked the conversation.*⁷

This regularization occurs for at least some words in most vernacular varieties of American English and may occur with words of three different sorts:

- Those in which the plural is “not overtly marked in general American English”: so *deers* and *sheeps* as opposed to WME *deer* and *sheep*, which are used for both the singular and the plural.

- Those words that have irregular plural suffixes in WME: so *oxes* as opposed to WME *oxen*.
- Those words in which the plural is marked in the WME variety by changes in a vowel: so *firemans* and *snowmans* as opposed to WME *firemen* and *snowmen*.

In some vernacular varieties, plurals may also be double marked, as in *mens* and *childrens*.⁸ In BL, this double marking may be attributable to hypercorrection: if a speaker understands that plurals are always marked with -s and is not taught the irregular nouns as exceptions, then it would seem perfectly reasonable to mark all plurals with -s so that one would say *mans* or *mens*, *childs* or *childrens*.⁹ Some of these regularized forms are quite widespread among the vernacular varieties of English (e.g. regularizing non-marked plurals such as *deers*), whereas others (e.g. double marking *mens*) are more limited.¹⁰

So what? If you come from a community in which your family and friends routinely use non-WME plural forms, you have a dilemma, in that the language of the people you know and love is not the language of school and professional life. To succeed at home—to be accepted, to fit in, to feel friendly and comfortable—you have to use the non-WME forms. But to succeed at school, you have to codeswitch to WME forms. If you use the wrong forms for each context, you risk being judged, not fitting in, and social failure, which can have material consequences: not getting good grades, a part in the play, a scholarship, a job.

- 3. Mass vs. count nouns:** Mass nouns refer to masses of material (e.g. *water*, *sugar*, *steel*) or things that conventionally cannot be counted (e.g. *soccer*, *homework*), while count nouns refer to countable objects (e.g. *dream*, *letter*, *arm*). Traditionally, when we refer to amounts of things, we refer to mass nouns with the words *more* and *less* (e.g. *more water*; *less water*), but we refer to countable nouns with the words *more* and *fewer* (e.g. *more dreams*; *fewer dreams*). Some authorities label this distinction between *less* and *fewer* as a “modern tendency,”¹¹ while others¹² state it as a firm rule. But *less* and *fewer* were actually interchangeable from the earliest days of English until 1770, when Robert Baker offered the opinion that *fewer* sounded more “proper and elegant” with count nouns.¹³ Although the rule seems to have become increasingly entrenched in the twentieth century, my students regularly say and write *less* for both mass and count nouns, and it even shows up in the media and published academic writing:

*Pumpkin pie has less calories than pecan pie.*¹⁴

*Dulles or Reagan or BWI, they all have very good fencing and usually have less problems with deer.*¹⁵

*Please respond in 500 words or less.*¹⁶

In another thirty years, I predict that *less* with a count noun will be judged “more correct” than *fewer*.

- 4. Generic vs. specific nouns:** We have already used the term “generic” above: generic nouns (or, more properly, generic NPs) refer to the general category of an object. The sentence *Dogs like to run* implies that it is generally true of *dogs* as a category that they like to run. By contrast, a specific noun or NP refers to a particular individual member of a category. In the sentence *My dog likes to run*, the NP *my dog* refers to one specific dog.

The four pairs of contrastive categories I have just described interact in some interesting ways. Count nouns have both a singular and a plural (e.g. *dream/dreams*), except for a few that already end in *-s* and are idiosyncratically plural, such as things that are described as coming in pairs (e.g. *scissors, pants*). However, mass nouns are only singular (e.g. *soccer*/**soccers*). When it appears that we can pluralize a mass noun, we’re actually using it as a count noun:

*Heteropolysaccharides are formed from several different sugars.*¹⁷ (meaning “different kinds of sugar”)

*He laughed and followed me out front with three waters and a bag of Rap Snacks.*¹⁸ (meaning “three bottles of water”)

Generic nouns may be either singular or plural; however, the singular generic must always be preceded by the determiners *a*, *an*, or *the*:

Dogs are mammals.

The dog is a mammal.

A dog is a mammal.

Specific NPs may be either singular or plural, depending on whether they refer to a specific individual (e.g. *My dog Rover likes to run*) or a specific group (e.g. *Our neighbor’s dogs won’t stop barking!*).

Common count nouns can be pluralized (e.g. *city/cities*), but typically, a proper noun cannot (*Peoria*/**Peorias*). There are contexts in which a proper noun takes the plural *-s*, as when we make a claim like, *Three times around the country means that we’ve already hit all the New Yorks and LAs and now we were playing the Kalamazoos and Poughkeepsies.*¹⁹ In this context, the pluralized proper nouns each mean something like “cities like New York” and “cities like Poughkeepsie.” What we are doing in such a context is turning the uniquely referring proper noun into a count noun: counting cities that are like New York is like counting New Yorks. This is like using the pluralized mass noun *waters* to mean *bottles of water*.

Additionally, while we commonly use determiners (e.g. *the, that*) with common nouns, proper nouns cannot usually be preceded by a determiner—nor do we usually need a determiner with a proper noun, since they name objects that

are unique within a context of use. We are not likely to confuse *Taylor Swift* the popular singer with my student who also happens to be named “Taylor Swift.” The exception here is when we are marking some kind of contrast:

*Some of us know this feeling as impostor syndrome. Others—including the Taylor Swift who sang “Nothing New” with a younger Phoebe Bridgers—might hear in it a fear of growing old.*²⁰

The contrast here is between Taylor Swift as she is in the present, and Taylor Swift in an earlier time; the use of “the” helps mark them as two different Taylor Swifts. Notice that in the examples of *the New Yorks* and *the Kalamazoos* above, those proper nouns are also preceded by *the*—again to mark that the category of “New Yorks” contains a number of different-but-similar cities. These distinctions (singular vs. plural; mass vs. count) will become more significant when we study determiners in 4.2.

Proper nouns are generally easy to identify because they are capitalized names of specific people, places, things, events, or ideas. Common nouns, however, can sometimes be harder to identify, especially since the same word can be used as more than one part of speech:

Verb: *I run for exercise.* **Noun:** *I think I’ll go for a run.*

Adjective: *I bought a green soccer ball.* **Noun:** *Green is my favorite color.*

Adverb: *I want to go home.* **Noun:** *Home is where the heart is.*

In WME usage, there are three tests for identifying common nouns:

The general noun-slot tests: Functionally, a noun can be defined most easily by the kind of slot it can fill in a sentence. If a word can be used in the open slot in one of the following sentences, or in similar slots in other sentences, then, in that sentence context, the word is functioning as a noun.

The _____ is/are/was/were good.
 _____ is/are/was/were good.

The *the* test for common nouns: If a word can be used with the determiner *the*, then that word is a common noun. This test is very reliable, although to make the test work with some abstract nouns (e.g. *honesty*, *caution*, *justice*), the noun must be followed by a modifying phrase (e.g. *The caution practiced by school officials this month should be applauded*).²¹

The pluralization test for common count nouns: If a word can be used in the plural, then that word is a common count noun. This test is also very reliable. Remember that it does not work for mass nouns since they cannot typically be pluralized (e.g. **milks* [which, like *waters*, can be used to mean “glasses of milk”]; **lightnings*; **homeworks*). However, if a word can ordinarily be pluralized, then it is a common noun.²²

Warnings: First, in the second sentence of the general noun-slot test, some pronouns will also fit the slot: *He/she/it/this is good; We/you/they/these are good*. You just need to know that these are pronouns (see Chapter 5). Second, as with all of the tests we will use throughout this book for identifying parts of speech and types of phrases and clauses within sentences, when applying the *the* test, remember to do so within the context of the original sentence. Otherwise, you might change the lexical category, or the form, of the word, phrase, or clause. Also, when you have more than one test for a constituent class, try all of them. They may not all agree, but the answer given by the majority of the tests will usually be the correct one.

2.2 Noun Phrases

So far, we have defined “noun” by the meaning and form of individual nouns. But in addition to these two kinds of definition, we will also define parts of speech, phrases, and clauses in terms of their functions. A noun functions as the head of a noun phrase (NP). Whether it appears by itself or, as is often the case, accompanied by dependents, including adjectival modifiers and determiners, a noun is always the head of an NP. Determiners, while dependents of the noun within the NP, are not always optional: if we drop a determiner, it may make the sentence ill formed. For example, in the sentence *The green ball is for sale*, the determiner *the* is obligatory, while the adjectival modifier *green* is optional (see 4.2). From here on out, we will mostly talk about NPs (rather than nouns), as an NP may comprise just a noun by itself.

The general structure of an NP can be stated as follows:

[DETERMINER PHRASE] + {ADJECTIVE PHRASES} + NOUN + {ADJECTIVAL POST-MODIFIERS}

The items in curly brackets—“Adjective Phrases” and “Adjectival Post-Modifiers”—are modifiers and are optional. I have put square brackets around “Determiner Phrase” because determiners are not always optional and cannot merely be lumped in with the modifiers. Also, a number of types of constituents can be “adjectival post-modifiers” of nouns; the list includes adjectival prepositional phrases (Chapter 3); adjective clauses (10.2.1); and adjectival participle phrases and adjectival infinitive phrases (Chapter 12). Be aware that when an adjectival modifier comes after a noun, if that adjectival modifier is modifying the preceding noun, then it is a constituent of the NP of which that noun is the head. Students often think an NP ends with the head noun. Sometimes it does; sometimes it doesn’t. Be careful.

In the following examples, in the NP:SUBJ of each sentence, [determiners] are in square brackets, {modifiers} are in curly brackets, *adjective phrases* are in italics, adjectival post-modifiers are underlined, and the head **nouns** are in bold:

[The] {*large, green*} **ball** {with the yellow spots} is for sale.

[The] **ball** {with the yellow spots} is for sale.

[The] {*large, green*} **ball** is for sale.

[The] {*large*} **ball** is for sale.

[The] {*green*} **ball** is for sale.

[The] **ball** is for sale.

[The] **balls** are for sale.

*{*Green*} **ball** is for sale.

{*Green*} **balls** are for sale.

***Ball** is for sale.

Balls are for sale.

In these sentences, note that all of the modifiers—whether *adjective phrases* or *adjectival post-modifiers*—are optional: they can be dropped or kept in any combination, and the sentence remains well formed. However, with a singular common noun (e.g. *ball*), the determiner (e.g. *the*) is not optional, while with a plural noun (e.g. *balls*), the determiner is, like the modifiers, optional: if we drop the determiner from before the plural noun, the sentence is still well formed. Yes, the meaning of the NP and the sentence change, as they do when we drop modifiers, but the well-formedness—the grammaticality—of the sentence does not change.

Even with a plural common noun, the determiner is not optional with regard to meaning: semantically, there is a distinct difference between *The balls are for sale* and *Balls are for sale*: the first sentence means that some particular set of balls is for sale, while the second sentence means that all of the balls are for sale—or, in general, balls are for sale. Nonetheless, although determiners are not the same as modifiers, within an NP, determiners, like adjective phrases and adjectival post-modifiers of nouns, are dependents of nouns since they “depend” on the head noun for their meaning. Determiners function only as constituents within NPs (see 4.2).

Adjectival post-modifiers in NPs can be phrases or clauses: prepositional phrases, participle phrases, infinitive phrases, and adjective clauses (a.k.a. relative clauses):

NP containing **adjectival post-modifiers** of the noun:

Prepositional Phrase: *The ball **in the grass** is yellow.*

Participle Phrase: *The ball **lying in the grass** is yellow.*

Infinitive Phrase: *The ball **to use for today’s game** is on the shelf.*

Adjective Clause: *The ball **that I want you to use for today’s game** is on the shelf.*

Common nouns may take pre-modifying adjective phrases and adjectival post-modifiers, but proper nouns typically do not take determiners or pre-modifiers. However, proper nouns may take adjectival post-modifiers, most commonly adjective clauses:

Determiner + Proper Noun: **The **Scotty** had never seen snow before.*

Adjective + Proper Noun: **Happy **Scotty** had never seen snow before.*

Proper Noun + Adjective Clause: ***Scotty**, who had never seen snow before, was home from school, thrilled.²³*

When a proper noun takes an adjective clause as a post-modifier, that adjective clause typically provides non-essential information: the information provided by the adjective clause is not required for the reader or hearer to understand which particular object the writer or speaker is naming with the proper noun. With or without the clause *who had never seen snow before*, we would understand what particular person the proper noun *Scotty* refers to. By contrast, in the sentence *The snow that Scotty saw today was his first*, the adjective clause *that Scotty saw today* is an essential modifier: this adjective clause functions as a post-modifier of the noun *snow*, identifying which particular snow the speaker is referring to and distinguishing it from other snows that might have fallen at any other time. This adjective clause is essential because, without it, the listener would not know which snow the speaker means. Several times during our study of grammar, we will encounter this distinction between essential modifiers and non-essential modifiers (also known as restrictive and non-restrictive modifiers, respectively).

Nominal appositive phrases: One important type of non-essential modifier that we find as a modifier of a noun is called an appositive phrase. An appositive phrase is an NP (or adjective phrase; see 4.1) acting as a modifier of a noun. The appositive phrase is set next to—in apposition to—a noun phrase:

*My friend Sinuhe suggested the llamas.*²⁴

*My aunt and uncle, the Giovannis, own a store, the Empire Shoe Shop on Main Street.*²⁵

Each appositive NP modifies an adjoining noun by providing adjectival information about the object referred to by the noun: the apposed NP *Sinuhe* tells *which friend*; *the Giovannis* tells *which aunt and uncle*; *the Empire Shoe Shop on Main Street* tells *which store*. The appositive phrase takes the form of an NP (a head noun with dependent determiners and modifiers), but the appositive phrase functions as an adjectival modifier of a noun. Also, in these sentences, each appositive phrase is a non-essential modifier: although each appositive provides adjectival information about a noun, none of the appositives are essential to the hearer's or reader's understanding of the reference of that noun.

Appositive NPs can also appear before a noun: *A good all-around athlete, Leighty qualified for the state track meet in the high jump.*²⁶

2.3 Noun Phrase Functions

NPs have several functions:

Subject of a clause: In both of the following examples, *Scotty* is the subject of the verb *had seen*.

Independent clause (a.k.a. sentence): *Scotty had never seen snow.*

Dependent clause: *The snow [that Scotty saw] was his first.*

Complement of a preposition: In the sentence, *Through the window Scotty watched the snow*, the NP *the window* complements or “completes” the sense of the preposition *through*. Together, the preposition and the NP make a prepositional phrase.

Complement of a verb: In *Scotty saw the snow*, the NP *the snow* is the complement of the verb *saw*. More specifically, it is the direct object (DO) of the verb. “Direct object” is one type of verb complement; NPs can function as other types of verb complement (see Chapter 7):

NP:DIRECT OBJECT: *Scotty likes beans*.²⁷

NP:INDIRECT OBJECT: *I gave Scotty a personalized mug*.²⁸

NP:SUBJECT COMPLEMENT: *Scotty is an aviation enthusiast*.²⁹

NP:OBJECT COMPLEMENT: *Donnie made Scotty a major*.³⁰

Identifying NPs: Consider the sentence *Scotty beamed all of the tribbles into the engine room of the Klingon ship*.³¹ When you are asked to identify all of the NPs in this sentence, you have to be careful to note that there are four: the subject NP (NP:SUBJ) *Scotty*; the direct object (NP:DO) *all of the tribbles*; the complement of the preposition *into* (NP:PCOMP), *the engine room of the Klingon ship*; and the complement of the preposition *of* (NP:PCOMP), *the Klingon ship*. All four are distinct NPs with their own functions, even though *the Klingon ship* is a constituent of—is contained within—the prepositional phrase *of the Klingon ship*, which is, in turn, contained within the NP *the engine room of the Klingon ship*. When asked to identify NPs, you need to be careful and methodical: as I will often note, in parsing sentences, the devil is always in the details.

Modifier of a noun: A word that seems to be a noun in terms of its meaning and common function can also serve to modify another noun in two ways: as an adjective and as a nominal appositive.

Noun functioning as an adjective: In the sentence *Scotty liked the engine room*, we might parse *engine room* as a compound noun: two or more nouns that are commonly used together to name a thing. English has a vast number of nouns that commonly appear together as compounds. Compound nouns may be closed, as in *snowball* or *moonlight*, or open, as in *soccer ball*, *tennis ball*, *fly fishing*, *stop sign*, or *tater tots*. Over time, commonly used open compounds, such as *base ball*, may be joined, first with a hyphen and then into closed compounds, as has happened with *electronic mail*, which was then clipped and hyphenated as *e-mail* and has most recently been joined into the closed compound *email*. Commonly, compound nouns are pronounced with greater stress on the first syllable.

It makes sense to analyze a compound noun as a single noun. If we are talking about *excellent fly fishing*, we are really not talking about *fishing* that was both *excellent* and *fly*; rather, *excellent* tells what kind of *fly fishing* there was. It is also reasonable to analyze *engine room* as a single noun. However, it is also true that the compound has an interior structure in which *engine* tells *what kind of room*; *engine* thus seems to be functioning as if it were an adjective: an adjective modifying a noun tells *which* or *what kind of* thing the noun names. Without any

other context, we usually think of the word *engine* as a noun, since it names a thing. Thus, within the context of the compound noun, we might think of *engine* as a noun functioning as an adjective (N:ADJ). This will be the first of many encounters with the inherent fuzziness of the lexical categories.

Compound nouns can be quite complex. *United States of America* or *People's Republic of China* are NPs with analyzable structures, but in actual use, we treat them as if they were just elaborate single words. You can analyze them either way.

Nominal appositive: In the sentence *My aunt and uncle own a store, the Empire Shoe Shop on Main Street*, the NP *the Empire Shoe Shop on Main Street* does not function in a nominal role: by itself, it is not the subject of the sentence or the complement of a verb or preposition. Rather, as we saw above, this NP is a modifier of the noun *store* and provides non-essential adjectival information about that noun by telling *which store*.

Adverbial: An NP may function as an adverbial modifier of an adverb or an entire clause. Adverbial constituents can provide various sorts of modifying information about an action or event named by a clause (e.g. *when* or *where* it happened) or about a quality named by an adjective or another adverb (e.g. *how much* or *how* [in what manner] that quality exists). In *That evening, Scotty called me at home*,³² the NP *that evening* tells when the whole action in the sentence happened. And the NP can be moved to the end of the sentence or to the slot between the subject and the verb: *Scotty called me at home that evening*. *Scotty, that evening, called me at home*. The NP *that evening* functions here as a sentence modifier—a function typically filled by some type of adverbial.

In the sentence *He had deposited twenty-five thousand dollars five days earlier*,³³ the NP *five days* tells how much earlier—that is, it modifies the adverb *earlier*. We will find that locative and temporal NPs—NPs that name places and times—that tell *where* (e.g. *home*) and *when* (e.g. *yesterday*; *Tuesday*)—can function as adverbials (see 11.3).

Pronouns and pronoun phrases (Chapter 5) are nominals, as we can see in the following sentences. In each case, the NP functioning as the subject (NP:SUBJ) is in brackets:

*[The woman who wrote this] was not afraid.*³⁴

[The woman] was not afraid.

[She] was not afraid.

A pronoun is traditionally defined as a word that is used to replace a noun. Actually, we use a pronoun to fill the same slot as would be occupied by a complete NP. This suggests that, to identify a complete NP, we could use a pronoun replacement test:

The pronoun replacement test for NPs: Any noun phrase functioning in a nominal role (SUBJECT, VERB COMPLEMENT, COMPLEMENT OF A PREPOSITION) can be replaced by an appropriate third-person pronoun (*he/him/his, she/her/*

hers, it/its, they/them/theirs, this, that, these, those). The pronoun will thus replace—and identify—the complete noun phrase.³⁵

We have already seen in the preceding examples how the pronoun *she* replaced the NPs *the woman who wrote this* and *the woman*. We can see how the pronoun replacement test works for identifying where an NP starts and ends in the following sentences:

1. *The bright orange ball of the sun was hanging low over the horizon.*³⁶
2. *It was hanging low over the horizon.*
3. **The bright orange it of the sun was hanging low over the horizon.*
4. **The bright orange it was hanging low over the horizon*
5. **It of the sun was hanging low over the horizon.*

Sentences 3, 4, and 5 are ill formed because the pronoun has been used only to replace part of the original NP rather than the complete NP. This is the proof that the pronoun does not just replace the noun itself. Also, 3, 4, and 5 show us that we can use the pronoun replacement test to identify where a complete NP begins and ends.

The pronoun replacement test works only based on the function of a constituent, not its form. Although a constituent may look like an NP, if it is not functioning in a nominal role, the pronoun replacement test fails:

NP Functioning Adjectivally

Scotty liked the engine room.

**Scotty liked the it room.*

Scotty, the chief engineer, is in the engine room.

?Scotty, he is in the engine room.

NP Functioning Adverbially

That evening, Scotty called me.

**It, Scotty called me.*

He had deposited \$25,000 five days earlier.

**He had deposited \$25,000 it earlier.*

Scotty ran home.

**Scotty ran it.*

So what? This failure of the pronoun replacement test suggests that function trumps form: even though, in form, *that evening*, *five days*, and *home* may look like they are NPs, when those phrases are placed in a context where they function adjectivally or adverbially, then they become, essentially, what their function says they are.

Non-WME reduplicated subject or predicate marker: Stepping back for a moment to the example of an NP functioning adjectivally, when we replaced the NP:APPOSITIVE with a PRON, we got ?*Scotty, he is in the engine room.* While in WME we cannot paraphrase the NP functioning adjectivally with a PRON, we find a usage with the same pattern in some non-WME varieties of English, most notably in BL, in sentences like:

Ray sister she got a new doll baby.

Ray sister go to school at Adams she got a new doll baby.

Ray sister seven-year-old go to school at Adams she got a new doll baby.

WME speakers often misunderstand *she* as an appositive, and commonly this is referred to as a “reduplicated subject.” But arguably, *seven-year-old* and *go to school at Adams* are adjective clauses with the relative pronoun *who* understood, and the pronoun *she* serving to mark where the subject ends and the predicate begins.³⁷ In WME, these sentences would read:

Ray’s sister got a new doll baby.

Ray’s sister, who goes to school at Adams, got a new doll baby

Ray’s sister, who is seven years old, and who goes to school at Adams, got a new doll baby.

Semantics (meaning) or Form-and-Function: Which Description Works Better? Nouns can be adjectives or adverbs? NPs can function adjectivally or adverbially? What’s up with that? The problem arises from the clash of thinking about words—and their associated phrases—in two different ways. In traditional grammar, parts of speech (and, by implication, their associated phrases) were defined in terms of meaning (that is, semantically) and out of context: the word *engine* must be a noun because it names a thing; the word *orange* must be an adjective because it names a quality that relates to things—that is, the adjective can be used to modify a noun. But in the second half of the twentieth century, linguists and grammarians began to think more about the patterns of English sentences and to try to define parts of speech and their associated phrases in terms of their forms (e.g. what inflectional affixes they can take) and functions within the contexts of sentences (that is, syntactically). So, if the word *engine* appears between *the* and a noun, then *engine* is functioning adjectivally. If the word *orange* appears as the subject of a sentence, then *orange* is functioning nominally.

So what? For our purposes, and for the purposes of talking about writing and clarity, both approaches—form-and-function, and semantics—are useful. It is important to know that when we use an unexpected form in a particular functional slot, it can confuse a reader or create an unexpected effect, as when Gerard Manley Hopkins writes in his poem “The Windhover,” *The achieve of, the mastery of the thing*,³⁸ using the verb form *achieve* in a functional slot we associate with nouns.

Throughout this book, we will approach grammar from both sides: the traditional, semantic approach and the more recent form-and-function analysis. This dual approach will lead us to say sometimes that a particular constituent is, in its form, an NP or other nominal functioning as an adverbial or adverbially or, in form, an adjective phrase but functioning as a nominal or nominally. We will use meaning-based question tests (e.g. an NP or nominal is a constituent that tells *who* or *what*; an adjective phrase or adjectival constituent tells *which one* or *what kind of*; an adverb phrase tells *when*, *where*, *how*, *how long*, *how much*, etc.) together with formal and functional analyses (What inflectional affixes could a word take in the context? What functional role is this constituent filling relative to the constituents around it?). When thinking about sentence constituents, it often proves useful to have both kinds of information in mind.

2.4 Key Points

- Nouns are defined semantically as words that name things: people, places, animals, objects, ideas, or qualities.
- Nouns and noun phrases tell *who* or *what*.
- Nouns are also defined by four contrastive categories: proper/common; singular/plural; mass/count; and generic/specific.
- Three tests for identifying nouns are the general noun-slot tests (function); the *the* test for common nouns (function); and the pluralization test for common count nouns (form).
- A noun functions as the head of a noun phrase (NP).
- A noun phrase must include a N:HEAD and may include a determiner and/or adjectival modifiers.
- An NP may function as the subject of a clause, as a verb complement, or as the complement of a preposition. In these functions, a complete NP can always be identified by the pronoun replacement test.
- An NP may also function adjectivally (in a compound noun; as an appositive) or adverbially (particularly NPs that name periods of time).

2.5 Exercises: Noun Phrases

Find the Noun Phrases 1: Made-up sentences³⁹

- For each sentence, identify all complete NPs. Sometimes there are complete NPs inside other complete NPs.
 - For each NP, identify the head noun.
 - For each NP, try to identify its function. If you don't get the function right, it's okay! You don't know them yet.
- A. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the chief philosopher of the women's suffrage movement, formulated the agenda for the struggle for women's rights.

- B. She was born on November 12, 1815, in Johnstown, New York.
- C. Stanton received her formal education at the Johnstown Academy and at Emma Willard's Troy Female Seminary in New York.
- D. Her father was a noted lawyer and state assemblyman, and young Elizabeth gained an informal legal education from her interactions with his colleagues and guests.
- E. A well-educated woman, Stanton married abolitionist lecturer Henry Stanton in 1840 and became active in the anti-slavery movement.
- F. While on her honeymoon in London to attend a World's Anti-Slavery convention, Stanton met abolitionist Lucretia Mott, who, like her, was also angry about the exclusion of women at the proceedings.
- G. Mott and Stanton, now fast friends, vowed to call a women's rights convention when they returned home.
- H. Eight years later, in 1848, Stanton and Mott held the first Woman's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls, New York.
- I. Stanton authored "The Declaration of Sentiments," which expanded on the Declaration of Independence by adding the word "woman" or "women" throughout.
- J. This pivotal document called for social and legal changes to elevate women's place in society.

Find the Noun Phrases 2: A real text

Use the same instructions as in "Find the Noun Phrases 1," but use the passage on page 28, "Jimmy's Sales Tip: Sam's, Costco."

Notes

- 1 Walt Wolfram & Natalie Schilling-Estes. *American English*. 2nd ed. Malden, MA: Blackwell. 2006. 381.
- 2 Walt Wolfram & Natalie Schilling-Estes. *American English*. 2nd ed. Malden, MA: Blackwell. 2006. 381.
- 3 John Russell Rickford & Russell John Rickford. *Spoken Soul: The Story of Black English*. New York: John Wiley. 2000. 110; Geneva Smitherman. *Talkin' and Testifyin': The Language of Black America*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. 1977. 28.
- 4 J. L. Dillard. *Black English: Its History and Usage in the United States*. New York: Vintage Books. 1972. 61.
- 5 A creole is derived from a pidgin. A pidgin is a makeshift contact language that arises when two groups who do not speak the same language meet (think of trying to buy a souvenir in a foreign country from someone who does not speak any English). A creole is the more complex language that arises when a pidgin becomes the language that children are born into: the vocabulary grows, and the grammar becomes more complex.
- 6 John Russell Rickford & Russell John Rickford. *Spoken Soul: The Story of Black English*. New York: John Wiley. 2000. 111.
- 7 Walt Wolfram & Natalie Schilling-Estes. *American English*. 2nd ed. Malden, MA: Blackwell. 2006. 381.

- 8 Walt Wolfram & Natalie Schilling-Estes. *American English*. 2nd ed. Malden, MA: Blackwell. 2006. 381.
- 9 Geneva Smitherman. *Talkin' and Testifyin': The Language of Black America*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. 1977. 9.
- 10 Walt Wolfram & Natalie Schilling-Estes. *American English*. 2nd ed. Malden, MA: Blackwell. 2006. 381.
- 11 Henry W. Fowler. *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage*. 2nd ed. Ed. Sir Ernest Gowers. New York: Oxford UP. 1965. 330.
- 12 Paul W. Lovinger. *The Penguin Dictionary of American Usage and Style*. New York: Penguin Reference. 2000. 134; Mignon Fogarty. "Less versus Fewer." *Grammar Girl. Episode 453*. 30 Jan 2015.
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- 14 *Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)*. Accessed 11 Jul 2025; Lisa Drayer. "Take It Off Today." *The Today Show*. NBC-TV. 19 Oct 2007.
- 15 Ashley Halsey, III. "Airplanes, Animals Have a Turbulent Relationship." *Washington Post*. 11 Oct 2014.
- 16 "Apply to Undergraduate Art History." University of Texas at Austin. 2024.
- 17 John W. Pelley. "Structure and Properties of Biologic Molecules." *Elsevier's Integrated Biochemistry*. Amsterdam: Elsevier. 2007.
- 18 D. Watkins. "The Painful Truth of Life after Prison." *Salon.com*. 15 Apr 2018.
- 19 Marty Friedman. "Story Behind the Song—'True Obsessions.'" *martyfriedman.com*. 9 Sep 2002.
- 20 *COCA*. Accessed 11 Jul 2025. Stephanie Burt. "Taylor Swift, Poet." *The Nation*. 1 Jul 2024.
- 21 "In Bitter Cold, School Officials Thankfully Play It Safe." (Minnesota) *Startribune.com*. 31 Jan 2014. However, note the exception discussed above: sometimes a proper noun may be preceded by *the*. But just as common nouns are much more, well, common than proper nouns, it is unusual to use *the* or other determiners with a proper noun.
- 22 Mark Lester. *Grammar and Usage in the Classroom*. 2nd ed. New York: Longman. 2000. 24. The same comment holds here: while proper nouns can be pluralized in some contexts, it is uncommon.
- 23 Jennifer Frey. "Team Player." *Washington Post*. 16 Dec 2002.
- 24 *COCA*. Accessed 11 Jul 2025. "Back Talk." *Skiing*. Sep 1996. 30.
- 25 John E. Warriner. *English Grammar and Composition*. Fourth Course. Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. 1982 [1948]. 78.
- 26 Jim Walker. "Lady Panthers' Chapman Leads Area All-Ohio Softball Picks." *The Ironton (Ohio) Tribune*, 11 Jun 2009.
- 27 *COCA*. Accessed 11 Jul 2025. Tamra Davis, dir. *Billy Madison*. Universal. 1995.
- 28 Herb Kane. "William Shatner Says My Chicken Is 'Delicious.'" *bbqcritic.com*. 13 Oct 2021.
- 29 *COCA*. Accessed 11 Jul 2025. "Body of Work." *Morning*. CBS. 9 Jun 2002.
- 30 Gail Pollock. "Major Scotty Moore." *scottymoore.net*. 28 Aug 2003.
- 31 "The Trouble with Tribbles." *memory-alpha.fandom.com*. 2025.
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- 35 Mark Lester. *Grammar and Usage in the Classroom*. 2nd ed. New York: Longman. 2000. 39.
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- 37 J. L. Dillard. *Black English: Its History and Usage in the United States*. New York: Vintage Books. 1972. 59.
- 38 *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*. Ed. Robert Bridges. London: Humphrey Milford. 1918. 29.
- 39 Sentences based on Debra Michals. "Elizabeth Cady Stanton." *womenshistory.org*. 2017.

Prepositions (P) and Prepositional Phrases (PP)

3.1 Prepositions: Form and Function

Prepositions (P) are a category of function words that convey meaning about the relative locations and movements of actions and objects in space (*on, to, in, by*, etc.) and time (*before, after, until*, etc.), as well as more abstract relations like possession (*of*), source (*by*—as in authorship; *according to*) and a host of other literal and metaphoric relationships.

A preposition may comprise one, two, three, or even four words, although one-word prepositions are the most common. Prepositions are commonly regarded as a closed class of function words. While this is clearly true for one-word prepositions (with the recent exception of *because*, which I will discuss below), we can generate new examples of multi-word prepositions, based on the models in the following list. And although prepositions are regarded as function words, they often carry much of the meaning and force of sentences because the relationships they express are meaningful. Just think of the differences in meaning of the following sentences, carried entirely by the prepositions: *The cat is **under** the table. The cat is **on** the table. The cat is **above** the table.* Clearly, these little function words carry a lot of weight!

Grammatically, a preposition functions as the head of a prepositional phrase. A preposition always requires a nominal, most often an NP, as a complement.

Here is a pretty comprehensive list of single-word prepositions, as well as representative lists of two-, three-, and four-word prepositions.¹

One-Word Prepositions

aboard	about	above	across	after	against
along	alongside	amid	amidst	among	amongst
around	as	astride	at	bar	barring
because ²	before	behind	below	beneath	beside
besides	between	beyond	but	by	circa
concerning	considering	despite	down	during	except

(Continued)

(Continued)

excepting	excluding	following	for	from	in
including	inside	into	like	minus	near/er/est
notwithstanding	of	off	on	onto	opposite
out	outside	over	past	pending	per
plus	regarding	round	save	since	than
through	throughout	till	to	toward/s	under
underneath	unlike	until	unto	up	upon
versus	via	vis-à-vis	with	within	without

Two-Word Prepositions

according to	across from	ahead of	along with
apart from	aside from	as for	as of
as to	away from	because of	but for
close to	contrary to	depending on	due to
except for	forward of	in between	inside of
instead of	irrespective of	near to	next to
on board	opposite to	other than	out from
out of	outside of	owing to	preparatory to
prior to	regardless of	save for	thanks to
together with	up against	up to	up until

Three- and Four-Word Prepositions:

as far as	as soon as	as well as	at the hands of
by means of	by virtue of	by way of	for the sake of
for want of	in accordance with	in addition to	in back of
in case of	in charge of	in common with	in comparison to/ with
in compliance with	in contact with	in exchange for	in favour of
in front of	in lieu of	in light of	in line with
in need of	in place of	in relation to	in return for
in line with	in place of	in relation to	in return for
in search of	in spite of	in step with	in terms of
in the face of	in the name of	in the process of	in touch with
in view of	on account of	on behalf of	on the matter of
on pain of	on the part of	on the strength of	on top of
with a view to	with/in reference to	with/in regard to	with the exception of

Some things to notice about the words in the preceding lists: As we go along, we will see that a number of words we identify here as prepositions can also function as other parts of speech. A number of prepositions can also function as adverbs:

Prepositions or Adverbs

aboard	about	above	across	after	along
alongside	around	as	astride	before	behind
below	beneath	beside	besides	between	beyond
but	by	down	in	inside	like
near	off	on	opposite	out	outside
over	past	round	since	through	throughout
to	under	underneath	up	within	without

P: *Gentle mists rolled **down** the mountain.*³ **Adverb:** *As volume went up, price went **down**.*⁴

P: *I really would like to put my head **out** the window.*⁵ **Adverb:** *Brian finished his sandwich as the stars came **out**.*⁶

P: *Seventy-five years ago today, we went **over** the rainbow.*⁷ **Adverb:** *It looked like the game was **over**.*⁸

Notice that the prepositions are each followed by an NP, while the adverbs are not (for more on adverbs and their functions, see Chapter 8).

Of the prepositions listed above, a good number can also function as subordinating conjunctions (SCONJ). Subordinating conjunctions mark the beginning of an adverb clause (10.2.3). If one of these words or phrases is complemented not just by an NP but by an entire clause, then the word is functioning as an SCONJ and not as a preposition:

P: *I'm light **as** a feather.*⁹

SCONJ: ***As** Dave approached a steep hill, two cyclists collided in front of him.*¹⁰

P: *Some of these people had **as much as** 37 years with the company.*¹¹

SCONJ: ***As much as** we may preach patience, as teachers we have only a limited time in which to evaluate our students.*¹²

P: *Gotta go through with it **because** reasons.*¹³

SCONJ: *I didn't go through with it **because** it would've been a lie.*¹⁴

Some words that function as prepositions can also function as verbs (V):

P: *This is amazing **considering** the terrible weather in the southeast during September.*¹⁵

V: *Eagles owner Jeffrey Lurie is **considering** selling a minority stake in the franchise.*¹⁶

P: ***Excluding** tips from federal income tax might simplify employer paperwork.*¹⁷

V: *Some insurers are **excluding** dogs from homeowners' policies.*¹⁸

And the word *but* not only can function as a preposition (meaning *except*) but is more commonly used as a coordinating conjunction (CCONJ):

P: *They care about no one **but** themselves.*¹⁹ *There **but for** the grace of God go I.*²⁰

CCONJ: *This year has been our best year yet, **but** next year is gonna be insane.*²¹

Many words that function as prepositions can also function as particles in phrasal verbs. In a phrasal verb, the VERB + PARTICLE combination functions as a single constituent (like a compound noun) and can often be paraphrased by a single word. Compare the following examples:

The bear went over the mountain. The class went over the notes.

In the first sentence, *over the mountain* is a PP, comprising the preposition *over* and the NP *the mountain*. The PP functions as a complement of the verb, with an adverbial meaning: the PP tells *where* the bear went. Also, the PP can be paraphrased by a single word: *The bear went there*. In the second example, *over the notes* is not a PP. Unlike *over the mountain*, *over the notes* does not tell *where* the class went—and it cannot be paraphrased by *there*, since *over the notes* is not a location. Rather, *went over* is a phrasal verb, which can be paraphrased by the single word *reviewed*: *The class went over the notes. The class reviewed the notes*. We will examine phrasal verbs in 7.1.4. For now, you should know that there are over 12,000 phrasal verbs in English.

To and of: The word *to* functions not only as a preposition and a particle; *to* functions as part of semi-modal verbs (e.g. *want to*, *have to*; see 6.1.2.1) and multi-word imperfect aspectual verbs (e.g. *start to*, *try to*, *manage to*; see 6.1.2.2), and *to* marks the infinitive form of verbs (e.g. *to do*, *to drive*; see 12.2). In addition, the common preposition *of* also functions as a “link” in a number of determiners (e.g. *one of*, *some of*, *part of*; see 4.2.1).

BL up: In BL varieties, the preposition *up* is commonly used as an “intimacy marker,” indicating that the location being named in the PP that follows *up* is “familiar and comfortable.”²²

*We sittin' **up** at Tony's.*

*Don't be sittin' **up** in my house askin' where's the money.*

*It was buck naked people **up** in my house.*

*I was gettin' comfortable watchin' TV **up** in bed.*²³

In the first sentence, *up* indicates that “Tony is a friend of yours.” In the second and third sentences, *up* emphasizes that “my house” is an intimate, comfortable place for its owner, and likewise for the “bed” in the fifth sentence. By contrast, **We was waitin' **up** at the dentist's* would be incorrect BL “because the dentist's office is a place you probably don't go that much and experience little comfort in.”²⁴

EFL-related preposition use: While many languages use prepositions, the information provided by prepositions in English is, in other languages, commonly conveyed in other ways. Some languages, such as Korean, instead use postpositions, placing the small word after its NP complement. Russian and Latin express the same information by attaching inflectional morphemes to the noun (much as English adds the morpheme *-s* to a noun to indicate the plural).²⁵ These differences can make it difficult for speakers of these foreign languages to acquire proficiency in using prepositions in English.

However, even for speakers of languages such as Spanish that do use prepositions, prepositional meaning is so idiomatic that it can be difficult to know which preposition is commonly used for which meaning. For example, in Spanish, *en* can mean “on,” as in, “It is on the table,” but it can also mean “in,” as in “It is in the room,” and “at,” as in “It’s at the house.” Moreover, idiomatic uses of these two prepositions further complicate learning. “In public transportation, for instance, the choice of *in* or *on* seems to be due to the relative mobility of the passenger inside the vehicle or to the size of the vehicle. Hence, in English, you ride *in* a taxi or *in* a small airplane, but you ride *on* a bus and *on* an airliner.”²⁶

A further problem for Spanish speakers is that for a number of Spanish prepositions, when the PCOMP is a non-finite verb, the preposition requires that its complement take the infinitive form of the verb. Thus, Spanish speakers will often say or write **a way*_[N] to do it instead of *a way*_[N] of doing it, or, **I consider that the expression . . . is a precise method*_[N] to define a fundamental characteristic of the American culture instead of *a precise method*_[N] of/for defining.²⁷ This happens not only when the non-finite verb follows a noun, but also when it follows an adjective, as in **The student is capable*_[Adj] to pass the test, instead of *capable of passing*.²⁸

So what? Regional and age-related variation in preposition use: Multiply this problem by thousands of prepositional idioms, as well as by the ways in which prepositional use varies by region. Northeasterners say wait on line, while wait in line is the idiom in the rest of the United States. Prepositional idioms also vary by generation. Someone may have called you out for writing based off of instead of based on, or saying on accident instead of by accident:

*I broke my user’s agreement on accident.*²⁹

*Were Pokémon’s Arceus and Giratina based off of the story of God and Satan?*³⁰

These changes tend to start with younger people, and with people from poor and working-class communities, and then to move up the age and socioeconomic scale. In terms of these two examples, people in their

mid-fifties would be far more likely to say *by accident* and *based on*. But both forms fit within the blueprint of English: *by accident* treats the *accident* metaphorically as a device that caused the event, or as a location one happened to be near. *On accident*, presumably modeled on *on purpose*, treats the accident metaphorically as a location where the event occurred. *Based on* treats *the story* metaphorically as a foundation on which *Arceus and Giratina* were built. *Based off of* treats *the story* metaphorically as a location from which *Arceus and Giratina* set out or began. Both versions (and *on line* and *in line*) work within the blueprint of the English language. Only social convention makes one more “correct” than the other.³¹

3.2 Prepositional Phrases: Form and Function

A PP always comprises a preposition followed by a nominal that is functioning as the complement of the preposition (P + NOMINAL:PCOMP). That nominal is most often a noun phrase (NP:PCOMP).

Here’s a common occurrence that traditional grammar books never notice: within a PP, the **preposition** can also take an adverbial modifier:

*I’m just **inside** the door.*³²

*She met her doctor not long **before** the surgery.*³³

*A decade **after** the crime, an arrest was made.*³⁴

In the first sentence, *just* is an adverb phrase functioning as a modifier of the preposition *inside* (ADV:P:MOD OF “inside”), telling *how far* or *to what degree inside*. In the second sentence, *not long* is a somewhat more complex ADVP that modifies *before* (ADV:P:MOD OF “before”), telling *how long before*. In the third sentence, *a decade* is an NP, functioning as an adverbial, functioning as a modifier of *after* (NP:ADVERBIAL:MOD OF “after”), telling *how long after*.

PPs can function as either adjectivals or adverbials: that is, like adjectives, they can modify nouns (though unlike adjectives, adjectival PPs always follow the noun they modify), or, like adverbs, PPs can modify whole sentences, adjectives, adverbs, or verbs, or function as adverbial complements of verbs.

Adjectival PPs: A PP functioning as an adjectival can only function as a post-modifier of a noun, as in *They helped fight the monsters under my bed.*³⁵ We can identify an adjectival PP functioning as a post-modifier of a noun (PP:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF N) using:

The adjectival question test (version 1): If a PP follows a noun and, with reference to that noun, the PP answers the question *which* or *what kind of*, then the PP is adjectival and modifies the preceding noun.

In the sentence *They helped fight the monsters under my bed*, if we want to know whether *under my bed* is an adjectival PP, we first check if it is following a noun—it is preceded by the noun *monsters*—and then ask, does this PP tell *which* or *what kind of monsters*? In this case, the PP *under my bed* does limit the meaning of *monsters* by telling *which monsters*. Therefore, *under my bed* is an adjectival PP.

Sometimes, the noun that a PP modifies will not be directly before the PP, since a noun may take more than one post-modifier. For example, in the sentence *People want the house on the hill with the white picket fence*,³⁶ both *on the hill* and *with the white picket fence* are adjectival PPs. However, while *on the hill* tells *which house*, and thus is a post-modifier of *house*, *with the white picket fence* does not tell *which hill* and thus is not a modifier of the noun that precedes it. Rather, *with the white picket fence* answers the question *which house* and is a second post-modifier of *house*. So both PPs are adjectival and function as post-modifiers of the noun *house* (PP:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF “house”).

Sometimes we encounter strings of PPs where the PPs are nested inside each other: each PP is a post-modifier in the NP in the preceding PP. In the sentence *The Cuddys have moved into a house near a park with a baseball diamond*,³⁷ the PP *with a baseball diamond* tells *which park*; it modifies the noun *park*. The PP *near a park with a baseball diamond* tells *which house*; it modifies the noun *house*. So, we have a large NP, *a house near a park with a baseball diamond*, which contains a PP, *near a park with a baseball diamond*, which contains an NP, *a park with a baseball diamond*, which contains a PP, *with a baseball diamond*, which, of course, also contains an NP, *a baseball diamond*. We can illustrate this structure graphically:

The Cuddys have moved into [a house [near [a park [with [a baseball diamond]]]]].

Or, to put it another way:

*The Cuddys have moved into [a house near a park with a baseball diamond]*_[NP:DIRECT OBJECT OF “moved into”]

*The Cuddys have moved into a house [near a park with a baseball diamond]*_[PP:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF “house”]

*The Cuddys have moved into a house near [a park with a baseball diamond]*_[NP:PCOMP OF “near”]

*The Cuddys have moved into a house near a park [with a baseball diamond]*_[PP:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF “park”]

*The Cuddys have moved into a house near a park with [a baseball diamond]*_[NP:PCOMP OF “with”]

The pronoun replacement test for NPs helps us see that the PP:ADJECTIVAL is a constituent of an NP. When we substitute an appropriate third-person pronoun

for less than all of the NP, the reference of a PP that is modifying the noun in the NP will change:

The Cuddyers have moved into a house near a park with a baseball diamond.

The Cuddyers have moved into **it near a park with a baseball diamond.*

Substituting *it* for *a house* changes the reference of the PP *near a park with a baseball diamond* from telling *which* house to nonsense. With a stretch, we could make the reference of the PP the whole clause, saying something about *how the Cuddyers moved it*. But that doesn't really work.

The Cuddyers have moved into a house near a park with a baseball diamond.

The Cuddyers have moved into **it with a baseball diamond.*

Substituting *it* for *a house near a park* changes the reference of the PP *with a baseball diamond* from telling which park to telling how they moved into the house—as though *a baseball diamond* accompanied the Cuddyers into the house. By contrast, we can replace any of the complete NPs with a third-person pronoun without changing the meaning of the sentence:

The Cuddyers have moved into a house near a park with a baseball diamond.

*The Cuddyers have moved into a house near a park with **it**.*

*The Cuddyers have moved into a house near **it**.*

*The Cuddyers have moved into **it**.*

To maintain the reference of the original NPs, we need to substitute *it* for a complete NP, in this case, those NPs whose head nouns are *baseball diamond*, *park*, and *house*, respectively.

Identifying adjectival PPs: If we were asked to identify all of the PPs in the preceding sentence, there are two: *near a park with a baseball diamond*, which is functioning as an adjectival modifier of *house* (PP:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF “house”), and *with a baseball diamond*, which is functioning as an adjectival modifier of *park* (PP:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF “park”). Each PP has a preposition (*near*; *with*) as its head, and an NP (*a park with a baseball diamond*; *a baseball diamond*) as its complement.

Adverbial PPs: PPs functioning as adverbials can have five functions:

- Modifier of Verb: *He slept **in the woods**.*³⁸
- Complement of Verb: *We went **into the store**.*³⁹
- Modifier of an Adjective: *Broccoli must have been green **with envy**.*⁴⁰
- Modifier of an Adverb: *They're downstairs **in the basement lot**.*⁴¹
- Sentence Modifier: ***In the evening** he informed members of Congress.*⁴²

In all of their adverbial functions, PPs can be identified by:

The adverbial question test: If a constituent word, phrase, or clause (let's call it *a*) answers an adverbial question about another constituent word, phrase, or clause (let's call it *b*), then the constituent (*a*) is probably adverbial; if you can delete (*a*) and still have a well-formed sentence, then (*a*) is an adverbial modifier of the constituent (*b*). Adverbial questions include *when, where, why, how, how often, how long*, etc.⁴³

We will see this test again in 8.2.

Adverbial PPs functioning as modifiers of verbs: When an adverbial PP functions as the modifier of a verb (PP:ADVERBIAL:MOD OF V), it typically appears directly after the verb:

*I slept in the office.*⁴⁴

*Yuri yelled with delight.*⁴⁵

*She waited until midnight.*⁴⁶

In all three sentences, the PP answers an adverb question about the verb: *where did I sleep? In the office. How did Yuri yell? With delight. When did she wait? Until midnight.* We also know that these PPs are modifiers because if we remove them, the sentence that remains is still a well-formed English sentence: *I slept. Yuri yelled. She waited.*

Typically, modifiers are tied closely to the constituent they modify. An adverbial constituent that modifies a sentence or dependent clause can be moved to the beginning, the end, and sometimes between the SUBJ and the PRED because it modifies the whole sentence or clause. An adjective modifying a noun must appear in the slot between the determiner and the noun, and other adjectival constituents modifying a noun must appear right after the noun. An adverbial constituent modifying a verb must appear close to the verb—either right before or right after it and sometimes in the middle of a **multi-word verb** (e.g. *I am absolutely going to try this*).⁴⁷ Also, typically, an adverbial modifier of a verb cannot be moved from its position in the sentence without changing its reference or making the sentence ill formed. In addition, in Chapter 7 we will discuss how some verbs take adverbials as complements—which also, typically, can't be moved.

It will be most useful to remember that modifiers—whether adjectival or adverbial—are optional constituents: if they are dropped, the sentence remains grammatically well formed and still has the same basic meaning.

Adverbial PP functioning as the complement of a verb: A complement is a constituent that is required in order to complete another constituent so that a sentence will be grammatically well formed. For example, a preposition requires an NP or other nominal as its complement to complete a PP. Most verbs require some kind of constituent as a complement.

When an adverbial PP functions as the complement of a verb, it also, like a PP:ADVERBIAL:MOD OF V, typically appears directly after the verb. There are five types of adverbial verb complement, each of which can be a PP:

PP:ADVERBIAL:SUBJECT COMPLEMENT (SC): *The wolf is at the door*.⁴⁸

PP:ADVERBIAL:LOCATIVE COMPLEMENT (LC): *I went into the locker room*.⁴⁹

PP:ADVERBIAL:TEMPORAL COMPLEMENT (TC): *They walked until two o'clock in the morning*.⁵⁰

PP:ADVERBIAL:MANNER COMPLEMENT (MC): *We've played with confidence*.⁵¹

PP:ADVERBIAL:OBJECT COMPLEMENT (OC): *I put the book on the shelf*.⁵²

We will examine each of these types of verb complement in Chapter 7. For now, don't sweat the details too much, but learn to recognize that in each of the preceding sentences with adverbial verb complements, the PP answers an adverb question involving the **verb**:

Where is the wolf? At the door.

*Where did I **go**? Into the locker room.*

*When did they **walk**? Until two o'clock in the morning.*

*How did we **play**? With confidence.*

*Where did I **put** the book? On the shelf.*

However, we know that these PPs are not modifiers because if we remove them, the sentence that remains is no longer well formed:

**The wolf is.*

?I went.

?They walked.

*?We've played.*⁵³

**I put the book.*

And since we know that they are not modifiers, we don't even have to check whether they can be moved to other locations in the sentence to determine whether they are modifying the whole sentence (although you can try it).

Just as we can replace a complete NP with a pronoun, we can usually replace each of these adverbial complements with a single-word adverb phrase. Adverbial complements that name locations—that tell *where*—can be replaced with *here* or *there*; adverbial complements that name times—that tell *when*—can be replaced with *now* or *then*; and adverbial complements that name the manner in which something was done—that tell *how*—can be replaced with *well*:

*The wolf is **there**.*

*I went **there**.*

*They walked **then**.*
*We've played **well**.*
*I put the book **there**.*

These examples suggest an “adverbial replacement test,” much like the pronoun replacement test for NPs. However, such a test is not as consistently accurate, since we can also use these adverbs to replace NPs, as in *I went up there* (i.e. *up the hill*) and *They walked until then* (i.e. *until the evening*). In checking for complete adverbial complements, we will have to use this replacement test carefully.

Adverbial PPs functioning as modifiers of adjectives: Typically, a PP:ADVERBIAL:MOD OF ADJ appears after an adjective when that adjective is the head of an adjective phrase that is functioning as the complement of a verb: *Your neighbors will be green **with envy***.⁵⁴ *The Northern public was tired **of war***.⁵⁵ In each sentence, the full adjective phrase (*green with envy*; *tired of war*) completes the meaning of the verb; without the adjective phrase, the sentence is ill formed: **The Northern public was*. **Your neighbors will be*.

An adverbial PP cannot modify an adjective when the adjective is modifying a noun: **Have you met your green with envy neighbors*? In the sentences about *your neighbors* and *the Northern public*, we know that the PPs are adverbial modifiers of the adjectives they follow because they answer adverb questions about the adjectives: *How/in what manner green?* *With envy*. *How/in what manner tired?* *Of war*. We also know that the PPs are modifiers because if we drop them, the sentences are still well formed: *Your neighbors will be green*. *The Northern public was tired*.

There is no question that these PPs are only modifying the adjectives they follow, because we cannot move them anywhere else in the sentence and still have a well-formed sentence; we end up, at best, sounding like Yoda, and at worst, changing the meaning of the original (try it). And with a PP:ADVERBIAL:MOD OF ADJ, we cannot even move the PP in front of the adjective it modifies: **Your neighbors will be **with envy** green*. **The Northern public was **of war** tired*. More Yoda-speak!

Adverbial PPs functioning as modifiers of adverbs: A PP:ADVERBIAL:MOD OF ADVERB always appears after the adverb:

They're downstairs in the basement lot.
*He'd toil for hours out in the yard.*⁵⁶
*Never in human history have so many lived for so long.*⁵⁷

In each case, the PP narrows the reference of the adverb it modifies, telling *where downstairs* and *out where*, and *to what degree* or *in what context never*.

In the list of multi-word prepositions, we have included several with the structure *as + ADVERB + as* (*as far as*, *as soon as*, *as well as*). This seems to me to be a highly

productive frame for creating multi-word prepositions, since we can put a great range of adverbs, as well as adjectives (e.g. *as large as*; *as high as*), into that middle slot. Should we treat them all as multi-word prepositions? Or would it make more sense to analyze the second *as* as the head of a PP:ADVERBIAL that is modifying the preceding adverb or adjective? I don't have a good answer. We will look at this *as* + ADVERB/ADJECTIVE + *as* pattern again when we get to subordinating conjunctions (10.2.3.1).

Adverbial PPs functioning as modifiers of sentences and other clauses: As we have seen above, an adverbial PP functioning as a sentence modifier can appear at the beginning of a sentence, at the end, or sometimes between the subject and the predicate:

In the evening he informed members of Congress.
He informed members of Congress *in the evening*.
?He, *in the evening*, informed members of Congress.

We know that the PP is adverbial because it answers an adverb question about the whole sentence: *When did he inform members of Congress?* *In the evening*. We know the PP is a modifier because we can drop it and still have a well-formed sentence: *He informed members of Congress*. We know it is a sentence modifier because we can move it to two, possibly three, different slots, and the sentence remains well formed and has the same meaning as the original. We have already seen the movability test for identifying adverbial constituents functioning as sentence modifiers (ADVERBIAL:SENTMOD). Adverbials are very common in English, and we will frequently use this test.

We can sum up the features that define each of the functions of adverbial PPs that we have seen so far:

Adverbial PPs: Functions and Features

	Is the PP required or optional in this function?		In this function, is the PP movable?	In this function, where is the PP located?
	Required	Optional		
COMP OF V	X		No	Usually after the verb
MOD OF V		X	Not usually	Usually after the verb
MOD OF ADJ		X	Not usually	Usually after the ADJ
MOD OF ADV		X	No	After the ADV
SENTMOD		X	Yes	At the beginning or end of the clause or between the SUBJ and PRED

The problem of locative PPs: We are already learning a lot about adverbials; by the time we talk about adverbs (Chapter 8), much of what we discuss will be repetition. However, in the context of discussing PPs, it is useful to talk about locative adverbials, phrases that identify a location—a *where*. As we noted above in the adverb question test, *where* is an adverb question. But locative phrases can function as both adjectivals and adverbials, and it can sometimes be hard to say whether a locative PP is adjectival or adverbial. Consider the following examples:

*I met a man in a kilt.*⁵⁸

*I met a man in the park.*⁵⁹

*The man in the park was my brother.*⁶⁰

The problem arises when the locative PP follows a noun, and it is unclear whether the PP is adjectival and modifies the preceding noun (PP:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF N) or the PP is adverbial and functions as a SENTMOD (PP:ADVERBIAL:SENTMOD). To check, we simply have to apply the tests we have already learned: if the PP is modifying the noun, then the pronoun replacement test will show that the PP is a constituent of the NP. If the pronoun replacement test fails and the movability test for an ADVERBIAL:SENTMOD works, then it is likely that the PP is adverbial and functioning as a SENTMOD. In each example sentence above, the PP follows a noun and is located where a SENTMOD could be: in the first two sentences, the PP is at the end of the sentence; in the third sentence, the PP is apparently between the subject (*the man*) and the predicate (*was my brother*). All three might be SENTMODS.

Let's walk through it a little bit. In the sentence *I met a man in a kilt*, we can substitute an appropriate pronoun for *a man in a kilt* but not for just *a man*:

I met a man in a kilt.

I met him.

**I met him in a kilt.* (which would mean that I was wearing the kilt)

Therefore, *in a kilt* must be an adjectival PP functioning as a post-modifier of the noun *man* (PP:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF "man").

Just as a double-check, let's see if we might parse the PP *in a kilt* as an adverbial sentence modifier:

**In a kilt I met a man.*

?I, in a kilt, met a man.

When we move the PP to the beginning, the sentence is no longer well formed; when we move it to the slot between the subject and the predicate, the sentence is a little awkward, but its meaning changes: the PP no longer refers to the *man* but instead may refer to *I*: *While I was wearing a kilt, I met a man*. In this sentence,

it does not seem that we can parse the PP *in a kilt* as a sentence modifier. Now we can apply the adjectival question test: in the original sentence, does the PP *in a kilt* tell us *which* or *what kind of man*? It does: *a man in a kilt*. If we apply the adverb question test, the answer we get is ridiculous: *where did you meet a man? *In a kilt*—as if *a kilt* were a place! So we have confirmed that in this sentence, the PP *in a kilt* is not movable and answers an adjective question about the noun it follows, so we have confirmed that the PP *in a kilt* is a PP:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF N.

Try the same process with the other two sentences. What happens? In each case, is the PP *in the park* adjectival or adverbial?

3.3 Key Points

- Prepositions are function words that convey meaning about locations and movements in space and time, as well as more abstract relations like possession, source, and other literal and metaphoric relationships.
- A preposition functions as the head of a prepositional phrase (PP).
- A PP always requires a nominal, most often an NP, as a complement of the preposition.
- A PP may function as an adjectival or an adverbial.
- An adjectival PP may function as a post-modifier of a noun.
- An adverbial PP may function as a modifier of a verb, a complement of a verb, a modifier of an adjective, a modifier of an adverb, or a sentence modifier.

3.4 Exercises: Prepositional Phrases

Find the Prepositional Phrases 1: Made-up sentences⁶¹

For each sentence,

- Identify each complete PP.
- Identify each preposition.
- Identify each complete NP:PCOMP.
- For each complete PP, **try** to identify whether it is adjectival or adverbial.
- For each complete PP, **try** to identify its function (e.g. “MODIFIER OF *noun*” or “SENTMOD”).

Sometimes, there are PPs inside other PPs. **Remember:** not all prepositions are part of PPs, and some words that look like prepositions may be functioning as other parts of speech.

Example: *Franz liked the field in the park.*

Complete PP: *in the park*

P: *in*

NP:PCOMP: *the park*

Adjectival or Adverbial: adjectival

Function: MODIFIER OF “field”

- A. Egypt has opened a 4,000-year-old tomb near Giza, home to the famous pyramids, for the first time.
- B. The tomb of Mehu is located in the Saqqara region.
- C. Dating to the 6th dynasty, the tomb held Vizier Mehu, a high-ranking advisor close to the king.
- D. It was discovered in 1940 by Egyptologist Zaki Saad.
- E. The public was able to visit it for the first time in history this weekend.
- F. Images on social media showed visitors queueing to enter and taking photographs of the interior.
- G. The colors inside are different from many other tombs in the necropolis as the brightness of them is somewhat unusual.
- H. Many of the paintings inside are unique to the time period, with images of a crocodile marrying a turtle and celebration dances depicted on the walls.
- I. The tomb doesn’t just contain Mehu but also his son Meren Ra and his grandson Heteb Kha.
- J. Mehu held forty-eight titles during the reign of King Pepi, which were found on the walls of the tomb.

Find the Prepositional Phrases 2: Real sentences

Use the same instructions as in “Find the Prepositional Phrases 1,” but use the passage on page 28, “Jimmy’s Sales Tip: Sam’s, Costco.”

Find the Prepositional Phrases 3: More real sentences⁶²

Use the same instructions again.

- (A) And the answer to a serious scientific question from the surface of the utterly weird and thoroughly smoggy, flammable, hydrocarbon-soaked Saturnian moon Titan is: thud. (B) Or perhaps: splat.
- (C) And that’s just fine with the international throng of planetary researchers who, on January 14 at a European Space Agency control room in Darmstadt, Germany, broke into giddy, relieved cheers. (D) Telemetry from a tiny spacecraft named Huygens revealed it had survived the farthest landing that any human machine has made on another world, whomping onto a soft but—surprising to some—not quite fluid surface soaked in, essentially, liquefied natural gas.
- (E) For nearly thirty years they and their colleagues have pondered in near disbelief hints that hydrocarbons literally rain from the sky on this large, haze-shrouded satellite of majestically ringed Saturn.

Notes

- 1 If you want even more examples, Wikipedia's "List of English Prepositions" is the most comprehensive that I have seen.
- 2 As I noted above, prepositional *because* is new to the language, having only taken on this function somewhere around 2010; my including it here will, for some people, be questionable or downright wrong. I will give an example below, and will discuss the new usage in more detail in 10.2.3.1.
- 3 *Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)*. Accessed 11 Jul 2025. Miroslav Penkov. "Black Water, Plum Rain." *The Southern Review*. Summer 2019. 344.
- 4 *COCA*. Accessed 11 Jul 2025. James Fallows. "Looking at the Sun." *Atlantic Monthly*. 272:5. Nov 1993. 69.
- 5 *COCA*. Accessed 11 Jul 2025. Gail Mancuso, dir. *A Dog's Journey*. Universal Studios. 2019.
- 6 *COCA*. Accessed 11 Jul 2025. Diane Kolb. "Waiting for the Perseids." *Jack and Jill*. Jul/Aug 2010. 24.
- 7 *COCA*. Accessed 11 Jul 2025. Jane Pauley. *CBS This Morning*. 12 Aug 2014.
- 8 Mike Shaffer. "Jefferson Holds Off Girard to Win DIV." *Star Beacon* (Ashtabula, OH). 5 Nov 2022.
- 9 *COCA*. Accessed 11 Jul 2025. Jimmy Hayward & Steve Martino, dirs. *Horton Hears a Who*. Blue Sky Studios. 2008.
- 10 *COCA*. Accessed 11 Jul 2025. Pam Cannon. "The Recycled Bike." *Children's Digest*. May/June 2007. 9.
- 11 "Twinkie Maker Hostess Brands to Shut Down." *Bloomberg News*. 16 Nov 2012.
- 12 *COCA*. Accessed 11 Jul 2025. George David Clark. "The Patience Problem." *Chronicle.com*. 5 Nov 2012.
- 13 *COCA*. Accessed 11 Jul 2025. Timothy B. Lee. "European Governments Approve Controversial New Copyright Law." *Ars Technica*. 21 Feb 2019.
- 14 *COCA*. Accessed 11 Jul 2025. Garry Marshall, dir. *Runaway Bride*. Paramount. 1999.
- 15 "Q3 2004 Ann Taylor Stores Earnings Conference Call." *Fair Disclosure Wire*. 10 Nov 2004.
- 16 E. J. Smith. "Lurie Is Considering Selling Minority Stake." *The Philadelphia Daily News*. 7 Jun 2024.
- 17 Virginia Postrel. "Candidates' Plans Would Make Tipping Culture Worse." *Los Angeles Times*. 22 Aug 2024.
- 18 "Hot Programs and Products." *Insurance Journal*. 21 Mar 2011.
- 19 *COCA*. Accessed 11 Jul 2025. "The Public Pulse: Irony of State Patrol Drug Seizures." *Omaha World-Herald*. 4 Jan 2019. As a preposition, *but* commonly follows indefinite pronouns such as *all*, *anyone*, *everything*, and *nobody* (see 5.1).
- 20 Attributed to John Bradford, first half of the 16th century.
- 21 Anonymous. *Facebook*. 30 Nov 2023.
- 22 John McWhorter. *Talking Back, Talking Black*. New York: Bellevue Literary Press. 2017. 38–39.
- 23 John McWhorter. *Talking Back, Talking Black*. New York: Bellevue Literary Press. 2017. 37.
- 24 John McWhorter. *Talking Back, Talking Black*. New York: Bellevue Literary Press. 2017. 39.
- 25 Cowan, Ron. *The Teacher's Grammar of English*. New York: Cambridge UP. 2008. 162–164.
- 26 Cowan, Ron. *The Teacher's Grammar of English*. New York: Cambridge UP. 2008. 163.

- 27 Cowan, Ron. *The Teacher's Grammar of English*. New York: Cambridge UP. 2008. 163–164.
- 28 Cowan, Ron. *The Teacher's Grammar of English*. New York: Cambridge UP. 2008. 258.
- 29 Anonymous. "I Broke My Users Agreement on Accident." *Nintendo Support Forums*. 19 Mar 2019.
- 30 "Were Pokémon's Arceus and Giratina Based off of the Story of God and Satan?" *Quora.com*. 2 Apr 2015.
- 31 For more information on *on accident* versus *by accident*, see Leslie Barratt. "What Speakers Don't Notice: Language Changes Can Sneak In." *TRANS: Internet-Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften*. 26 Jun 2006; Mignon Fogarty. "On Accident versus by Accident." *Grammar Girl. Episode 63*. 22 Jun 2007. For more about *based off*, see Jan Freeman. "Off Base: A Phrase That's Hard to Picture." *The Boston Globe*. 13 Jan 2008.
- 32 Anonymous. *Facebook*. 8 Dec 2024.
- 33 COCA. Accessed 11 Jul 2025. Allison Adato. "Plastic Surgery South of the Border." *People*. Jun 2005. 117.
- 34 Erika Hayasaki. "Your Lying Eyes." *Newsweek*. 28 Nov 2014. 38.
- 35 Virginia Terzian. *Daily Titan* (Cal State-Fullerton). 13 Jul 2005.
- 36 Edward D. Murphy. "The Price Is—Ouch!" *Portland Press Herald* (Maine). 2 Jun 2002.
- 37 Pat Graham. "Cuddyer Feeling Right at Home in Rockies Lineup." *The Associated Press*. 19 Apr 2012.
- 38 COCA. Accessed 11 Jul 2025. Melanie Rae Thon. "The River Woman's Son." *Ploughshares*. Spring 1997. 182.
- 39 Anonymous. *r/vinyl. Reddit*. 2022.
- 40 COCA. Accessed 11 Jul 2025. "Interview with Dave Zincenko." *Today*. NBC. 19 Sep 2019.
- 41 COCA. Accessed 11 Jul 2025. Louis Shaw Milito, dir. "Legend of the Dark Knight: Trespassers." *Gotham*. S5.E2. 10 Jan 2019.
- 42 Kacy Burdette. "Photos of Richard Nixon's Last Days as President." *Fortune.com*. 16 Jun 2017.
- 43 Note that adverbials are a complicated category and adverbial questions need a little elaboration. In particular, *how* is a general version of several more specific questions: *in what manner*; *in what context*; *by what means*. We will see the list of adverbial questions expand as we study more adverbs and adverbial constituents.
- 44 Anonymous. *Hacker News*. 6 Nov 2022.
- 45 COCA. Accessed 11 Jul 2025. Robin Cook. *Vector*. New York: Putnam's. 1999. 182.
- 46 Chris Willman. "Taylor Swift Announces All-New Album." *Variety*. 28 Aug 2022.
- 47 Anonymous. *Instagram*. May 2025.
- 48 COCA. Accessed 11 Jul 2025. Ben Angel. *The Wolf Is at the Door*. Ashland, OR: Blackstone. 2024.
- 49 COCA. Accessed 11 Jul 2025. "The Surrogate." *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. S4.E7. 22 Feb 2004.
- 50 COCA. Accessed 11 Jul 2025. Gertrude C. Warner. "The Boxcar Adventure." *Child Life*. Jan/Feb 1998. 22.
- 51 Scott Satterfield. "Postgame Quotes: App State vs. Georgia Southern." *appstatesports.com*. 23 Oct 2015.
- 52 COCA. Accessed 11 Jul 2025. Elizabeth Buchan. "Revenge of the Middle-Aged Woman." *Good Housekeeping*. Oct 2003. 173.
- 53 Of course, we can create contexts in which *I went*, *they walked*, and *we've played* are well-formed sentences without a verb complement, but the complement has to

be implied in the context, as in, “You don’t need to go to the store. I went.” Here, the verb complement—the constituent that tells *where I went*—is given by the preceding sentence.

- 54 COCA. Accessed 11 Jul 2025. Jessica Baumgardner. “*Good Housekeeping’s* Best of Everything List.” *Good Housekeeping*. May 2005. 156.
- 55 Eric Hogan. “Abraham Lincoln Propelled to Victory.” *The Albany Herald* (Georgia). 2 Sep 2024.
- 56 John Lorson. “Send Help! Out in the Yard with a Little Old Man.” *thedailyrecord.com* (Wooster, OH). 18 Oct 2020.
- 57 Christine Herbes-Sommers, dir. *Coming of Age in Aging America*. Vital Pictures. 2017.
- 58 Ben Gibbons. “Lessons We Learned from Northside Music Festival.” *Pittsburgh Independent*. 24 Jul 2024.
- 59 Anonymous. “r/Jokes.” *Reddit*. 2021.
- 60 COCA. Accessed 11 Jul 2017. Chris Weitz & Paul Weitz, dirs. *Down to Earth*. Paramount. 2001.
- 61 Based on Kara Godfrey. “Egypt Opens 4000-Year-Old Tomb in a Pyramid Near Giza.” *Express*. 10 Sep 2018.
- 62 Charles Petit. “Earth’s Distant Cousin.” *U.S. News & World Report*. 31 Jan 2005. 36–37.

Adjectives (Adj) and Adjective Phrases (AdjP); Determiners (D) and Determiner Phrases (DP)

Adjectives are content words, traditionally defined as modifiers of nouns. By “modifying,” we mean that they qualify, limit, contextualize, or more closely define the thing that is being named by the noun. But, as modifiers, grammatically, they are optional constituents: if we drop an adjective phrase (AdjP) from an NP, the NP will still be well formed. We will use the word “adjective” to refer to what are sometimes called descriptive adjectives. Descriptive adjectives are words such as *tall*, *beautiful*, *happy*, *miserable*, and *blue* that name qualities possessed by the things named by nouns: they *describe* nouns.

Later in the chapter, we will examine a category of function words called determiners. Traditional grammar commonly fails to distinguish determiners from adjectives since, like adjectives, determiners function in NPs and fill slots preceding the noun. However, determiners are distinct from adjectives in that determiners appear only in NPs, and within NPs, determiners always precede an AdjP. Determiners also differ from adjectives in several key features, most notably that adjectives are gradable (e.g. *big*, *bigger*, *biggest*), while determiners (e.g. *the*, *their*, *seven*), with few exceptions, are not.

4.1 Adjectives (Adj) and Adjective Phrases (AdjP): Adjective Forms

Adjectives come in two forms: gradable and absolute (or non-gradable). Gradable adjectives have three forms or degrees: the base, the comparative, and the superlative:

Base: *close*, *desirable*, *good*

Comparative: *closer*, *more desirable*, *better*

Superlative: *closest*, *most desirable*, *best*

These examples show the three ways in which the different degrees are formed. Most single-syllable adjectives are regular and take the endings *-er* and *-est*

to mark the comparative and superlative, while most multi-syllable adjectives are regular and take the words *more* and *most*. *Good/better/best* is one of a small set of irregular exceptions, along with *well/better/best*; *bad/worse/worst*; *far/farther/farthest*; and *far/further/furthest*.

Absolute or non-gradable adjectives do not show degree. Examples include *main*, *electronic*, and *stone* (as in “a *stone* wall”). Something cannot be **mainer* or **more main*, **electronicer* or **more electronic*. Nouns functioning as adjectives, such as *stone*, are also typically absolute, as in *soccer ball* and *elbow room*.

Present and past participles (verb forms ending in *-ing* and, most often, *-ed*) can often function as adjectives. How gradable they are varies from non-gradable, as in *running water* or a *burned region* (**the more running water*; ?*a more burned region*) to fully gradable with *more* and *most*, as in *the interesting/more interesting/most interesting question*, and *the detailed/more detailed/most detailed information*. With participles, gradability depends on how firmly established the participle is as an adjective: some participles (e.g. *interesting/ed*, *exciting/ed*) are used almost exclusively as adjectives, and almost never as verbs.

The word *unique*, which started as non-gradable, has, in much common usage, become gradable: for many English speakers, something can now be *more unique* or *the most unique*:

MacGraw had a quality that was far more unique.¹
He's perhaps the most unique wideout on the roster.²

While this grates on some speakers' ears, its use in writing has been slowly growing since the 1820s.

Non-WME comparatives and superlatives: “Most vernacular varieties of English indicate some comparative and superlative adjective and adverb forms that are not found in Standard varieties. Some forms involve the regularization of irregular forms.”³ Thus, instead of *bad/worse/worst*, we find *bad/badder/baddest*, as in:

*“The **baddest**,” a follower mentioned, while another poster added, “Rickey so baddd,” in reference to her baddie aura.⁴*
*“I’ve met a lot of my closest and **bestest** friends from these events,” she said.⁵*
*So, what’s next for the **goodest** boy in all of Ransom Canyon?⁶*

Some irregular forms “involve the use of *-er* and *-est* on adjectives of two or more syllables (e.g. *beautifullest*, *awfulest*), where the [mainstream] variety uses *more* and *most*”;⁷ however, these forms were mainstream English throughout the

nineteenth century⁸ and seem only to have become consistently non-mainstream in the twentieth century. The following two nineteenth-century examples come from Herman Melville and Eugene Field, respectively, both of which are arguably “mainstream” writers:

*We brand thee, in thy every lung-cell, a liar;—liar, because that is the **scornfullest** and **loathsomest** title for a man.*⁹

*But the gingham dog and the calico cat
Wallowed this way and tumbled that,
Employing every tooth and claw
In the **awfulest** way you ever saw*¹⁰

“In some instances, comparatives and superlatives are doubly marked, as in *most awfulest* or *more nicer*”:¹¹

*The news is getting “less awfuller,” he said.*¹²
*It makes a sunny day all that much **more nicer**!*¹³
*The **most beautifullest** thing in this world, is just like that!!*¹⁴

Such double markings were not originally redundant.¹⁵ Until the late 1500s, most gradable adjectives took the *-er/-est* endings as inflections, while *-more/-most* initially developed as comparative and superlative suffixes, as in words like *furthermore* and *outermost*. Then, gradually, the words *more* and *most* came into use as adverbs of degree to mark the comparative and superlative. There was a period of overlap when using *more/most* and *-er/-est* together was a mainstream usage,¹⁶ and we find numerous examples:

*This was the **most unkindest** cut of all.*¹⁷
*A wall’d town is **more worthier** than a village.*¹⁸

This usage only comes to be condemned as a double marking of degree (and therefore a needless redundancy) first by John Dryden, who calls it “gross” (1672),¹⁹ and then with increasing vigor by late eighteenth-century prescriptive grammarians such as Lindley Murray (1795).²⁰ A 1940 study found that while WME speakers tend to use the *-er/-est* inflectional endings about half of the time (using adverbs like *more/most* to mark degree otherwise), non-WME speakers tend to use the older *-er/-est* inflections 90 percent of the time.²¹ This helps explain why the “overuse” or “misuse” of *-er/-est* inflections still stands out as a feature of non-WME varieties.

So what? There are three non-WME ways of marking the comparative and superlative degrees of adjectives, all of which are currently in use in many varieties of English: regularization of irregular forms; use of *-er* and *-est* with adjectives of two or more syllables; and double marking. However, when we make judgments about WME versus non-WME varieties, we should always remember that those judgments really apply only to the current status quo. Regularization is a routine process in language change, and the other two “non-mainstream” forms for marking degree were once features of WME.

EFL-related comparative and superlative use: Romance languages, including Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian, form the comparative for adjectives (and adverbs as well) by adding words meaning “more” or “less” before the adjective, regardless of how many syllables the adjective comprises. Thus, L1 speakers of Romance languages may produce sentences like, **He is much more old than me*, instead of *much older*, and **For me is more easy to see what I am learning*, instead of *easier*. In French, the superlative is formed by adding a phrase meaning “the most/least” before adjectives, leading French L1 speakers to produce sentences like, **I am the most short person of the class*. Similarly, Portuguese speakers may say or write, **I am convinced that the most strong friends are people that grow with us in our childhood*.²²

Identifying adjectives: There are four tests for identifying adjectives:

The adjective slot test: If you can place a word in the slot between the determiner *one* and a singular common noun (e.g. *one _____ house*) or in the slot between the determiner *two* and a plural common noun (e.g. *two _____ houses*), then the word is an adjective.

The predicate adjective test: If you can place a word in the slot after *seems* in *He/she/it seems _____*, then the word is an adjective. This test does not work for nouns functioning adjectivally: **It seems stone*.

The very test (works only with the base form of gradable adjectives): If a word that seems to be a noun modifier can be used with *very*, then the modifier is an adjective.

The adjectival question test (version 2): If a word or phrase that seems to be a noun modifier answers the question *which* or *what kind of*, then it is an adjectival. For example, if we have the sentence *Trucks transport large concrete bridge segments along Fore River Parkway*, and we want to know if *large* and *concrete* are adjectives, we simply ask, *Which bridge segments did trucks transport?* or *What kind of bridge segments did trucks transport?* And the answer, *large concrete ones*, tells us that *large* and *concrete* are adjectives.

The adjective question test works for identifying determiners along with adjectives, but not for distinguishing between adjectives and determiners: if the sentence read, *Trucks transport the first two large concrete bridge segments along Fore River Parkway*,²³ and we applied the adjective question test by asking, *Which bridge segments did trucks transport?* the answer would be, *The first two large concrete ones*. As we shall see below, while traditional grammar categorizes determiners (*The first two*) together with adjectives (*large concrete*), there are distinct grammatical differences between these two categories of words. In particular, determiners are almost never gradable.

4.1.1 Adjective Phrases: Forms and Functions

An adjective functions as the head of an adjective phrase (ADJP). Whether it appears by itself, or, as is sometimes the case, accompanied by adverbial modifiers, an adjective is always the head of an ADJP. An ADJP may comprise an adjective alone, or it may include an adverb phrase preceding the ADJ, an adverbial PP following the ADJ, or both:

ADJ: *They ran a **close** race.*²⁴ *It's **cold**.*²⁵

AdvP + ADJ: *Most polls show a very close race.*²⁶ *It's too cold.*²⁷ *Obviously, it would be highly desirable to avoid such a scenario.*²⁸

ADJ + PP:ADVERBIAL: *They were **green** with envy.*²⁹ *She's **high** on life.*³⁰ *I'm **anxious** about the exam.*³¹

AdvP + ADJ + PP:ADVERBIAL: *We are seriously green with envy.*³² *She's just high on life.*³³ *I'm so anxious about the exam.*³⁴

ADJPs have only two functions: modifier of a noun, as in *This is a very close race*,³⁵ and complement of a verb, as in *The race is very close*³⁶ (ADJP:SUBJECT COMPLEMENT [SC]; see 7.1.2.2) and *He considers the risks minimal*³⁷ (ADJP:OBJECT COMPLEMENT [OC]; see 7.1.3.2). There is a small limit on which forms of ADJP can perform which functions. While any kind of ADJP can be a verb complement, typically only the simplest ADJP—an adjective preceded by an adverb or a brief adverb phrase—can modify a noun. The ADJP *very highly placed* in the NP *a very highly placed source*³⁸ is about as complex a phrase as we will normally find in the ADJP slot between the determiner and the noun. Generally, we want to put any lengthy adjectival material in the post-modifier slot after the noun. There are, as always, informal contexts that violate this sort of general statement, as in a sentence like the following with a complex pre-nominal ADJP: *We need a “seriously green with envy” emoticon*.³⁹ In writing, such oddities will commonly be hyphenated or marked with quotation marks (creating a sort of compound ADJ).⁴⁰

We can, of course, place several brief ADJPs in the slot between the determiner and the noun, as when we write or say, *On Sesame Street there were several **large, blue, very furry** monsters*. In this sentence, we have three separate

ADJP's before the noun: *large*, followed by *blue*, followed by *very furry*. In traditional grammar we think of each of these as a separate ADJP, conjoined by commas, each modifying the noun *monsters*: each one tells *which* or *what kind of monsters*.

There is, however, another strong interpretation of such a string of ADJP's in an NP. In some ways it seems that each of the ADJP's isn't just modifying the noun but that each ADJP modifies everything that follows it in the NP. While the ADJP *very furry* tells us *which monsters*, the ADJP *blue* tells us *which very furry monsters* (*the blue ones*—*the blue, very furry monsters*, as opposed to some other monster, such as Elmo, who is red); and the ADJP *large* tells us *which blue very furry monsters* (*the large blue very furry ones*—like Herry—as opposed to small, blue very furry monsters like Grover). To describe this sense that there is a series of nested relationships among ADJP's that modify a noun, more recent grammatical theory proposes that there is an intermediate structure between the N and the NP, called an “N-bar” and symbolized by N'. The N' is used to label the structures that are not complete NPs but that help illustrate the internal complexity of the modification within the NP:

monsters [N]

very furry [ADJP:MOD OF “monsters”]

very furry monsters [N']

blue [ADJP:MOD OF N' “very furry monsters”]

blue, very furry monsters [N']

large [ADJP:MOD OF N' “blue very furry monsters”]

large, blue, very furry monsters [N']

several [D:SPECIFIER OF N' “large, blue, very furry monsters”]

several large, blue, very furry monsters [NP:COMPLEMENT OF “were”]

You can analyze the relationships among ADJP's and the noun within an NP either way: both satisfy different features of our sense of how those relationships work. Most people you talk to about grammar will remember the traditional analysis and not know about N-bars. But it will prove useful to remember that there is usually more than one way to think about any grammatical analysis.

Adjectival appositive phrases: Just as an NP may function as a non-essential modifier of a noun, there are also adjectival appositive phrases:

Fat and happy with his centuries-old smile, the Buddha Shakyamuni receives everyone.

*The Buddha Shakyamuni, fat and happy with his centuries-old smile, receives everyone.*⁴¹

The Buddha Shakyamuni receives everyone, fat and happy with his centuries-old smile.

Fat and *happy* are adjectives, and *with his centuries-old smile* is a PP:ADVERBIAL:MOD OF “happy,” describing how the Buddha displays his happiness. The adjectival appositives tell us something about the Buddha Shakyamuni. Like some nominal appositives, however, this sort of adjectival appositive seems to be both adjectival—telling us something about the Buddha—and perhaps adverbial—describing a state that exists at the same time as the action named in the clause (i.e. while *he receives everyone*, the Buddha is *fat and happy with his centuries-old smile*). After all, it appears we can relocate the modifying phrase in the same manner we can shift an ADVERBIAL:SENTMOD, moving it away from the noun it apparently modifies. So is *fat and happy with his centuries-old smile* adjectival or adverbial? We will further discuss this blurring of the line between non-essential adjectival modifiers and adverbial modifiers in Chapter 12.

4.2 Determiners (D) and Determiner Phrases (DP)

Determiners—as a category of function words—appear only in NPs. They appear in the slot before the ADJP:MOD OF N, as the first constituent of the NP. In traditional grammar, the category we are identifying as determiners is simply lumped in with adjectives; after all, like adjectives, determiners conventionally precede nouns and seem to specify and identify what a noun is referring to just as much as adjectives do. However, determiners are distinct from adjectives in several ways, most notably in that determiners are not modifiers. Remember that modifiers are always optional constituents: if we drop them, the sentence is still grammatically well formed. We cannot always drop determiners: *determiners* are obligatory with singular count nouns:

Singular count noun

Yehiel bought **the** green truck.⁴²

Yehiel bought **the** truck.

*Yehiel bought green truck.

*Yehiel bought truck.

Plural count noun

Yehiel bought **the** green trucks.

Yehiel bought **the** trucks.

Yehiel bought green trucks.

Yehiel bought trucks.

Also, adjectives can function as verb complements (see Chapter 7), but determiners cannot function in any other role besides specifying the meaning of nouns, and they cannot be placed anywhere but in the slot at the beginning of the NP:

Adjective functioning as verb complement: *The truck was green.*

*Determiner functioning as verb complement: **The truck was the.*

For these reasons, we will not say that a determiner phrase modifies a noun, but we will say that a determiner phrase functions as a specifier of a noun (DP:SPEC OF N).

4.2.1 Determiner Forms

As with prepositions (Chapter 3) and pronouns (Chapter 5), the most common determiners simply constitute a list that we must learn to recognize. Below, I list fourteen types of determiners, separating out four of the most common types as “Central Determiners”; members of some of the other categories of determiners cannot be used without a preceding or following Central determiner. For example, the Partitive *any of* must be followed by a Central determiner (*any of the/those/my/Fred’s books*). A DP may include three, four, or more determiners.

Central Determiners

- Articles: *the, a, an*.
- Demonstratives: *this, that, these, those; which, what*.
- Possessives: *my, your, his, her, its, our, their; whose*.
- Possessive NP (NP + *’s*): *Fred’s; dogs’; the Peoria Symphony’s*.

Other Determiners: Amounts and Numbers

- Quantifiers: *all, another, any, both, each, either, few, little, many, neither, none, plenty, several, some, every, no*.
 - Cardinal numbers: *one, two, three*, etc.
 - Plural numbers + *of*: *dozens of, hundreds of, thousands of*.
 - Fractions: *half, a/one-third, three-fourths, two-fifths*, etc.
 - Multipliers: *once, twice, three times*, etc.; *double, triple*, etc.
- Partitives: *few of/a few of, little of/a little of, a lot of, a/the pound of, a/the quart of*, etc.
 - Many quantifiers + *of*: *all of, another of, any of, each of, either of*, etc.
 - Fractions + *of*: *one-third of, three-fourths of, two-fifths of*, etc.; *half of, a/the quarter of*, etc.
 - Cardinal numbers + *of*: *one of, two of, three of*, etc.
- Ordinal numbers: *first, second, third*, etc.; *next, last*.

The articles (*the, a, an*) can only be determiners, so they are the best examples to use as models in testing whether other words are determiners. **Note that a number of determiners in the list include the word *of*.** In these determiners, *of* is called a “link” because it links or connects the determiners in the DP. When *of* functions as a link, it is not a preposition. Note that quantifiers, fractions, and cardinals without *of* can function as indefinite pronouns (see 5.1) and therefore can be harder to identify when they are used as determiners.

Three notes about the preceding list of determiner forms:

Note (1): the difference between quantifiers and partitives: A quantifier limits the reference of a noun to the totality of some set of things named by the noun. A partitive limits the reference of a noun to some part of a set of things named by the noun. In *Some cookies lay on the end table*,⁴³ *some* is a quantifier that limits the reference of the noun *cookies* to all of the cookies that were on the end table. In the sentence *Some of the cookies were a little undercooked*,⁴⁴ *some of* is a partitive that limits the reference of the noun *cookies* to some portion of—“some, but not all of”—the cookies.

Note (2): All possessive NPs are determiners: As soon as we put *'s* at the end of an NP, it becomes a possessive determiner and behaves like a single word. Even fairly complex NPs can become determiners simply by adding *'s* as a possessive marker. In each of the following sentences, the underlined phrase is a possessive determiner:

*Things got a little wild in the winning team's clubhouse after the game.*⁴⁵
*The new prime minister's cabinet included Mrs. Thatcher.*⁴⁶

This is very much like when we saw an NP functioning adjectivally or adverbially: the form of the phrase makes it look like an NP, but in this case, as soon as we add the *'s*, the form of the phrase changes to possessive determiner. Just as, in the pronoun replacement test, any NP can be replaced by a third-person personal pronoun, any NP + *'s* can be replaced by a third-person possessive determiner, suggesting a:

Possessive determiner replacement test: Any complete possessive NP—that is, NP + *'s*—can be replaced by a single-word third-person possessive determiner (i.e. *his, her, its, their*).

This test is illustrated by the following examples:

Things got a little wild in the winning team's clubhouse.
Things got a little wild in their clubhouse.

The new prime minister's cabinet included Mrs. Thatcher.
His cabinet included Mrs. Thatcher.

Non-WME Possessive NPs: In varieties of BL, the possessive suffix *'s* may be absent (indicated by Ø):

The manØ hat is on the chair.
*JohnØ coat is here.*⁴⁷
*The Brotha be lookin good; that's what got the SistaØ nose open!*⁴⁸

It is grammatical in BL to mark possession by adjacency or context.⁴⁹ Marking possession by juxtaposing two nouns, placing the possessor directly before the possession, is a common feature of pidgins and creoles: languages that arise from the contact of two different languages.⁵⁰ There is a strong argument that BL arises as a blending of various West African languages with English and that a number of the grammatical features that mark BL as different from WME can be explained in terms of features of West African languages. However, as with most features of non-WMEs, the frequency of the deletion of the possessive suffix *'s* varies with social context. According to one recent study, “Blacks who had the least contact with Whites and were most involved with other Blacks in the culture and values of the street used . . . possessive *'s* (*John's hat*) least frequently, less than 25 percent of the time, and sometimes not at all.” By contrast, “Blacks who had the most contact with Whites (for instance, musicians) and/or were relatively isolated from street culture, had much higher frequencies of these [WME] features, using them between 60 and 100 percent of the time.”⁵¹ This difference in possessive marking, along with other differences between WME and BL, emerged from 1915 onward as large numbers of Southern Blacks moved into Northern cities and became increasingly segregated from Whites in all aspects of their daily lives.⁵² As contact between the two groups declined, it seems inevitable that various features of White and Black language would diverge from each other.

So what? The greater the degree of interaction between groups, the more likely that language features will converge toward a common standard. Without interaction, the language varieties of separated groups quickly diverge.

Note (3): Some determiners consist of more than one word: In the version of descriptive English grammar we are studying, I propose the existence of multi-word determiners because of how determiners function—what words can go in what slots—and because of our notions of what the topic of a sentence or NP is. Let's consider the following sentences:

*None of the characters is that many steps removed from madness.*⁵³

*None of the characters are immortal.*⁵⁴

These sorts of sentence present a grammatical and stylistic problem: traditionally, *none* is understood to be singular, a shortening of *no one*. Should the verb agree in number with the singular *none* or the plural *characters*? In traditional grammar, the subject of both sentences would be the NP *none of the characters*; its head would be the word *none*, which is modified by the PP:ADJECTIVAL *of the characters*. Since *none* is the head noun, the number of the verb (singular or

plural) must agree with the number of *none*. Since *none* is singular, the verb must be in the singular form. For traditional grammar, the proper form of this sentence is *None of the characters is that many steps removed from madness*. But is this sentence about *none*, or is it about *characters*? Our sense might reasonably be that *characters* is the topic, so we ought to regard *characters* as the head noun of the NP *none of the characters*. This idea becomes even more reasonable when we note that many single-word determiners in English can fill the same slot as *none of*: *all*, *half*, and a good number of other words on the list above. These other single-word determiners serve as a precedent for the idea that multi-word idioms with meanings related to the meanings of single-word determiners could also be analyzed as determiners. More recent grammatical theory has adopted this notion of the multi-word determiner and so would argue that, since *characters* is the head noun of the NP:SUBJ, the verb must be plural in form to agree with the number of the subject noun. By this analysis the proper form of the sentence is, *None of the characters are immortal/that many steps removed from madness*.

Now you're wondering (perhaps with some dismay), "But which one is right?" The answer involves nothing to do with grammar: if you are writing for an audience that tends to be more "old school," then the traditional grammar version is "right": *None of the characters is immortal*. If you are writing for an audience that is less likely to notice details of traditional grammar—because they don't know or don't care—or an audience that will just accept something written because it "sounds OK," then the newer version will be "right": *None of the characters are immortal*. If you listen to how people speak, you'll hear many use the newer version, rather than the traditional one; in fact, of the two examples I have provided, the one that uses *are* is from a transcript of spoken language in an interview. Some will point to the way people speak as indicating a lack of or decline in literacy; some will point to the way people speak and say that traditionalists are just being snobs.

Said as a demonstrative determiner: Citing this use of *said* as an adjective, the *Oxford English Dictionary* notes that it is frequently used in legal contexts, as in

*The present prothonotary of the district court in said county shall be the prothonotary of the said court of common pleas until said date when his commission shall expire.*⁵⁵

These uses of *said* and *the said* remain common in contracts, legal documents, and government statutes. However, I have increasingly seen this use of *said* in my students' writing, where the writer seems to be using it with the sense of a demonstrative determiner (*this*, *that*, *these*, *those*):

*When we have reverence for the people in our lives, we typically do our best to develop them further and prevent said relationships from disintegrating.*⁵⁶ (c.f. *those* relationships)

*In my daily life there are things that I can do to build skills and experience that will help me get into a great medical school and excel in said medical school.*⁵⁷ (c.f. that medical school)

I can only guess that these student writers feel that using *said* in such contexts feels more formal than *this*, *that*, *these*, or *those*, and therefore more appropriate for classroom writing.

Non-WME use of the third-person plural pronoun *them* as a demonstrative determiner: In most vernacular varieties of American English, we find the pronoun *them*, or alternatively *them there*, used as a demonstrative determiner: ***Them** books are on the shelf. She didn't like **them there** boys.*⁵⁸ In this usage, *them* and *them there* have the same sort of distancing/pointing function as the WME determiner *those*.

EFL-related determiner use: Articles: All languages have some way of marking definiteness versus indefiniteness, but many languages do not do so via articles. And languages that do have articles often deploy them in ways distinctly different from English. Spanish, French, German, and Italian use a possessive determiner where English would use a definite article; this is particularly true when referring to parts of the body, leading EFL speakers to produce sentences like, **The ambulance attendant asked the injured man to open the eyes.*⁵⁹

Some languages, particularly Spanish, use a definite article before a professional title, leading Spanish L1 speakers to produce sentences like, **The President Lyndon Johnson undertook this policy in 1964.*⁶⁰

In English, nouns naming abstract concepts (e.g. *life, love, beauty, education*) commonly do not take an article (e.g. *Beauty is in the eye of the beholder*).⁶¹ Speakers whose L1 requires a definite article before such nouns, such as Spanish, French, and Hungarian, will often add it in English, producing sentences like, **He says the self-esteem is the most important thing in the life.*⁶²

Not all languages agree as to which nouns are countable or non-countable. For example, in Korean, unlike English, *evidence, stuff, homework, information* and numerous other nouns are countable, leading Korean L1 speakers to say or write **evidences, *stuffs, *homeworks, and *informations*, and to use the indefinite article where English would have no article, producing sentences like, **However, it must have been easy for him to develop and incorporate a prior information.*⁶³ And, quite reasonably, L1 speakers of languages that have no articles at all, such as Russian and Korean, will often omit articles from English NPs where, in WME varieties, those articles, definite or indefinite, are obligatory. Those EFL speakers may produce sentences like, **Sustainable architecture could be alternative way to build better living environment.*⁶⁴

EFL-related determiner use: Demonstratives: While English demonstrative determiners are marked for both number (singular *this/that*; plural *these/those*) and contrasting location relative to the speaker (near to [*this/these*] versus

away from [*that/those*]), in some languages, such as Korean, only relative location, and not number, is marked in the equivalent demonstrative determiners. This leads to L1 Korean speakers producing sentences in which the number of the determiner does not agree with the number of the noun specified, as in **We admit that those argument is not wrong* and **This processes are referred to socialization*.⁶⁵

EFL-related determiner use: Quantifiers and partitives: The quantifiers and partitives *many/many of*, *most/most of*, and *some/some of* can also pose problems for students whose L1, with the equivalents of these words, routinely uses a morpheme that might be translated by the English “of.” Korean, for example, with the equivalents of *most* and *some*, always adds a possessive marker, leading Korean speakers to generate sentences like *She donated one million dollars to UIUC*. **Most of money was used to build a library*. Similarly, quantifiers in French generally use the morpheme *de*, commonly translated as “of,” as in *beaucoup d’étudiants*, leading French L1 speakers to say or write **many of students*.⁶⁶

4.2.2 Determiner Phrases: Forms and Functions

Determiners—or, more properly, determiner phrases—fill the initial slot in an NP—and that’s all they do. When we see a word that only functions as a determiner, such as *the* (the most common word in formal written English), then we know we have found an NP. Beware, however, of over-generalizing this idea: not all words that function as determiners only function as determiners. For example, when we see the word *that*, which has a number of distinctly different functions in English, we should beware of just assuming it is a determiner. The articles *a*, *an*, and *the* can only be determiners—so they are good words to think of when we are trying to identify determiners.

A DP most often comprises a single determiner, but a DP may include three or four words. When we have a possessive noun phrase (NP + ’s), a DP may be quite long. As a term, “determiner phrase” is not really accurate: a phrase typically has a head and dependents. But there isn’t really a head in a DP, and the relationship among the determiners within a phrase is often highly idiomatic.

I’ve just made a sweeping claim about DPs not having a head-and-dependent structure, and so not being true “phrases.” However, there is an exception: a DP may include an **adverbial modifier** (ADVP; PP:ADVERBIAL), one that reduces the specificity of the DP, making it more approximate:

*It’s about the best book I’ve read in years.*⁶⁷

*There was perhaps three hours of testimony.*⁶⁸

*It shook the building for precisely ten to fifteen seconds.*⁶⁹

*This really is their second, at most third time back.*⁷⁰

Here is a list of the approximating adverbials that most commonly appear as modifiers of DPs:

about	almost	approximately	around	at least
at most	barely	even	exactly	hardly
just	maybe	merely	most	nearly
not quite	not really	only	over	perhaps
possibly	practically	precisely	quite	roughly
scarcely	substantially	under	up to	virtually

Note that as modifiers of DPs, these adverbials are highly idiomatic, and not all of these adverbials can modify all DPs. There are numerous regional and local variations. Note also that, if the adverbial can be moved away from the DP without changing the meaning of the adverbial, then it is not modifying the DP; rather, it is likely a SENTMOD:

*This is by far the best roast turkey recipe I've ever found.*⁷¹

By far, this is the best roast turkey recipe I've ever found.

This is the best roast turkey recipe I've ever found, by far.

By contrast, an adverb that is truly modifying a determiner cannot be moved:

*It's just the best workout you can get.*⁷²

**Just it's the best workout you can get.*

**It's the best workout you can get just.*

A DP appears in an NP in the initial slot; if there is an ADJP in the NP, the DP appears before the ADJP; if there is no ADJP, the DP appears right before the noun. In general, only common nouns take determiners, and we cannot place a determiner in front of a proper noun. But for almost all general claims in grammar, there are exceptions, and there are contexts where a proper noun does take a determiner:

*The idea that history matters and that old New York is at least as interesting as today's New York is a recent development.*⁷³

*When I was growing up in a vintage brick building overlooking the dignified curve of the Hudson River, the New York I knew was divided between west and east.*⁷⁴

4.3 What Makes Determiners Different from Adjectives? And Why Are Numbers Determiners?

Adjectives are content words; determiners are function words. Content words are nouns, verbs, adjectives, and many adverbs (e.g. *commonly*, *immensely*); they

convey substantive meaning, referring to objects and events in the world. Function words join content words to each other and mark relationships between them. Function words name or refer to more abstract qualities and relationships, such as (in the case of determiners) definiteness and specificity. Determiners, prepositions, pronouns, some common adverbs (e.g. *not, so, just, very*), and conjunctions are function words.

Adjectives are an open class; determiners are, for the most part, a closed class. New nouns, verbs, adjectives, and content adverbs are created and enter usage every day, while others fall out of use just as frequently. Function words are, generally speaking, closed classes: we do not create new pronouns, function adverbs, or conjunctions at all, and, for the most part, we do not create new determiners or prepositions. Nor do we stop using existing pronouns, determiners, prepositions, function adverbs, or conjunctions. With determiners, the exception, as we have seen, is possessives with *'s*, which are an open sub-class of determiners.

Adjectives can be gradable (e.g. *lean/leaner/leanest; abominable/more abominable/most abominable*); **determiners are not gradable.** We cannot say **two-er* or **more the*. There are four exceptions: *few, less, little*, and *much*, each of which can function as a determiner but can also take degree markers: *few/fewer/fewest, less/the lesser/the least, little/less/least*, and *much/more/most*.⁷⁵ *Little* has both a determiner meaning, as in *a little fresh water* (an amount), and an adjective meaning, as in *a little book* or *The book is little* (meaning “small”).

In general, adjectives can be modified by an intensifying adverb (e.g. *very/so lean*), **while, other than the approximating adverbials noted above, determiners cannot be modified by an intensifying adverb.** We can't say **very the* or **very two*. Three exceptions apply: *very few/little/much*.

When an NP includes both a DP and a descriptive adjective, the DP always precedes the descriptive Adj; the Adj cannot precede the DP. We can say *the furry blue monster*; we cannot say, **furry the blue monster* or **furry blue the monster*.

AdjPs may function as constituents of NPs or as verb complements; DPs can only function as constituents within NPs. A DP can only function as a specifier of a noun, as in the NP *the monster*. An AdjP can modify a noun (*the blue monster*) or complement a verb (*The monster is blue*_[SUBJECT COMPLEMENT]; *The potion turned the monster blue*_[OBJECT COMPLEMENT]).

AdjPs are modifiers and are therefore always optional; DPs are not modifiers and are not always optional. With or without an AdjP, the same NP will be well formed. But a singular common count noun requires a DP.

Possessives and numbers are determiners only when they precede nouns in NPs. Otherwise, possessives and numbers are pronouns, and possessive NPs (NP + *'s*) are “pronominals”: constituents that function like NPs:

Possessive pronoun:	<i><u>Hers</u> is a career marked by daring choices.</i> ⁷⁶
Possessive pronominal:	<i>The man and woman are wearing wedding rings; <u>the woman's</u> is a diamond.</i> ⁷⁷
Cardinal as pronoun:	<i><u>Three</u> are college freshmen and <u>one</u> is a high school senior.</i> ⁷⁸
	<i><u>Two</u> can live as cheaply as <u>one</u>.</i> ⁷⁹
Ordinal as pronoun:	<i><u>First</u> is better than <u>sixth</u>.</i> ⁸⁰

As indefinite pronouns (see 5.1), cardinal and ordinal numbers can both function as the head of a PRONP:

Cardinal:	<i>Arugula is <u>the green one</u> with jagged edges.</i> ⁸¹ <i>Before Friday's loss River Valley had won <u>the last two</u> in the rivalry.</i> ⁸²
Ordinal:	<i>Prime Minister Zapatero's government was <u>the first</u> with a gender-balanced Cabinet.</i> ⁸³ <i>It's <u>the second</u> from the right.</i>

Cardinal and ordinal numbers are not adjectives for the same reasons that other determiners are not adjectives. However, compare the use of *the first* and *the second* in the preceding sentences with the superlative degree of adjectives like *best*, *worst*, *most*, and *least*, which commonly must be preceded by *the* and which may function as adjectives (e.g. *The best food is from Italy*)⁸⁴ or as nouns, or perhaps pronominals, since they stand in for the complete NP (e.g. *The best is from Italy*). *First*, *next*, and *last* are more closely related to the superlative adjectives than the other ordinals: they can all take an intensifying adverb as in *the very first/last/next moment* (like *the very best moment*), while other ordinals cannot: **the very second moment*.

4.4 Key Points

- **Adjectives** are content words that may be gradable (e.g. *big*, *bigger*, *biggest*) or non-gradable (e.g. *main*; *stone*).
- Four tests for identifying adjectives are the adjective slot test (function); the predicate adjective test (function); the *very* test (function); and the adjectival question test (meaning).
- An adjective functions as the head of an adjective phrase (ADJP). An ADJP may include an adverb phrase as a pre-modifier and/or a post-modifying PP:ADVERBIAL.
- Adjective phrases may function as modifiers of nouns or as verb complements.

- When they modify nouns, adjective phrases tell *which* or *what kind of* and are placed immediately before the noun.
- **Determiners** are a (mostly) closed class of function words that function only as specifiers of nouns and appear only in the first slot in an NP (before an AdjP, if there is one).
- A determiner phrase (DP) may comprise one or more words. The most common determiner (and the most common word in written English) is *the*.
- Like adjectives, determiners provide information about the noun.
- However, unlike adjectives, determiners are almost never gradable; determiners can rarely be modified by an intensifying adverb; and unlike an AdjP:MOD OF N, determiners are not always optional.

4.5 Exercises: Adjective Phrases and Determiner Phrases

Find the Adjective Phrases 1: Made-up sentences⁸⁵

For each sentence 1–10, identify all adjectives and complete AdjPs. For each AdjP, try to identify its function.

- Bicycles became much more popular in 1815, after a large volcano, Mt. Tambora, erupted in present-day Indonesia.
- Phenomenal amounts of debris were ejected into the earth's atmosphere.
- As global temperatures cooled, crops around the world were ruined, leading to widespread famine and starvation for horses and livestock.
- In this pre-automobile era, this immense disaster raised the question of how to transport people without horses.
- A German inventor named Karl Drais decided he would build a propulsion device that could replace horse riding.
- Two years later he presented his new invention: a two-wheeled contraption that came to be called a velocipede.
- This early bicycle had a simple saddle atop two large wheels, with no pedals or propulsion.
- More sophisticated designs soon followed, including the awkwardly humorous and accident-prone penny-farthing, with its one giant wheel and one small wheel.

Find the Adjective Phrases 2: A real text

Same instructions as in “Find the Adjective Phrases 1.” Use the passage from page 28, “Jimmy’s Sales Tip: Sam’s, Costco.”

Find the Determiner Phrases 1: Made-up sentences

- For each sentence, identify each complete DP and its function.
 - For each determiner, label the type of determiner (article, demonstrative, possessive, quantifier, partitive, multiplier, fraction, cardinal, ordinal).
- A. We waited in the rain for three hours for the president's motorcade to arrive.
 - B. When the first shipment arrived, none of the staff were prepared to handle so many boxes.
 - C. Your mint chocolate chip cookies are our favorite!
 - D. A bowl of cherries sat on a bright green cloth.
 - E. Many of the last group of paintings, almost half of the collection, were unfinished.
 - F. Franz's teammates were some of the best players in the state.
 - G. A few of these plants survived through the winter.
 - H. She found her algebra book under a pile of her brother's clean clothes.
 - I. Every year, all of the soccer players' parents make the team a steak dinner.
 - J. Half a wit is better than no wit at all.

Find the Determiner Phrases 2: A real text

Same instructions as in "Find the Determiner Phrases 1." Use the passage from page 28, "Jimmy's Sales Tip: Sam's, Costco."

Notes

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Pronouns (PRoN) and Pronoun Phrases (PRoNP)

Pronouns are a category of function words. In traditional grammar, a PRoN is often defined as a word that stands in for or replaces a noun. In fact, a PRoN stands in the place of an entire NP or other nominal (see 11.1). We have already seen this concept in the pronoun replacement test for identifying complete NPs. Consider the following sentences:

*They bought a **house** with a small yard.*¹

*They bought **it**.*

They bought **an it with a small yard.*

In the second sentence, the PRoN *it* replaces the entire NP *a house with a small yard*. In the third sentence, when we try to replace only the head noun of the NP with the pronoun, we get nonsense. Remember that a complete NP comprises a noun and all its dependents, including DPs and modifiers (both ADPs and adjectival post-modifiers, such as PPs).

A PRoN is traditionally understood as referring back to an NP that appeared earlier in the discourse. The earlier NP is called the antecedent of the pronoun. Sometimes, a PRoN precedes the NP to which it refers, in which case the NP is a postcedent, rather than an antecedent.

PRoN and antecedent: *The moonlight startled me, as if **it** were filling the room with ice and snow.*²

PRoN and postcedent: *Even though **he** was a Hall of Fame coach, Wilson taught his students more about life than basketball.*³

Although pronouns usually refer to NPs or other nominals, a PRoN may also refer to an entire sentence: *I dropped the objectivity and told them that I was shot when I was around their age. **That** got their attention!*⁴ In this example the PRoN *that* refers not just to the preceding NP *their age* or *I* but the entire action described in the clause *I told them . . . age*. Arguably, in this context, *that* might be labeled as a “pro-clause,” rather than a pronoun, since its antecedent is an

entire independent clause (a.k.a. a sentence) rather than an NP. However, in the second sentence of the example, *That got their attention*, the word *that* functions as the subject, a role that is always filled by a nominal, so it is reasonable to label *that* as a pronoun or a “pronominal” (which would probably be a better name for the whole category).

EFL-related pronoun use: *it* for *this* or *that*: To refer back to an entire preceding sentence, Korean uses a special phrase that Korean speakers often equate with English *it*, where WME varieties would prefer *this* or *that*, leading Korean speakers to produce sentences like the following: *He took care of people who were poor and sick. *I admire it*, instead of *I admire this/that*.⁵

In writing, PRONs can sometimes have no antecedent or postcedent, as when they are used to refer to generic or indefinite persons or objects:

*One should always be unfinished.*⁶

*Someone should go after them.*⁷

*Few remember their names.*⁸

In conversation, rather than referring to an NP in the discourse, pronouns are commonly used to refer to objects in the physical context of the speakers: one could point to a sunset and say, ***That*** *is beautiful!*

5.1 Pronoun Forms

Pronouns come in six types:

- Personal:
 - Nominative (Subject) case: *I, you, he, she, it, we, they*.
 - Objective case: *me, you, him, her, it, us, them*.
 - Possessive case: *mine, yours, his, hers, its, ours, theirs*.
- Reflexive: *myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves*.
- Indefinite: *anyone, all, few, somebody*, etc.
- Demonstrative: *this, that, these, those*.
- Interrogative: *what, which, who* (nominative), *whom* (objective), *whose* (possessive).
- Relative: *that, which, who* (nominative), *whom* (objective), *whose* (possessive).

As we saw with determiners, some of the form labels for pronouns are based on their function: among the personal, interrogative, and relative pronouns, the nominative or subject case pronouns are so called because they only function as

the subject of a clause, and the objective case pronouns only function as verb complements (such as the direct object of a verb) and PComps (called the “object of the preposition” in traditional grammar).

Three notes about pronouns:

Note (1): The distinction between possessive pronouns and possessive determiners: The one thing that all PRoNs have in common is that they all can stand alone as constituents of sentences: all PRoNs can function by themselves as nominals. Thus, possessive pronouns can stand by themselves as sentence constituents; possessive determiners cannot, and possessive determiners will always be found as constituents within NPs:

Possessive Pronouns: *mine, yours, his, hers, its, ours, theirs, whose*

Mine is the yellow kayak.⁹ The yellow kayak is mine.¹⁰

**Mine kayak is yellow.*

Possessive Determiners: *my, your, his, her, its, our, their, whose*

**My is the yellow kayak. *The yellow kayak is my.*

My kayak is yellow.¹¹

Despite the similarity between possessive pronouns and possessive determiners, we have to remember that possessive determiners are not pronouns—although we must be careful with those words that have the same forms in the two categories: *his, its, and whose*.

There is a related issue with nouns and NPs marked as possessive by the addition of *'s*: either such possessive NPs can be possessive determiners, or they can stand alone and function as NPs:

Possessive DP

Ed's bag was heavier than Franz's bag.

Ed's bags were heavier than Franz's bags.

Possessive NP

Ed's was heavier than Franz's.

Ed's were heavier than Franz's.

Grammatically, the possessive NPs function like any other NPs. Semantically, however, the second pair of sentences both involve the elision or deletion of the nouns *bag* and *bags*: despite their absence, we know those nouns are still implied because the possessive NPs may take a singular or a plural verb (*was* or *were*), even though the possessive *Ed's* is not marked as singular or plural. Even without the noun

(*bag/s*), the singular or plural number of the verb reminds the reader of the singular or plural number of the subject. And grammatically, the possessive NPs are NPs, but semantically, they seem to still be determiners, with the nouns they specify implied.

So what? Languages are full of redundancies that enable audiences to understand meaning even when some elements are elided. We need those redundancies at all levels to better ensure that we understand each other's meaning correctly.

Note (2): Indefinite pronouns are a large category in English, although not an open class. And indefinite pronouns are the only subclass of pronouns that routinely can take both modifiers and determiners:

*Not just **anyone** can handle a camel.*¹²

*Very **few** see that dream through to reality.*¹³

*Morris, Price, and the Chinese-led team are a few of the **many** who have gone in search of the biblical boat.*¹⁴

*"Bob Michel keeps no little black book in his desk drawer," he said. "Mine is a large green **one** with a lot of names and plans for the future that will include each and every one of you."*¹⁵

In each of these sentences, the indefinite PRoN functions as the head of a pronoun phrase (PRoNP) that functions as a nominal within the sentence. Despite taking modifiers, we still know that the words in bold type are PRoNs because:

- They do not name specific objects or categories of objects (as nouns do).
- The indefinite pronoun in each case replaces a more specific NP: *Not just anyone* replaces something like *not just any one person*; *Very few* replaces *very few people*; *a few of the many . . . boat* replaces *a few of the many researchers . . . boat*; and *a large, green one . . . you* replaces *a large, green book . . . you*.
- We can drop the modifiers and determiners and have the bold-faced words stand alone, and still have grammatically well-formed sentences:

***Anyone** can handle a camel.*

***Few** see that dream through to reality.*

*Morris, Price, and the Chinese-led team are **many**.*

*Mine is **one**.*

You may already have noticed that in the first two sentences above, the modifiers (*not just*; *very*) are adverbial; indeed, the kinds of adverbial modifiers that, in 4.2.2, I described as reducing the specificity of the DP, making it more approximate. This makes sense because of the substantial overlap between the lists of indefinite PRoNs

and quantifying determiners; in the case of *anyone*, we have a quantifying determiner (*any*) that has been merged into a compound with a cardinal number (*one*). Likewise, *many* is found on both the quantifying determiner and indefinite pronoun lists.

Because of the size of the category and the complexities of the kinds of modifiers they can take, indefinite PRONs are the most complicated subclass of pronouns. Here is a fuller list:

Indefinite Pronouns

all	another	any	anybody	anyone	anything
anywhere	both	each	each other	either	enough
everybody	everyone	everything	everywhere	few	fewer
fewest	half	least	less	little	many
more	most	much	neither	no one	nobody
none	nothing	nowhere	one	one another	others
several	some	somebody	someone	something	somewhere
such					

Many of these words can function not only as indefinite pronouns but as other parts of speech. Half of them can also be determiners (though not *others* and those ending in *-one*, *-body*, *-thing*, and *-where*). Be careful!

Note (3): Demonstrative pronouns can sometimes take determiners and adjectival post-modifiers:

*What's in a name? **That** which we call a rose/By any other word would smell as sweet.*¹⁶

*Some of that **which is of concern** does not need to be a concern.*¹⁷

*I suddenly imagined **all those** who have hurt me in my life.*¹⁸

*Microbes in the neonatal intensive care unit resemble **those** found in the gut of premature infants.*¹⁹

Non-WME pronoun forms: Possessives: In BL, we typically find “regularization of the possessive pronoun *mines* by analogy with *yours*, *his*, *hers*, etc.,” as in *Mines is here. It's mines*.²⁰ And “in vernacular Appalachian English and other rural varieties characterized by the retention of relic forms,” we typically find:

the use of possessive [pronoun] forms ending in *-n*, as in *hisn*, *ourn*, or *yourn*. Such forms can be found in phrase- or sentence-final position (called absolute position), as in *It is hisn* or *It was yourn that I was talking about*; *-n* forms do not usually occur in structures such as *It is hern book*.

*Is it yourn? I think it's hisn.*²¹

Both of these non-WME variants (*mines*; *yourn*) can be understood as speakers' attempts to regularize the irregular PRON system, either by changing *mine* to

match the *-s* ending of all the other possessive PRON forms or by changing all of the *-s* endings to match the ending of *mine*. However, the historical context is more complicated. Until the fourteenth century, there was no distinction between the possessive Ds and the possessive PRONs, though there were fewer forms. *Her* was used as the third-person plural possessive PRON until the fifteenth century, when it was replaced by *their*. The neuter third-person singular possessive *its* appears near the end of the sixteenth century. *Our*, *your*, and *their* continued to be used as PRONs until the seventeenth century. But from the fourteenth century on, new forms were increasingly used to distinguish between the D and PRON uses of the possessives. *Mine* and *thine*—formerly used as both Ds and PRONs—continued to be used as PRONs after *my* and *thy* were in common use as Ds.²² “It was natural, therefore, that *ourn*, *yourn*, *hern*, etc., after the pattern of *mine* and *thine* should be created and for a time compete with *ours*, *yours*, *hers*, etc., formed on the pattern” of the possessive PRONs ending in *-s*. In his fourteenth-century translation of the bible, John Wycliffe uses both *ourn* and *yourn*; “*hern* appeared earlier in the fourteenth century; and *hisn* appeared in the fifteenth century.”²³ People from England who settled in rural Appalachia brought these PRON forms with them, and their descendants have maintained them, even as the dominant WME of the cities shifted away from them.

So what? Although the function word groups, PRONs among them, tend to stay remarkably stable over long periods of time, they still change, usually slowly, sometimes surprisingly quickly. For example, when I prepared the first edition of this book in 2019, the only examples of *Imma* (a contraction and clipping of BL *I’m fixing to*; see 6.1.2.1) I could find online were in song lyrics; now there are innumerable examples in social media postings. It took most of 200 years, from 1600 to 1800, for *thee/thou/thy/thine* to leave the everyday English of most speakers, but they didn’t have smartphones and the Internet to help drive the change!

Other non-WME pronouns: Other non-WME pronoun forms “typically involve regularization by analogy and rule extension.”²⁴ We routinely find several categories of non-WME PRON usage:

Reflexives: Through an incomplete process of regularization over the past 600 years, reflexive PRONs all appear to take the possessive Ds and add *-self/-selves* (*myself*, *yourself*, *herself*, *itself*, *ourselves*, *yourselves*) except for *himself* and *themselves*, which use the object case personal pronouns as their base. Many American English vernaculars regularize these exceptions by creating the non-WME forms *hissself* and *theirselves*, which are more consistent with the rest of the paradigm.

*He hit **hissself** on the head.* (BL)²⁵

*They had to start supporting **theirselves** at early ages.* (Chicano English)²⁶

However, even in WME, we find *his self* and *their selves*, but only with an intervening ADJ:

*Most people give no thought to the everyday enormity of what Miller must face beyond his very self. (not *him very self)²⁷*

*He was his usual happy self. (not *him usual happy self)²⁸*

*For men shall be lovers of their own selves. (not *them own selves)²⁹*

It is common in many spoken varieties of American English to use *myself* as the last item in a conjoined series of names, in both subject and object positions:

Subject: The president of Mexico and myself have agreed to cancel our planned meeting scheduled for next week.³⁰

Object: He asked Faith, Keith and myself for our names.³¹

Both: He asked Tommy and myself_(OBJECT) had we seen Bernard Bennett. And as Tommy and myself_(SUBJECT) was telling him, no, we hadn't seen Bernard, Kelvin Peters came off the elevator.³²

I suspect that people use the reflexive form to create a little more distance or formality. In each of these examples, the use of *myself* may put the speaker on a more equal footing with the other people named. While both uses of *myself* are arguably non-WME, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), they have appeared in the written language since at least Chaucer's time.

EFL-related pronoun use: reflexive pronouns: Some languages express reflexiveness by building it into the verb. When a speaker's L1 contains many more reflexive verbs than English (e.g. French, Spanish, German), it is common for those speakers to insert an unneeded reflexive pronoun in English with the equivalent of a verb that is reflexive in their L1, producing sentences like, **At sixty-five years old they must retire themselves because this is a rule of society.*³³

Object PRON forms in subject position: In many varieties of English, it is common to use the objective forms of personal pronouns in the subject position with subjects conjoined by *and* or *or*:

John and them will be home soon.³⁴

Him and me's lifted a beer, time to time.³⁵

Me or him will post updates on this thread as soon as it is fixed.³⁶

The OED offers examples of this usage from before 1400 to the present. Just as in many English varieties, speakers use reflexive pronouns to mark distance or formality, many speakers use objective case pronouns in subject position to mark closeness and informality: Saying *him and me* sounds friendlier than saying *he and I*.

No variety of English exhibits the routine use of objective case personal pronouns by themselves as subjects; we almost never find *Him will do it* or *Them will be home soon*.³⁷ However, “Washington inner-city children say things like:

Me help you?

Her paintin’ wif a spoon.³⁸

This pattern of using object pronouns in subject position may stem from the roots of BL in English pidgin and creole languages, where it is commonplace for pronouns to be leveled to objective case forms.³⁹

Plural form of *you*: “To fill out the person-number paradigm (*I, you, he/she/it, we, you, they*),” many varieties of English have added a plural form of *you*. The use of some versions remains markedly non-WME, as in *Youse won the game. I’m going to leave youse now*, which occurs primarily in the North, and *You’uns won the game. I’m going to leave you’uns now*, which occurs primarily “in an area extending from Southern Appalachia to Pittsburgh,” where it becomes *yinz*. However, the Southern form *y’all*, as in *Y’all won the game. I’m going to leave y’all now*,⁴⁰ has become essentially a WME (though still informal) usage throughout the Southeast, and there is evidence that it is spreading to English globally.⁴¹ As a testament to the flexibility of English, in some varieties, we even find a reflexive form of *y’all*, as in *Gotta stay focused, gotta keep workin hard, believe in yallselves. Prove everybody that doubted y’all wrong*.⁴² Interestingly, both *y’all* and *youse* are sometimes used as singulars,⁴³ leading to the development of a Southern plural form, *all y’all*.

Personal dative use of object pronoun forms: The “dative” is a grammatical term for the indirect object (IO), a variety of verb complement (see 7.1.3.1). In the sentence, *I got John a new car*, the NP *a new car* is the direct object (DO); *John* is the IO. In some English varieties, the object case forms of personal pronouns are used as IOs: *I got me a new car. We had us a little old dog*. “The so-called personal dative illustrated in [these sentences] is a Southern feature that indicates that the subject of the sentence (e.g. *we*) benefited in some way from the object (e.g. *little old dog*).”⁴⁴

Associative plurals: Speakers of BL and some Southern White varieties use “*and (th)em* or *nem*, usually after a proper name to mark associative plurals, as in *Felicia an’ (th)em* or *Felicia nem* for ‘Felicia and her friends or family or associates.’”⁴⁵

Appositive pronouns: BL speakers may also use, “‘That teacher, *she* yells at the kids’ for WME ‘That teacher Ø yells at the kids.’”⁴⁶

5.2 Pronoun Attributes: Case, Number, Person, Gender, Animateness

Case: Personal PRONs give us the largest remnant of English case inflections. In English, for the most part, we use the word order of sentences to tell us how an

NP is functioning. In many other languages, nouns and adjectives take different endings to mark whether the NP is the subject, the DO, the IO, or indicating a location (which we usually mark in English with a preposition appearing before an NP). In many languages, the nominative or subject case is unmarked, and other sentence roles require that nouns, modifying adjectives, and pronouns be marked with special endings or “inflections.” In modern English we mark the possessive case of all NPs with *’s* (or *-s*’ with plural NPs). In the personal PRONs, we actually still have different forms to mark the objective and possessive cases:

Case Forms of Personal Pronouns

Nominative	Objective	Possessive
I	me	mine
you	you	yours
he	him	his
she	her	hers
it	it	its
we	us	ours
you	you	yours
they	them	theirs

In WME nominative case, personal PRONs only function as the subject of a sentence or dependent clause (PRON:SUBJ; see 10.2) and as the complement of the verb *be* (see 7.1.2.2). Objective case personal PRONs only function as PCOMPS (PRON:PCOMP) or as the objective complement of a verb (PRON:DO; PRON:IO; see Chapter 7). Possessive case personal PRONs may function in all of the same roles as nominative and objective case PRONs.

Objective case personal PRONs can take determiners but only partitives with *of*, including cardinal numbers with *of*:

Several of us have been discussing this.⁴⁷
And part of me thought, maybe I’ll just stay here.⁴⁸
Two of them were recently vacated by the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals.⁴⁹

Just as when we use determiners and/or modifiers with indefinite pronouns, when an objective case personal PRON takes a determiner, the combination forms a PRONP that functions like other nominals. Note, however, that traditional grammar would argue that in *several of us* or *part of me* or *two of them*, we have to use the objective case form of the PRON (*us*; *me*; *them*), since *of* is a preposition and *of us*, *of me*, and *of them* are PPs modifying *several*, *part*, and *two*, respectively. My only recourse is to fall back on my explanation of determiners

and the argument that these NPs and sentences are about, respectively, *us*, *me*, and *them*, not *several*, *part*, and *two*. At the same time, we can drop *of* + PRoN from each sentence (turning *several*, *part*, and *two* into PRoNs) and still have a grammatically well-formed sentence. However, we could also paraphrase each PRoNP with the appropriate subject case personal PRoNs (*several of us* → *we*; *part of me* → *I*; *two of them* → *they*), which seems to indicate that the heads of the phrases are *us*, *me*, and *them*, not *several*, *part*, and *two*, respectively. Which parse works better for you?

Also, in WME varieties, reflexive PRoNs do not function in nominative case roles (e.g. **Himself* went to the store) or take a possessive form (e.g. **Myself's* is on the table). They only function in objective case roles (e.g. *She hurt herself*;⁵⁰ *You only have yourself to blame*;⁵¹ *They saved it for themselves*)⁵² and as nominal appositives modifying nouns (*I myself have a PhD degree*).⁵³

Number: Personal PRoNs in all three cases are also marked for number. In English, we have two numbers: singular (SG) and plural (PL):

Case and Number of Personal Pronouns

Number	Nominative	Objective	Possessive
SG	I	me	mine
	you	you	yours
	he	him	his
	she	her	hers
	it	it	its
PL	we	us	ours
	you	you	yours
	they	them	theirs

Number becomes significant when we are looking for the right personal PRoN form to use with a singular or plural antecedent. Number also matters when we are trying to match a nominative personal PRoN with the singular or plural forms of the verb *be* and when we are trying to match the singular third-person form of a verb (the one that ends in *-s*) with the correct WME PRoN (*he*, *she*, or *it*; see the next paragraph on “person”).

Person: In English, we use different personal PRoN forms (and different forms of the reflexive pronouns and possessive personal determiners) to indicate what person the speaker is talking about, relative to the speaker:

- The **first-person** form refers to the speaker (SG) or a group of which the speaker is a member (PL).
- The **second-person** form refers to the person spoken to (SG) or a group whom the speaker is addressing (PL).

- The **third-person** form refers to the person spoken about (SG) or a group whom the speaker is speaking about (PL).

All of the preceding information about case, number, and person in personal pronouns (and personal possessive determiners) is presented in the following table:

Person	#	Nominative	Objective	Possessive	
				Determiner	Pronoun
First	SG	I	me	my	mine
	PL	we	us	our	ours
Second	SG	you	you	your	yours
	PL	you	you	your	yours
Third	SG	he, she, it	him, her, it	his, her, its	his, hers, its
	PL	they	them	their	theirs

Gender: In English, only the third-person singular personal pronouns (*he/him/his, she/her/hers, it/its*), the third-person singular reflexive pronouns (*himself, herself, itself*), and the third-person singular possessive determiners (*his, her, its*) are marked for three genders: masculine (M), feminine (F), and neuter (NEU). We use the appropriately gendered personal PRON to refer to NPs that name objects, or to refer to objects themselves, that possess apparent gender (e.g. *man* [M], *woman* [F], *desk* [NEU]) or conventional gender (e.g. a ship is referred to as *she*). The increasing social recognition of queer gender identities has led to numerous proposals for, and community efforts to promote, new pronouns to be used to refer to people who do not identify with the M/F gender binary. Such efforts are important, especially since language change emerges from communities of actual language users. However, to date, none of the proposed new pronouns have entered broad popular usage, and for good reason: as flexible as the language can be, it is very difficult to alter, add, or remove features from systems that are so old or deeply entrenched as the personal pronouns/determiners. English has not lost or gained a personal pronoun/determiner since the passing of *thee/thou/ty/thine* in the sixteenth century: the authors of the King James translation of the Bible (1611) deliberately used *thee/thou/ty/thine* because they sounded old fashioned and formal. Nonetheless, English has a gender-neutral (GN) third-person animate personal pronoun/determiner, which we will discuss further in a moment: the singular *they/them/their/theirs*.

Animateness: One final attribute of PRONs in general, and personal pronouns in particular, is animateness. Most personal and reflexive pronouns refer to animate objects, typically people or animals and sometimes conventionally to ships, cars, and countries (e.g. *That's my car. She's a beauty.*).⁵⁴ The third-person

plural personal and reflexive pronouns *they/them/theirs/themselves* may refer to animate or inanimate objects:

Animate

*The Lancers were coming off a pair of playoff wins in which they played some of their best basketball.*⁵⁵

*Children themselves may be eager to hear accounts of family formation.*⁵⁶

Inanimate

*You want to buy some bananas, but they are all green with no tinge of yellow in sight.*⁵⁷

*The rooms themselves are modest in size and decoration.*⁵⁸

The third-person singular neuter pronouns *it/its/itself* only properly refer to inanimate objects:

*Animate: *Those who know Peter insist it is no daredevil.*

Inanimate: *You want to eat a banana, but it is green.*

Since the late eighteenth century, there has been no singular gender-neutral (GN) animate personal—or “epicene”—PRON in English that is accepted by conservative authorities, which creates a gap in the language: how should we refer pronominally to an animate object or antecedent of uncertain gender? For example, in *When a person comes to the office, ___ should expect . . .*, how should we refer back to the NP *a person*? From the late eighteenth century until the 1970s, the masculine *he* was commonly accepted as the generic animate singular: *When a person comes to the office, he should expect. . .* But since the 1970s, use of the generic *he* is no longer acceptable, since to refer to all people as though they were male has become socially unacceptable. Likewise, as I mentioned above, with the growing social recognition of non-binary gender identities, some people have tried to introduce new third-person GN pronouns to refer to people who do not identify as male or female. English already has a pronoun that speakers and writers actually use for situations in which a person’s gender is unspecified, and for people who do not identify with the M/F binary, a solution that simply harkens back to a usage that was well established from the fourteenth century until the end of the eighteenth century: use *they/them/theirs/their* as the non-gendered animate singular: *When a person comes to the office, they should expect. . .* This usage, which was common for 400 years among all levels of speakers and writers of English, was stomped upon by a series of pedagogical grammarians who tried to regularize many structures in English that they saw as irregular (Google the phrase “singular *they*” for a variety of academic and popular discussions of the

topic).⁵⁹ Singular *they* has already regained wide acceptance in spoken English as a GN option, and it is spreading in published writing. For conservative language users and authorities, the use of *they* as a singular may be grating, and such folks may harshly judge those who use singular *they*. If you know your audience will judge such matters strongly, avoid using singular *they*; but know that, in most contexts, it is now fairly safe to speak or even to use *they* with reference to a singular, animate object or nominal.⁶⁰

EFL-related pronoun use: case, number, and gender: Unlike English, many languages do not have different pronoun forms to mark case, number, person, or gender. For example, in Farsi, verb inflections mark number and person, and therefore subject pronouns are optional; and in Spanish and Italian, where person and number are also marked in the verb, it is actually common to not use subject pronouns, which can then carry over into Spanish and Italian L1 students producing sentences like **Are my friends*, for the WME *They are my friends*. In Farsi as well, pronouns are not marked for gender. Native speakers of Farsi may therefore say *I saw him yesterday* while referring to a woman.⁶¹

In Chinese, if a following clause has the same topic as the preceding clause, it is permissible in the following clause to drop subject pronouns, and more commonly object pronouns. This pattern thus often carries over into Chinese speakers' English sentences, leading to sentences like **Every time I concentrate to speak out, don't know why always had Chinese in my mind*, and *He win a golden fish—he is very happy and (great). He take and he put in a glass bowl*.⁶²

5.3 Pronoun Functions

Pronouns fulfill the same functions as NPs and other nominals, although PRONs must agree with their referent (antecedent, postcedent, common knowledge object, or object in the physical context of discourse) in the attributes of number, person, gender, and animateness, and personal pronouns must have the appropriate case form (nominative, objective, possessive) for their role in a sentence. We will consider the functions of each category of pronoun in turn.

Nominative (Subject) case PRONs can function as the subject of a sentence or as the complement of copular *be*: forms of the verb *be* used as the main verb in a sentence or clause:

Subject: *I went home. She found the treasure.*

Subject Complement of copular *be*: *It is I. I am she.*

The term “nominative” comes from the same root as the word “noun,” and both relate to “naming.” The “rule” that we use the nominative form of the personal PRON after *be* was created by the same late eighteenth-century grammarians who said we

should not use *they* as a singular PRON. In most contexts, saying, “It is I” or “It is she,” sounds overly formal. If we say, “It’s me,” in many contexts, no one will notice, although we may offend the sensibilities of those who subscribe to the older “rule.”

An **objective case personal PRON** can function as a PCOMP or as the complement of a verb, participle or infinitive:

PCOMP: *Where they go, we go with **them**.*⁶³ *For **him**, the village was the soul of India.*⁶⁴

Complement of V: *That’s what kicked **me** into taking writing seriously.*⁶⁵ *We gave them a four-star rating.*⁶⁶

Complement of Participle: *I had fun finding **them**.*⁶⁷ *Artec’s getting closer to finding **her**.*⁶⁸

Complement of Infinitive: *To know **her** was to love **her**.*⁶⁹ *Are politicians too rich to understand **us**?*⁷⁰

Possessive case personal PRONs can function in nominative and objective roles, as can **indefinite** and **demonstrative pronouns**.

Reflexive PRONs often function in the same roles as objective personal pronouns: as a PCOMP or complement of a verb, participle, or infinitive. They may also function emphatically, as a nominal appositive, repeating the reference of an earlier or immediately preceding NP. In all roles, the **reflexive PRON** must have an antecedent in the same sentence:

PCOMP: *I did it by **myself**.*⁷¹

*We must learn to laugh at **ourselves**, and move on.*⁷²

Complement of a Verb: *I could have kicked **myself**.*⁷³

*We got **ourselves** into this mess.*⁷⁴

Emphatic (nominal appositive): *I did it **myself**.*⁷⁵

*The President **himself** brought that issue up.*⁷⁶

Emphatics are adjectival in that they tell *which* person: *which President? The President himself*. We also sometimes find reflexives with a **postcedent**, as in *Myself, I used to be a libertarian*.⁷⁷

Some **interrogative PRONs** function like nominative personal PRONs, some like objective personal PRONs, and some like both:

- **What** can function in both the nominative and objective slots:

Nominative: *What_[PRON:SUBJ] went wrong?*

Objective: *What_[PRON:DO] do you want? You do want what_[PRON:DO]?*

- **Which**, as a pronoun, can function in both the nominative and objective slots (though *which* is more commonly a determiner):

Nominative: *Which*_[PRON:SUBJ] *is right?*

Objective: *Which*_[PRON:DO] *do you want? You do want which*_[PRON:DO]?

(Determiner): *Which*_[DP:SPEC OF "BOOK"] *book do you want? You do want which*_[DP:SPEC OF "BOOK"] *book?*

- **Who** is always nominative: *Who is right?*
- **Whom** is always objective: *Whom do you love? You do love whom?*

Relative PRONs, like interrogative PRONs, also vary in function:

- **That** and **which** can function in both the nominative and objective slots:

Nominative:

*This is the book that made me love books.*⁷⁸ (*that* is the SUBJ of *made*.)

*I was around a lot of people, which made me feel uncomfortable.*⁷⁹ (*which* is the SUBJ of *made*.)

Objective:

*The thing that she wanted most was to drink coffee.*⁸⁰ (*that* is the DO of *wanted*: *she wanted that*.)

*She comes downstairs bearing the book, which she hands to Ted.*⁸¹ (*which* is the DO of *hands*: *she hands which to Ted*.)

- **Who** is always nominative:

*These are the people **who** saw you shuffle around in your pajamas.*⁸² (*who* is the SUBJ of *saw*: *Who saw you*—like *They saw you*.)

- **Whom** is always objective:

*The woman **whom** you saw is that great city.*⁸³ (*whom* is the DO of *saw*: *You saw whom*—like *You saw her*.)

There are categories of words that should best be called interrogative and relative pro-adverbs, interrogative and relative pro-determiners, and even interrogative pro-adjectives:

- Pro-adverbs: *where, when, why, how, how often, how long, how much, how many.*
- Pro-determiners: *whose, which, what, how much, how many.*
- Pro-adjectives: *which, what.*

In Chapter 10, we will more thoroughly examine all of these *wh*-pro-words.

5.4 Identifying Pronouns

Pronouns are a closed class, and the simplest way to identify them is to know them by memory (and to understand that possessive determiners are not pronouns). Given our fuller knowledge of PRONs and the attributes of personal PRONs, it is now useful to give the full version of Lester's statement of

The pronoun replacement test for NPs: Any noun phrase can be replaced by an appropriate third-person pronoun. The pronoun will replace the complete noun phrase. Whichever word within the noun phrase determines the form (person, number, case, gender, animateness) of the pronoun is the head noun of the noun phrase.⁸⁴

To make this test work, you have to trust your ear for identifying the head noun within the NP; it also helps knowing what person, number, case, gender, and animateness are, especially, as with some complex determiners, it becomes unclear what the head of the NP may be. For example, in the sentence *I saw Dad today*,⁸⁵ native speakers know by ear that the appropriate PRON to replace *Dad* is *him*, not *he*: *I saw him today*, not, **I saw he today*. However, we can also know which PRON is correct because we commonly assume that *Dad* names a masculine (gender), animate thing, and *Dad* is in the third person (he is the person being spoken about), and he is singular (number—there is only one of him). Case is the one concept here that may still be fuzzy, but *Dad* names the DO of the verb *saw*; the DO takes the objective case form. So the PRON that agrees with *Dad* needs to be in the objective case.

Now, consider these two sentences: which is correct?

*Great fear swept the crowd, and they praised God.*⁸⁶

*There was panic in the crowd and it started moving as one.*⁸⁷

Is *the crowd* plural and animate (*they*) or singular and inanimate (*it*)? That depends on the context: are we talking about the crowd as a bunch of human individuals (*they*) or as a single mass (*it*)? Whether they are aware of the concepts of number and animateness or not, our audience will still hear the implications of the different pronouns.

So what? The pronoun replacement test for NPs—and nominals more generally—will be extremely useful when we are working on identifying complete NPs and nominals, and their functions within sentences.

5.5 Key Points

- Pronouns (PRON) are a closed class of function words that stand in the place of a complete NP or other nominal. PRONs may function in all the ways that NPs and other nominals do.
- A pronoun must have a referent within the discourse context, or within the shared knowledge, experience, or physical context of speakers or writers and their audience.
- There are six types of PRONs: personal, reflexive, indefinite, demonstrative, interrogative, and relative.
- Some pronouns are marked for case (nominative; objective; possessive), number (singular; plural), person (first; second; third), gender (masculine; feminine; neuter), and animateness (animate; inanimate).
- Indefinite and demonstrative pronouns are the only subclasses of pronouns that routinely can take both modifiers and determiners.
- Despite their similarities, possessive PRONs should not be confused with possessive determiners.
- Because there are so many irregularities in the WME PRON system, it is one of the portions of English grammar with the most diverse and distinctive range of non-WME forms, as speakers of different varieties strive to regularize the system (e.g. *mines*; *hissself*).

5.6 Exercises: Pronouns

Find the Pronoun Phrases 1: Made-up sentences

For each sentence, identify all pronouns (and pronoun phrases, as appropriate) and label the type of pronoun. For each personal pronoun, identify the person (first; second; third), number (SG; PL), case (NOM; OBJ; POSS), gender (M; F; NEU; GN), and animateness (animate; inanimate). Finally, identify the function of the PRON within the sentence.

Example: *I found the book on a different shelf.*

I—first person, singular, nominative, animate; PRON:NP:SUBJ of “found”

- Everybody in my family, including my brother, enjoys playing board games, but few of us enjoy them as much as he does.
- Whenever we have an evening at home, everyone gathers around the dining room table; even the dog joins us.
- We choose games, and each selects a different one.
- Some games take too long for us to play, but some are short enough.
- My brother himself then chooses whose will be the first game played.
- His is always the last game of the evening.

- G. These are special evenings and I always enjoy them.
- H. A family game night is something that anyone can enjoy.
- I. If you don't like board games, you just haven't played the right one yet.
- J. Nobody in my family would decline an opportunity to play.

Find the Pronoun Phrases 2: A real text⁸⁸

Use the same instructions as in “Find the Pronoun Phrases 1.”

- (A) My mum died in 1980 at the age of 25. (B) I was 3. (C) I am trying to find out as much about her as I can. (D) Google is useless for anything like this, and I'm not sure of the best way to get public records; is there somewhere you can get them for free?
- (E) None of my family know much about her. (F) Her death certificate says she died of a heart attack. (G) I know it was due to drug abuse, but was recently told (from a friend of a friend's mum) that it was from a heroin overdose—something my Dad didn't know.
- (H) She may have had some criminal records and it's been mentioned she spent some time in Morocco.
- (I) If anyone has any ideas on the best way to start going about this or knows of her, or if anyone who knows her would contact me, all information would be much appreciated.

Notes

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Verbs (V)

Verbs are a category of content words that, in traditional grammar, are defined as words that name actions. There are also several subcategories of verb forms, the largest two being finite and non-finite verbs. In this chapter, we will deal primarily with finite verbs: verbs that can function as the head of a verb phrase (VP) that, in turn, functions as the predicate of a sentence or dependent clause (VP:PRED). We will discuss non-finite verbs at length in Chapter 12. Finite verbs have a number of features, including tense (present, past), modality (e.g. indicative, modal, imperative, subjunctive), aspect (progressive, perfect, imperfect, habitual), and voice (active, passive). Verbs also take different kinds of complements: words or phrases that *complete* the meaning of the verb (e.g. direct object, indirect object, subject complement). We will examine verb complements in Chapter 7.

6.1 Verb Forms

In discussing finite verbs, we must talk about further subcategories: lexical verbs, auxiliary verbs (AUX; also called “helping verbs”), and semi-modal and imperfect aspectual verbs.

Lexical verbs are any verb that can function alone (or with auxiliary and/or semi-modal and/or imperfect aspectual verbs) as the main verb (MV) in a clause. Lexical verbs are also inflected: they change form

- To mark tense (present, past; we will discuss tense below).
- In the present-tense forms, to mark the person referred to (think back to the discussion of personal pronouns in 5.2). All present-tense verbs in English (except *be*) have one form for all persons and numbers, except third-person singular, where all add *-s*.
- To mark the present participle by adding *-ing* (this is true for all verbs in English).
- To mark the past participle by adding *-ed* (regular verbs) or changing spelling in other ways (irregular verbs).

Kick, sing, run, drive, and be are examples of familiar lexical verbs: all name “actions” (though *be* may not seem very “active”), and all add suffixes or change spelling for past tense, third-person singular, and participle forms. We will also talk about one other form: the infinitive, which is the base or “dictionary” form of the verb, commonly preceded by the particle *to* (see also 12.2):

Tensed or Finite Forms		Un-Tensed or Non-Finite Forms		
Present	Past	Present (-ing) Participle	Past (-ed) Participle	Infinitive
kick/kicks	kicked	kicking	kicked	to kick
sing/sings	sang	singing	sung	to sing
run/runs	ran	running	run	to run
drive/drives	drove	driving	driven	to drive
am/are/is	was/were	being	been	to be

Kick is a regular verb, and all new verbs that enter English will follow this paradigm, really taking only four distinct forms, with the past and past participle both ending in *-ed* (*kick/s, kicked, kicking*). We saw this back in 1.2 with the made-up verb *kadow*. *Sing, run, and drive* are all irregular verbs. In English, we still have over 400 irregular verbs: some add a different ending (e.g. *drive-driven*), while most, rather than inflecting just by adding endings to indicate changes in form and function, change their spelling.¹ The only lexical verb in English that has more than six forms is the highly irregular *be*. *Be* has eight distinct forms (including three in the present and two in the past).²

Auxiliary verbs (AUX) are a limited subset of verbs in English that serve to mark three kinds of meaning: modality, aspect, and voice (we will discuss each of these features of verb meaning in detail below). In terms of form and function, true AUX verbs can:

1. Occur in front of the subject in interrogatives.
2. Serve as what the negative *-n't* attaches to.
3. Occur in tag questions.

Modal auxiliary verbs: “Modality” is the speaker’s attitude toward the action named in the verb, in terms of whether the speaker regards the action as real or hypothetical. In English, hypothetical action is marked by the addition of modal AUX verbs (the unmarked modality in English is the default modality; in traditional grammar, a verb without a modal AUX is said to be in the “indicative mood”). Modal AUX verbs mark the action named by the main verb as involving possibility, necessity, permission, obligation, ability, volition, or desire: in short, as hypothetical, not actual. All of the modal auxiliaries in current American English are as follows:

Present/Past

can/could
shall/should
will/would
may/might
must/—

All only have present- and past-tense forms, except for *must*, which is always in the present tense.³ Note that the modal AUX verbs exhibit the three features of auxiliaries:

1. Occur in front of the subject in interrogatives: *He could kick the ball.*⁴ *Could he kick the ball?*
2. Serve as what the negative *-n't* attaches to: *He couldn't kick the ball.*
3. Occur in tag questions: *He couldn't kick the ball, could he?* *He could kick the ball, couldn't he?*

Aspectual auxiliary verbs mark the duration or location of an action in time. WME has just two aspectual auxiliaries: *have*, which marks the perfective aspect, indicating that the action is completed (e.g. *He has kicked the ball*), and *be*, which marks the progressive aspect, indicating that the action is ongoing (e.g. *He is kicking the ball*). The aspectual AUX verbs also exhibit the three features of auxiliaries:

1. Occur in front of the subject in interrogatives:
*He has kicked the ball.*⁵ *Has he kicked the ball?*
*He is kicking the ball.*⁶ *Is he kicking the ball?*
2. Serve as what the negative *-n't* attaches to:
*He hasn't kicked the ball.*⁷
He isn't kicking the ball.
3. Occur in tag questions:
He hasn't kicked the ball, has he? *He has kicked the ball, hasn't he?*
He isn't kicking the ball, is he? *He is kicking the ball, isn't he?*

Passive voice AUX *be* marks that the verb is in the passive, as versus the active voice:

Active voice: *He kicked the ball.*

Passive voice: *The ball was kicked by him.*

The passive AUX *be* also exhibits the three features of auxiliaries:

1. Occurs in front of the subject in interrogatives:

The ball was kicked by him. Was the ball kicked by him?

2. Serves as what the negative *-n't* attaches to:

The ball wasn't kicked by him.

3. Occurs in tag questions:

The ball wasn't kicked by him, was it? The ball was kicked by him, wasn't it?

Auxiliary *do* can be used for emphasis (e.g. *I do love a good soccer Cinderella story*;⁸ see 6.1.6) or, more commonly, as a filler or dummy AUX to fulfill the three defining functions of auxiliaries when there is no auxiliary already present:

1. Occurs in front of the subject in interrogatives:

He kicked the ball. Did he kick the ball?

2. Serves as what the negative *-n't* attaches to:

He kicked the ball. He didn't kick the ball.

3. Occurs in tag questions:

He kicked the ball, didn't he? He did kick the ball, didn't he? He didn't kick the ball, did he?

Semi-modal and imperfect aspectual verbs add the same kinds of meaning to the verb as do auxiliary verbs but do not have the three features that define the form of AUX verbs. As one example, the semi-modal verb *want to*, often pronounced as *wanna*, conveys modality (desire); it conveys that the action is hypothetical (i.e. just because I *want to* do something doesn't mean it will happen); and *want to* can be paraphrased by the modal AUX *may* (i.e. *I want to do it* implies *I may do it*). But we cannot put *want to* or *want* in front of the subject in an interrogative, attach negative *-n't* to it, or use it in a tag question. I will defer more detailed discussion of WME and non-WME semi-modal and imperfect aspectual verbs to the sections on modality and aspect below, as well as separate discussions of the passive voice AUX *be*; the subjunctive mood partial-AUX *be*; AUX *do*; the generic past *used to*; and non-WME absent *be*.⁹

The complete verb in a sentence or dependent clause is a finite verb functioning as the head of a VP:PRED. The finite complete verb may comprise a finite-form main verb (MV) alone, but often the complete verb comprises the MV preceded by one or more auxiliaries and/or semi-modal and/or imperfect aspectual verbs. When we talk about “the verb in a sentence or dependent clause,” we will usually mean the complete verb, not just the MV.

As sketched above, tense, modality, aspect, and voice are the four significant features of complete verbs. We study them in the order listed because, typically, the elements in the complete verb that mark these features appear in that order.

6.1.1 Tense

We commonly think of “tense” as having something to do with time. It does, although not in a simple way. For example, we generally don’t use the “present-tense” form of a lexical verb to refer to present action: the sentence *I run to the store* doesn’t usually mean “I am currently running to the store.” We are more likely to use a present-tense verb to talk about

Habitual action: *I often run to the store or take a nap while the pork is cooking.*¹⁰

Past action (in a narrative; the “historical present”): *So a few days ago I start wishing for some help, and yesterday I run into Essence walking past my store and I happen to mention I’m looking for help.*¹¹

Future or hypothetical action: *Maybe I’ll start by not making my bed for a day. After I run to the store for more Bounty.*¹²

We often use the past tense to refer to past action. However, its use is more complex than that. The sentence *I ran to the store* usually means that the event occurred in the past, but it may refer to

A one-time event: *I ran to the store this morning.*¹³

Past habitual action: *I ran to the store every day.*¹⁴

Rather than thinking of tense as related to time, we will mostly talk about tense in terms of the forms of verbs. Each verb has two, and only two, inflected tensed forms: the present and the past. The present and past forms of verbs are traditionally referred to as finite or tensed verbs. Finite or tensed verbs can serve, by themselves, as the MV in a well-formed sentence:

Present-Tense V

*She walks to the store.*¹⁵

*She goes to the store.*¹⁶

Past-Tense V

*She walked to the store.*¹⁷

*She went to the store.*¹⁸

When we begin talking about complete verbs that comprise more than one word, we will repeatedly note that the tense of the complete verb is carried by the first

verb in the string, whether it is an AUX, a semi-modal, an imperfect aspectual verb, or the MV. In each of the following sentences, the complete verb is in the present tense, as indicated by the tense of **the first word in the verb**:

She goes to the store.

She has gone to the store.¹⁹

You ll have to go to the store to grab it.²⁰

Your gut sense about these sentences will tell you that the first sentence might be about action occurring at the present time; the second about action that has already occurred in the past; and the third about future action. However, each of the verbs is in the present tense because the form of the first word in the complete verb is the present-tense form.

In addition, all verbs in English have three other non-finite or non-tensed forms: the *-ing* or present participle form; the past participle form; and the infinitive form (which commonly comprises the particle *to* plus the dictionary or “base” form of the verb). These non-finite forms cannot stand by themselves as the MV of a well-formed WME sentence:

Present participle: **She going to the store.* **She walking to the store.*

Past participle: **She gone to the store.*

Infinitive: **She to go to the store.* **She to walk to the store.*

The present participle form of a verb always ends in *-ing* (a rare “always” in English grammar). Past participles of regular verbs—the vast majority of verbs in English, and the paradigm of all new verbs that enter English—end in *-ed* (as does the past form of a regular verb). But, as we already noted, there are several hundred irregular verbs, many of them among the most common verbs in the language. A simple way to find the past participle of any verb is to identify the verb form that usually follows the *have* AUX: *have walked*, *have driven*, *have run*, *have swum*, *have made*. Along with their role in finite verbs, the present and past participles and the infinitive all form the basis for a versatile set of non-finite verb phrases that are an important feature of written and spoken communication (see Chapter 12).

Non-WME tense forms: regularizing irregular forms: Note that in the present-tense paradigm for all verbs in English except *be*, the only form that is not the base form is the third-person singular, which always ends in *-s* (*be* has three forms in the present tense: *am*, *is*, *are*). Many varieties of English, including BL varieties, frequently regularize the deviant third-person singular form by dropping the *-s* (or *-es*). In those varieties, the non-WME sentences *She go to the store* and *She walk to the store* are perfectly acceptable.²¹

In the past tense, English verbs, whether regular or irregular, all (except *be*) take a single form, regardless of person or number. For example, the past-tense form of the regular verb *talk* is *talked*; the past-tense form of the irregular verb *sing* is *sang*. *Be* has two forms in the past tense:

			Present	Past
Singular	First person	I	am	was
	Second person	you	are	were
	Third person	he/she/it	is	was
Plural	First person	we	are	were
	Second person	you	are	were
	Third person	they	are	were

However, in vernacular varieties we find some degree of “leveling to *is* for present-tense forms of *be*” and “leveling to *was* for past tense forms of *be*,” in sentences like:

The dogs is in the house. We is doing it right now.

*The cars was on the street. Most of the kids was younger up there.*²²

We find similar leveling—regularizing irregularities—in the third-person singular in other verbs and regularization of irregular past and past participle forms, in Chicano English:

Otherwise, she don't know Brenda. (third SG *does* leveled to *do*)

Somebody else just come and take your life. (third SG *comes* and *takes* leveled to *come* and *take*)

It spinned. (irregular past *spun* regularized)

I had, like three weeks that I had came out the hospital before I got shot. (irregular past participle *come* leveled to past *came*).²³

While none of these forms are currently part of any WME variety, all are part of the general trend in English toward the regularization of irregular verb forms.

In some non-WME varieties of American English, we find this process of regularization taken even further, with the deletion of the past-tense marker *-ed*. “Such cases are particularly likely to be found in varieties influenced by other languages in the recent past,” and they are notably “prominent in varieties such as Vietnamese English and Native American Indian English in the Southwest.” In such varieties of English, we may find sentences like *Yesterday he mess up* and *He play a new song last night*. “Grammatically based tense unmarking tends to be more frequent on regular verbs than irregular ones, so that a structure such as

Yesterday he play a new song is more likely than *Yesterday he is in a new store*, although both may occur.²⁴ Arguably, if the sentence is prefaced by the adverb *yesterday*, then the action is already framed as taking place in the past, and the past-tense marker on the verb is redundant and so unnecessary. BL relies heavily on sentence or physical context “to signal conditions of time,”²⁵ as in the following example: *The boy carried the dog dish to the house and put some dog food in it and put some water in and bring it out and called his dog.*²⁶ Notice that, aside from *bring*, all of the other verbs are in the past tense, so marking the tense on *bring* is unnecessary and would simply be redundant since “the surrounding clauses or sentences give the needed time cues.”²⁷ WME often uses adverbials “to signal conditions of time” as well but needs them less as tense is more regularly marked in the inflection of the verb.

Unmarking tense for habitual action: In Native American Indian English in the Southwest, “unmarking is favored in habitual contexts (e.g. *In those days, we play a different kind of game*) as opposed to simple past time (e.g. *Yesterday, we play at a friend’s house*).”²⁸ This way of marking habitual action by deleting the past tense marker from the verb is akin to the use of *be* + verb-*ing* to mark habitual action in certain varieties of American English (see habitual *be* in the section on aspect below).

Another non-WME verb tense form is the **historical present**:

In the dramatic recounting of past time events, speakers may use present-tense verb forms rather than past tense forms, as in *I go down there and this guy comes up to me. . . .* In some cases an -s suffix may be added to non-third-person forms, particularly with the first-person form of *say* (e.g. *so I says to him.*). This structure is more prominent in European American vernaculars than in [BL].²⁹

BL also has a **use of *had* to mark the complicating action in a narrative**, where WME would use the simple past:

*This is a story that happened to me Monday, not too long ago. I was on my way to school and I had slipped and fell and I ran back in to change my clothes.*³⁰

This usage is a **narrative tense**,³¹ and it is used by African Americans in California and Texas, as well as Puerto Rican Americans in New York City.³²

EFL-related tense use: Some languages do not mark tense directly by inflecting the verb, as English does by adding -*ed* to mark the past. Chinese, for example, marks past time by using a time expression, effectively like using the adverb *yesterday* to indicate past action. Commonly, Chinese L1 speakers will produce sentences using the base form of the verb and an adverb instead of using

the inflected forms of the English verb: **She go Chicago every day. *She go Chicago yesterday.*³³

Rules vary among languages as to what tense the verb in a dependent clause should take, in relation to the tense of the verb in the container clause (the clause that contains the dependent clause). In English, it is generally the rule that, if the verb in the container clause is in the past tense, the verb in the dependent clause will take the past tense as well: *He left_[Past Tense] the house [while it was_[Past Tense] raining]_[Dependent Clause]. He remembered_[Past Tense] [that he had_[Past Tense] to turn off the light]_[Dependent Clause].* However, in Arabic, for example, there is, as in English, a perfect aspect that is used for complete or past action, and an imperfect aspect that is used for action that is incomplete. “As a result, speakers of Arabic may establish the following equivalencies: Arabic perfect aspect = English simple past tense; Arabic imperfect aspect = English simple present or present progressive.”³⁴ In Arabic, the perfect aspect “is the dominant form for verbs in container clauses, but the imperfect aspect is the dominant form for verbs in dependent clauses”; Arabic L1 speakers then translate those aspects into what they perceive as the English equivalents, leading Arabic L1 speakers to produce sentences like **He left the house while it rains/is raining* instead of *He left the house while it was raining.*³⁵ A related problem arises for Arabic L1 speakers’ rendering of *if-then* sentences in English, where, because of the cross-language equation of tenses described above, Arabic speakers may produce, **If we took_[Past Tense] transportation, for example, women are_[Present Tense] not allowed to drive any type of motor vehicle in my country,* where in WME, we would expect the tenses of the two verbs to be the same, as in *If we take_[Present Tense] transportation, for example, women are_[Present Tense] not allowed to drive.*³⁶

6.1.2 Modality, Aspect, and Voice

For regular verbs in English, the past and past participle forms are identical, both ending in *-ed*. To distinguish them, we have to look at the system of how we identify and label the constituents of complete verbs. This requires us to explore three features of complete verbs—modality, aspect, and voice—and the AUX, semi-modal, and imperfect aspectual verbs that mark those features.

We will continue to discuss tense, modality, aspect and voice in terms of their meanings, but modality, aspect, and voice can be understood simply as labels for forms of verbs.

- **Mood:** If there is no modal AUX or semi-modal verb in a complete verb, then the mood of the verb is indicative; the presence of the modal AUX or semi-modal verb marks the verb as modal—as indicating the speaker’s belief or assertion that the action named is hypothetical.

- **Aspect:** If there is a perfect aspect AUX (a form of *have* functioning as an AUX) in a complete verb, then that AUX *have* marks that the verb has the perfect aspect; the progressive aspect AUX *be* marks that the verb has progressive aspect; and the imperfect aspectual verbs mark that the verb has imperfect aspect. If there is no aspectual verb in a complete verb, then the verb has “zero aspect.”
- **Voice:** If there is a passive voice AUX *be* in a complete verb, then the presence of the passive AUX marks that the verb is in the passive voice. For transitive verbs (verbs that take a direct object as a complement) if there is no passive voice AUX, then the verb is in active voice; for intransitive verbs (verbs that do not take a direct object as a complement), there is no voice.

Thus, the default English verb is in the indicative mood, has zero aspect, and either active voice or zero voice.

That’s a short explanation. Now, for the details.

6.1.2.1 Modality

Modality is the feature of the verb that indicates whether the action named by the verb is actual or hypothetical. Note the difference between the actions named in the following sentences: *She goes to the store.* *She may go to the store.*³⁷ In the first sentence, the MV, *goes*, is in the present tense and, without other context, indicates an actual event and asserts the existence of that action as a fact. This verb is thus said to be in the indicative mood. By contrast, in the second sentence, the addition of the modal AUX *may* changes the meaning of the verb: now we are not talking about an actual action but about a possible or hypothetical action. The sentence *She may go to the store* implies that she has not yet gone to the store, and she may or may not.

We can sometimes use the present indicative form of the verb to refer to future or otherwise hypothetical action: *Tomorrow, I go to the port.*³⁸ We could express the same meaning by saying, *Tomorrow, I will go to the port*, or *Tomorrow, I may go to the port*.

So what? When we use the present indicative to name future or hypothetical action, we are presenting that hypothetical action as though it were already a fact: the speaker is expressing the attitude that they have no doubt that the named event will happen. The speaker’s choice of an indicative or a modal verb presents the speaker’s belief or attitude about the action.

Three important notes before we go on:

1. **In a complete verb, the first word in the verb carries the tense of the whole verb**, whether the first word is an AUX, a semi-modal, an imperfect aspectual verb, or the MV. The past-tense form of *I go to the store* is *I went to the store*. *Went* is the past-tense form of *go*. The past-tense form of *I may go to the store* is *I might go to the store*. *Might* is the past-tense form of *may*; *might go* is the past-tense form of *may go*.
2. **The verb following the modal AUX takes the base form**. After the modal AUX *may*, the MV *go* is in the base or dictionary form. That is, MODAL AUX + BASE FORM OF V = modal verb. In the complete verb, each AUX or semi-modal or imperfect aspectual verb dictates the form of the verb that immediately follows it.
3. **There is no inflected “future tense” in English**. Included among the modal auxiliaries are *will* and *shall*, auxiliaries that we might think of as marking the “future tense.” But by the word tense, while we mean something about time, we also mean different inflected forms of a single base form of a verb: forms altered by spelling or the addition of a suffix. A tensed verb can stand alone as the MV in a sentence or dependent clause. For no verb in English do we simply change spelling to mark a “future tense.” Instead, future action is commonly indicated in the same way as other hypothetical actions: by the use of a particular modal AUX.³⁹

So what? Future action, like any hypothetical action, is simply action that hasn't happened yet and therefore may not happen at all. *Will* and *shall* are merely stronger assertions than are *may* and *can* about the likelihood of the occurrence of an event.

Modal auxiliaries and semi-modal verbs: As we have already noted, there are nine modal auxiliaries in English: *will/would*, *can/could*, *shall/should*, *may/might*, and *must*. Each is only an AUX; they can appear alone only in elliptical constructions with an implied MV: a speaker might respond to the question, *Will you do it?* by saying, *I will*, an elliptical sentence that implies, *I will do it*.

Like modal auxiliaries, semi-modal verbs all mark modality in the complete verb by marking the action as hypothetical. Each semi-modal can be paraphrased by a modal AUX. But unlike modal auxiliaries, semi-modals comprise more than one word. All of the semi-modals (except *be about to*) are composed of a verb (V) plus the particle *to* (V + *to*) or V + *to* preceded by a present or past tense form of

the verb *be* (*be* + *V* + *to*). Here is a list of some common semi-modals and their modal AUX paraphrases:

Semi-Modal	Modal Aux Paraphrase	Semi-Modal	Modal Aux Paraphrase
agree to	may	aim to	will
aspire to	will	be about to	shall
be going to (<i>gonna</i>)	will	be supposed to (<i>supposeta</i>)	should
be to	(see below)	choose to	may
commit to	will	consent to	may
conspire to	may	decide to	will
desire to	may	expect to	may
had better/best	should	have got to (<i>gotta</i>)	must
have to (<i>hafta</i>)	must	hope to	may
intend to	may	long to	may
mean to	may	need to	must
offer to	may	ought to (<i>oughta</i>)	should
plan to	may	promise to	will
propose to	may	resolve to	will
swear to	will	threaten to	will
want to (<i>wanna</i>)	may	wish to	may
yearn to	may		

The most common of the semi-modal verbs—*gonna*, *gotta*, *supposeta*, *hafta*, *oughta*, and *wanna*—are regularly pronounced as if they were single words and are the ones most commonly recognized by linguists and grammarians, who will sometimes also mention *be able to*, which can be paraphrased by the modal AUX *can*. However, *be able to* is really just an elaboration of the semi-modal *be to*, as in *I am to report to the Court of General Sessions*.⁴⁰ We can put many **adjectives** between *be* and the particle *to*, as in *The employee is able to give consent*⁴¹ (c.f. *The employee can give consent*) or *I am likely to favor an increase in the minimum wage*⁴² (c.f. *I should/may favor an increase*).⁴³ Some adjectives add a negative implication, as in *Many are afraid to speak up*⁴⁴ (c.f. *Many will not speak up*). We will discuss negation with *not* at length in 8.3, but we have already seen negative determiners (*neither*, *no*, *none of*) and negative indefinite pronouns (*neither*, *no one*, *nobody*, *none*, *nothing*); and there are negative prefixes (e.g. *dis-*, *un-*, *im-*).

So what? Clearly negation is an important feature of the language!

There are also a number of common modal expressions in which the slot between *be* and *to* is filled by an **adverb**: *The History Channel is soon to release a*

documentary version⁴⁵ (c.f. *The History Channel will release*). *Details are yet to be finalized*⁴⁶ (c.f. *Details may be finalized*). And some adverbs also add a negative implication, as in *Consistency is hardly to be expected in these matters*⁴⁷ (c.f. *Consistency should not be expected*).

The **semi-modals** can occupy two kinds of slots in the complete verb. First, they can fill the same slot as a modal AUX, appearing at the beginning of the complete verb and marking not only modality but tense: *I ought to go* is the past modal of “go”; *I am going to go* is the present modal of “go.”

Second, and very much unlike modal auxiliaries, semi-modals allow us to have more than one modal-marking verb in a single complete verb:

*To transform the world you might have to stand alone.*⁴⁸
*You have to want to make a difference.*⁴⁹

In the verb *might have to stand*, *might* and *have to* both express modal meaning. We would label this verb as the “past modal modal of *stand*.” In the verb *have to want to make*, *have to* and *want to* are each semi-modals, and we would label *have to want to make* as the “present modal modal of *make*.”

So what? This may sound a little silly: how can an action be “modal modal”? It just shows that we have nuanced ways of naming actions so as to hedge about our intentions as a politeness gesture, not insisting too directly and thereby leaving open the speaker’s and listener’s options for action and interpretation.

In traditional grammar, what we are calling semi-modals are analyzed as V + INFINITIVE. In the sentence *He had to have been heading there*,⁵⁰ traditional grammar would treat *had* as the main verb and *to have been heading there* as an infinitive phrase functioning as a nominal functioning as the direct object of “had” (INFP:NOMINAL:DO). But many contemporary grammarians have already recognized the most common semi-modals as a legitimate extension of the category of words that mark modality in the verb and therefore would analyze the complete verb as *had to have been heading*; part of that interpretation hinges on the pronunciation of *have to* and *had to* as *hafta* and *hadda*. The pronunciation shows that we conceptualize these as essentially being single words.

Also, by analyzing *to have been heading there* as an INFP:NOMINAL:DO of the verb “had,” traditional grammar understands the INFP as answering the question “What did I have?” This assumes that *to have been heading to the store* is a thing or state that can be had in the same way that one might have an object, such as a book. It seems to me to make more sense—and to be truer to the meaning of the sentence—to treat these V + *to* + V combinations as SEMI-MODAL + V.

When a V + *to* combination immediately precedes a verb and expresses hypothetical action in the same way as a modal AUX, we will treat the V + *to* combination as a semi-modal. In semi-modals, the word *to* is a particle: a small word that functions as a connector between the semi-modal and the following verb. But remember: semi-modal verbs are not auxiliaries, since they do not have the qualities that define a true auxiliary: they cannot be inverted with the subject to form a question (*I want to go home. *Want I to go home?*); we cannot attach *n't* to them (**I wantn't to go home; *I want ton't go home*); and we cannot form a tag question with them (**I want to go home, want 'nt I?*).

Two partial modal auxiliaries: In some English varieties, *ought to* (*oughta*) and *need* function as incomplete or partial modal auxiliaries since they convey modal meaning and exhibit two of the three defining features of auxiliaries: they (1) occur in front of the subject in interrogatives; (2) serve as what the negative *-n't* attaches to; but (3) they do not usually occur in tag questions:

Ought to (Oughta)

1. *You ought to lie down, Major. Ought you to lie down, Major?*⁵¹
2. *You oughtn't to let them in.*⁵²
3. *?You ought to let them in, oughtn't you? ?You oughtn't to let them in, ought you? You ought to let them in, shouldn't you?*⁵³

Need

1. **You need ask. You need to ask. Need you ask?*⁵⁴ **Need you to ask?*
2. *You needn't ask.*⁵⁵
3. **You need to ask, needn't you? ?You needn't ask, need you? You need to ask, don't you?*⁵⁶

Non-WME semi-modal verbs: future *be*: In BL, *be* has a variety of non-WME uses, including as a semi-modal verb to mark future action, and even as a stand-alone verb with the same meaning as WME *will be*. The particular meaning of *be* is indicated by sentence context, particularly by the use of adverbials to indicate the time frame of the action. In *She be goin' there later*, *be* implies future action, as indicated by the adverb *later*. Contrast this *be* with that in the sentence *She be goin' there every day*, where *be* marks a habitual action, one that occurs routinely, as indicated by the adverbial phrase *every day*.⁵⁷ We will discuss the aspectual verb habitual *be* below. As we shall see, *be* has developed a complex variety of uses and meanings in BL, uses and meanings that are often unavailable in WME. Invariant *be* is also consistent with the tendency of all varieties of English to regularize irregular forms. Thus, instead of having the WME hodge-podge conjugation of *be*, BL overwhelmingly uses *be* for all persons and numbers. At the same

time, BL is influenced by the forms of WME, and BL forms tend to converge with WME forms. Some BL speakers will tend to say, *She'll be goin' there later*, or *She-ah be goin' there later*, although not the full WME pronunciation, *She will be going there later*.⁵⁸

Be fixin' to: Southern varieties of American English employ a non-Mainstream semi-modal, *be fixin' to*, with the specific meaning that an event is or was imminent but has not yet or did not actually happen. A more WME version of *fixin' to* would be “about to” or “planning to”⁵⁹ or “be going to” (and its more colloquial pronunciation, “gonna”). *I'm fixin' to go to the store* means I am about to do so. *It's fixin' to rain* means the rain will start soon. The construction can also be used in the past tense, as in *I was fixin' to come but I got held up*, meaning that the speaker had intended to come, and in fact was about to, when other events intervened.⁶⁰ Like the semi-modal *be going to*, *be fixin' to* includes a *be* AUX followed by the *-ing* form of the verb and might be mistaken for a verb with the progressive aspect. In BL, this AUX may be pronounced as *finna*, *fidna*, or *fitna*⁶¹ with *is* and *are* routinely deleted (though *am*, *'m*, *was*, or *were* cannot be deleted, consistent with the BL rules for the deletion of copular *be*⁶² [see 6.1.8]).

Imma: Another BL variation on the WME semi-modal *be going to* is *Imma* (also spelled *I'mma* and *I'ma*), which rolls the first-person singular pronoun in with the verb, contracting *I am going to* into a single word.

*“A person like me, Imma take me a few to-go plates from the facility.”*⁶³

*“Imma look funny for a lil bit but that's it.”*⁶⁴

Note that *Imma* only has a first-person singular form.

(sup)poseta: In some varieties of American English, the WME semi-modal *be supposed to* is reduced in its pronunciation to *supposeta*, or even *poseta* (much like *be fixin' to* is reduced to *finna*), and may be used with a following MV in the past form, as in *You supposeta went there*. In this sentence, *supposeta* can be understood as a reduction of *supposed to have*, blending the semi-modal and the perfect aspect AUX.⁶⁵

Need + Past Participle: Across the North Midlands dialect region of American English (ranging westward from the central regions of New Jersey and Pennsylvania out to Kansas and Nebraska), it is common for speakers to reduce the semi-modal + passive construction *need to be* + past participle, to *need* + past participle. Thus, it is common to hear *The car needs washed* where WME speakers would say, *The car needs to be washed*. Across the region, this usage increasingly appears online, as in *I'm sure some people need entertained and enjoyed this*,⁶⁶ and may even appear in published writing, as in a headline in the *Macomb (Illinois) Journal*, “Zoning Changes Need Stopped.”⁶⁷

Double modals: Double modals—the use of two modal auxiliaries together—are a typical feature of Southern vernacular varieties and appear in a range of

possible combinations, the most common of which is *might could*. Southern vernacular varieties pair modal auxiliaries with semi-modal verbs in regionally distinctive combinations, such as *might oughta*, and will also distinctively combine modal auxiliaries with the generic past verb *useta* (see below), as in *useta could*. In Northern varieties, double modals with two modal auxiliaries do not occur, although some Northern vernacular varieties will pair *useta* with a modal, as in *He useta couldn't do it*. Some double-modal constructions with at least one semi-modal verb are ubiquitous in American English varieties (e.g. *You might want to reconsider your investment strategy*).⁶⁸

Double modals tend to lessen the force of the attitude or obligation conveyed by single modals, so that *She might could do it* is less forceful than *She might do it* or *She could do it*. In some Southern regions, double modals are quite widespread and not particularly stigmatized.⁶⁹

As a result, double modals comprising two modal auxiliaries mark Southern varieties as particularly distinct from other regional varieties.⁷⁰

EFL-related modal use: Several Spanish verbs that have modal meanings must be followed by infinitive verbs, leading Spanish L1 speakers to produce sentences like, **In all situations I hear English and I must to talk English, and the most important thing is that I must to pronounce a correct English*, and **I can't to believe that you aged so quickly*.⁷¹ Of course, in Spanish, as in many languages, the infinitive form of the verb is a single word, so there is no distinction between the infinitive and the base or dictionary form of the verb.

Cognates—words that sound alike between two languages—can cause problems, as they may not have precisely the same meaning. The German modal verb *müssen* has the same meaning as its English cognate, the modal AUX *must*, but when negated, *müssen nicht* means something is “not necessary,” the equivalent of English *don't have to*. Thus, L1 German speakers may say or write, *New technology has made life easier. I must not go to work on foot, I take the car instead*, instead of, *I don't have to go to work on foot*. The sentence produced by the L1 German speaker is grammatically well formed, but it does not convey the speaker's intended meaning.⁷²

Unlike English, Chinese does not use modal auxiliaries to mark distinctions among types of hypothetical action, instead relying on general knowledge of the world and the context in which a sentence is used to establish its precise meaning. Thus, the same sentence in Chinese might be translated into English—in three different ways!—as referring to

Future: *If you see_[Present] my younger sister, you'll_[Present Modal] certainly know that she is pregnant.*

Hypothetical: If you saw_[Past] my younger sister, you'd_[Past Modal] certainly know she was pregnant.

Counterfactual: If you had seen_[Past Perfect] my younger sister, you would have_[Past Modal Perfect] certainly known that she was pregnant.

This conflation of modal meanings in Chinese leads Chinese L1 speakers to produce sentences like the following:

**If I had studied harder, I would pass.*

WME *If I had studied harder, I would have passed.*

Or, *If I studied harder, I would pass.*

**If I had worn my glasses, I will greet you.*

WME *If I had worn my glasses, I would have greeted you.*

Or, *If I wore my glasses, I would greet you.*⁷³

So what? While I have boiled the meaning of modals down to the notion of whether the action named is actual or hypothetical, there are clearly a variety of hypothetical actions, which may entail a variety of different socially defined categories of meaning: ability, permission, possibility, advice, necessity, or counterfactuality, as well as expressing future time.⁷⁴ Because the ways in which people talk about such categories vary among cultures, the ways in which languages express those meanings will vary as well; and as EFL learners frequently apply the patterns from their L1 to their spoken and written English, it will sometimes be difficult for EFL learners to choose the correct English modal verb to express their intended meaning.

6.1.2.2 Aspect

Traditionally, aspect is distinct from tense and modality: tense tells when in time an action occurs, relative to a reference point established by the speaker (past, present); modality tells whether the action is actual or hypothetical; and aspect is understood as the feature of the verb that tells whether the action named by the verb is perfect (completed), progressive (ongoing), or imperfect (initiated, intermittent, flawed, or somehow incomplete). Since English has no inflected future tense, we have to add an AUX or semi-modal verb marking future action in the same way that we mark hypothetical action. The way we place an action in time (tense) and how we mark whether an action is real or hypothetical (modality) overlap. When we discuss the imperfect aspect below, we will find that, in form and meaning, it has some kinship with the kinds of modal meaning expressed by

semi-modal verbs: hypothetical action (marked by a modal AUX or semi-modal verb) is related to incomplete action (marked by an imperfect aspectual verb).

We will start with the more common perfect and progressive aspects. In the complete verb, the perfect aspect is marked by the presence of the have AUX followed by the past-participle form of the following verb (not to be confused with the semi-modal verb *have to*, or the lexical verb *have*). The progressive aspect is marked by the presence of a be AUX followed by the present participle form of the following verb. That is:

have + PAST PARTICIPLE OF V = V with perfect aspect

(e.g. *have baked*; *have gone*)

be + PRESENT PARTICIPLE OF V = V with progressive aspect

(e.g. *am baking*; *am going*)

A verb can have both the perfect and the progressive aspects. The *have* AUX comes first, followed by the *be* AUX (which has to take the past participle form *been*), followed by the present participle of a verb:

have + *been* + PRESENT PARTICIPLE OF V = V with perfect progressive aspect

(e.g. *have been baking*; *have been going*)

A verb can also be modal and have the perfect aspect, the progressive aspect, or both aspects:

MODAL + *have* + PAST PARTICIPLE OF V = modal V with perfect aspect

(e.g. *will have baked*; *will have gone*)

MODAL + *be* + PRESENT PARTICIPLE OF V = modal V with progressive aspect

(e.g. *will be baking*; *will be going*)

MODAL + *have* + *been* + Present Participle of V = modal V with perfect progressive aspect

(e.g. *will have been baking*; *will have been going*)

Here is a paradigm for the verb *go* in the first-person singular (*I*), in the present and past tenses, with modality, and perfect and progressive aspect:

I go to the store. (PRES tense; IND mood; Ø aspect)

I went to the store. (PAST tense; IND mood; Ø aspect)

I have gone to the store. (PRES tense; IND mood; PERF aspect)

I had gone to the store. (PAST tense; IND mood; PERF aspect)
I am going to the store. (PRES tense; IND mood; PROG aspect)
I was going to the store. (PAST tense; IND mood; PROG aspect)
I have been going to the store. (PRES tense; IND mood; PERF PROG aspect)
I had been going to the store. (PAST tense; IND mood; PERF PROG aspect)
I may go to the store. (PRES tense; modal; Ø aspect)
I might go to the store. (PAST tense; modal; Ø aspect)
I may have gone to the store. (PRES tense; modal; PERF aspect)
I might have gone to the store. (PAST tense; modal; PERF aspect)
I may be going to the store. (PRES tense; modal; PROG aspect)
I might be going to the store. (PAST tense; modal; PROG aspect)
I may have been going . . . (PRES tense; modal; PERF PROG aspect)
I might have been going . . . (PAST tense; modal; PERF PROG aspect)

Imperfect aspectual verbs: Imperfect aspectual verbs are a large category of English verbs that is unrecognized by traditional grammar and rarely discussed, even by linguists. While the perfect AUX *have* marks the action as completed or “perfected” at some time, and the progressive AUX *be* marks the action as ongoing or “in progress” at some time, the imperfect aspectual verbs mark the action named by the MV as having a mushier sort of status. Imperfect aspectual verbs characterize action as being realized to some degree.⁷⁵

*He starts to get up.*⁷⁶ *He begins to get up.*⁷⁷
*He starts getting up.*⁷⁸ *He begins getting up.*⁷⁹
*He attempts to get up.*⁸⁰
*He manages to get up.*⁸¹
*He contrives to get up.*⁸²
*He dares to get up.*⁸³

In the first three sentences, the verbs express that the action was actually initiated (*started, begun, attempted*), but we do not know whether it is completed. In the last three sentences, the verbs express that the action actually occurred but that it was somehow flawed, so it is not a true or adequate example of the action, as though something about the event of *getting up* isn’t quite right.

These imperfect aspectual verbs exhibit another quality that also marks the aspect auxiliaries. Verbs like *begin, continue, cease, get* [as in *get going*], *start*, etc.

are sometimes called aspectual verbs, because they do not refer to actions, processes, etc. which are independent of the actions, processes etc. denoted by the complement [that is, the following verb]. For instance, *I began walking* does not refer to two actions, one of which might be talked about as “beginning,” and the other as “walking.” The whole of the predicate refers to just one action. The function of the finite verb is only to emphasize a particular aspect of this action.⁸⁴

So in *I began walking*, the finite verb *began* relates to the participle *walking* in much the same way that *am* relates to *walking* in *I am walking*: *am walking* doesn't refer to two actions, an act of "being" and an act of "walking." Rather, *am walking* indicates that the action of walking is in progress, so *AM* + *V-ING* marks the progressive aspect; *BEGAN* + *V-ING* also marks some kind of aspectual character in the action named by the MV.

Imperfect aspectual verbs can also show a "disposition" toward performing an action. *He began to sneeze* and *He began sneezing* do not mean he continuously sneezed but that there was a sporadic series of sneezes. Likewise, *She began studying Greek* and *She continued to study Greek* do not necessarily mark that it was a constantly ongoing event, or a singular event, but an event that she had a disposition for, which she was disposed to do sporadically during this period.

We begin to see the mushiness of the category of imperfect aspectual verbs: they may mark

- Action that is initiated but incomplete—but not in progress at the moment.
- Action that actually occurred, but that was somehow flawed, and so not a true or adequate example of the action.
- Action that the actor has a disposition toward performing but is not performing constantly.
- A variety of other hedges or qualifications to action.

Imperfect aspectual verbs come in two forms:

- **Single-word verbs**, which take the form of the imperfect aspectual verb followed by the present participle form of a verb: *Rogen's mom starts driving him to comedy clubs.*⁸⁵
- **Multi-word verbs**, which take the form of the imperfect aspectual verb followed by the particle *to* and the base form of the following verb: *He starts to drive off.*⁸⁶

Here is a larger (though by no means exhaustive) list of examples of each type of imperfect aspectual verb:

Single-Word Imperfect Aspectual Verbs

adore	begin	cease	come	continue
discontinue	dislike	enjoy	envision	finish
go	hate	imagine	keep	like
love	practice	prefer	start	stop
try	undertake			

Multi-Word Imperfect Aspectual Verbs

appear to	arrange to	attempt to	begin to	cease to
continue to	contrive to	dare to	hate to	like to
love to	manage to	prefer to	pretend to	scramble to
seek to	seem to	start to	strive to	struggle to
train to	try to	undertake to	venture to	

There are many more, and you can easily identify them from your own experience of English and the definitions we are working with.

Notice that the form of these imperfect aspectual verbs is highly idiomatic. While the verbs *keep* and *continue* are basically synonyms, we can say *continue talking/to talk* but only *keep talking*. Then there are verbs like *arrange* and *pretend* that, as imperfect aspectual verbs, can only take *to* + V: one can *arrange/pretend to talk*, but one cannot **arrange/pretend talking*. Also, the single- and multi-word versions of an imperfect aspectual verb sometimes have distinctly different idiomatic meanings: notice the difference in meaning between *get going*, meaning “leave,” and *get to go*, which means “be permitted to go.”

Sometimes it is not clear whether it is appropriate to interpret the sequence VERB + *to* + VERB or VERB + PRESENT PARTICIPLE as part of a single complete verb, or whether it would be better to interpret it as a verb followed by a direct object, where the form of the direct object is an infinitive phrase or participle phrase, functioning as a nominal, functioning as the direct object (INFP:NOMINAL:DO or PARTP:NOMINAL:DO). Clearly, sentences like

Rogen's mom starts driving him to comedy clubs.

He starts to drive off.

*My mom keeps driving me crazy about that.*⁸⁷

all involve imperfect aspectual verbs, as the actions of the two verbs are inseparable. But when we move to sentences like

Rogen's mom loves driving/to drive him to comedy clubs.

Rogen's mom enjoys driving him to comedy clubs.

it becomes less clear how *driving him to comedy clubs* and *to drive him to comedy clubs* differ from nominal direct objects (NOMINAL:DO), as in sentences like

Rogen's mom loves the act of driving him to comedy clubs.

Rogen's mom enjoys the act of driving him to comedy clubs.

We will wrestle further with how to interpret V + *to* + V and V + PRESENT PARTICIPLE sequences when we discuss non-finite verb phrases in Chapter 12.

EFL-related V + *to* + V use: English is odd in that the infinitive form of the verb is two words: *to* + V. For L1 speakers of Spanish and Portuguese, for example, languages in which the infinitive form of the verb is a single word, it can be hard to pick up the idiomatic rules of which verbs are followed by *to* + V, and which are followed by the present participle. Add to this that there are contexts in which English does use the bare infinitive form of the verb, without the particle *to* (see 12.2), and it seems reasonable that L1 speakers of Spanish may produce sentences like, **But he rejects to include Erasmus's murders in his discussion* (instead of *rejects including*), or, **I prefer do exercise, watch TV, or go out* (instead of *prefer to do*).⁸⁸

A possible imperfect auxiliary? The verb *dare* permits two of the three functions that define an AUX in English: it can (1) occur in front of the subject in interrogatives and (2) serve as what the negative *-n't* attaches to; but (3) it cannot occur in tag questions.

Dare

1. *They dare to challenge him.*⁸⁹
*They dare challenge these policies.*⁹⁰
*Dare they challenge my authority?*⁹¹
2. *They daren't challenge the rich and powerful.*⁹²
3. **They dare challenge these policies, daren't they?*
?They daren't challenge these policies, dare they?
?They dare challenge these policies, do they?

The tag question use of *dare/daren't* was, at least for a brief while, part of spoken English.⁹³

Non-WME aspectual verbs: Many varieties of American English commonly use a number of non-WME aspectual verbs, including completive *done*, habitual *be*, remote time stressed *been*, and unstressed *been*. A less common non-WME aspectual verb is the use of *be*, rather than *have*, to mark the perfect aspect.

Completive *done*: In Southern European American varieties and BL, *done* is used as an aspectual verb with a meaning similar to the WME AUX *have*. However, while WME AUX *have* is followed by the past participle form of a verb, the non-WME aspectual *done* is typically followed by the past-tense form of a verb:

- I done forgot what you wanted.*⁹⁴
*That new paper boy done gone and broke my sternum.*⁹⁵

In BL, completive *done* may also be followed by the base form of an MV: *I done finish my homework today.*⁹⁶ Both constructions mark that the action has

been completed in the recent past, much as does the WME AUX *have*, sometimes called the “immediate perfect aspect.”⁹⁷ “[T]he *done* form may also add intensification to the activity, as in *I done told you not to mess up*,”⁹⁸ much as *have* does in WME, as in *I have told you not to mess up*, or, likewise, *do* as in *I did tell you not to mess up*. But *done* is different from WME *have* or *do*: BL speakers note that *done* feels more intense and forceful:⁹⁹ the completive *done* stresses that the action is “finished, complete, and done with.”¹⁰⁰ And, perhaps more significantly, while the perfect aspect AUX *have* can be negated, completive *done* cannot:

Perfect AUX *have*: *He has gone. He hasn't gone.*

Completive *done*: *He done gone. *He ain't done gone. *He donen't gone.*¹⁰¹

Completive *done* can combine with other verbs, including habitual *be* (see below), to create other mood-and-aspect forms:

Another few weeks, the Puerto Ricans be done took over. (Future or modal completive; c.f. WME *will have taken over*)

If the dog wasn't spayed, she 'd be done got pregnant cause she gets out. (Modal completive; c.f. WME *would have gotten*)

The children be done ate by the time I get there. (Habitual completive; c.f. WME *have usually eaten*).¹⁰²

Be done is most common in the future or modal completive, particularly in sentences of the form *I be done _____ before you know it*:

I be done did this lil' spot a hair fo' you know it.

If you ain mighty particular, yo' luck be done run out fo' you know it.

*I'll be done bought my own CB waitin' on him to buy me one.*¹⁰³

This use of *be done* in BL has continued to evolve.¹⁰⁴ In the following sentences, the implication of *be done* is that the succeeding event is a sure result of the preceding event:

If you love your enemy, they be done ate you alive in this society. (WME equivalent, roughly, *In this society, if you love your enemy, it will follow as surely as night the day that they will eat you alive.*)

Don't do that 'cause you be done messed up your clothes. (WME equivalent, *If you keep behaving that way, you will certainly mess up your clothes.*)

This modal usage is “resultative” since, rather than just indicating completion or “a simple ordering of events, it indicates that the second event will inevitably follow the first.”¹⁰⁵

Imperfect aspect with completive *done*: There is an analysis of completive *done* that may cover all of these examples under a single umbrella. In BL, *done* may commonly mark that the action occurred in the recent past, as when you find that your friend just chugged your soda and you say, *You done drunk it*. But it may also apply to action that occurred years ago, as when your father says to the forty-year-old whom he hasn't seen since she was two, *You done grewed up!* “even though presumably the growing up happened years ago.” In both examples, the use of *done* “marks counterexpectation.” That is, “a sentence with *done* is always about something the speaker finds somewhat surprising, contrary to what was expected.”¹⁰⁶ This would help explain all of the examples of completive *done* given above: when I say, *I done forgot what you wanted*, it indicates that I did not expect to forget it. And if I say, *The children be done ate by the time I get there*, although it was usually the case that the children *have finished* eating by the time I get there, it is still not the state of affairs I hope for or expect. Completive *done* can't be negated, as it is already the assertion of a counterexpectation; understood as marking a counterexpectation, verbs with completive *done* could be understood as conveying imperfect aspect, in that the action described is “flawed” from the speaker's perspective: it is not what the speaker expected, and so isn't quite right.

Imperfect aspect with reinforcing *like*: Likewise, the ubiquitous use of *like* in the speech of younger Americans also serves to mark counterexpectation, as in the following bit of a conversation between a sixteen-year-old and a friend:

*So we got there and we thought we were going to have the room to ourselves and it turned out that like a family had booked it already. So we're standing there and there were like grandparents and like grandkids and aunts and uncles all over the place.*¹⁰⁷

As with the examples of *done* above, these uses of *like* indicate the speaker's surprise that the situation was not as expected. The speaker and his colleagues assumed they “were going to have the room to themselves” but instead “a family had booked it already” (*like a family had booked it already*)—not just a couple of parents and a kid, but a whole extended family (*like grandparents and like grandkids and aunts and uncles*). This “reinforcing *like*” thus helps to mark the imperfect aspect in the verb.¹⁰⁸ The second sentence could have been stated more formally with the imperfect aspectual verb *seem to*: *So we're standing there and there seemed to be grandparents and grandkids and aunts and uncles all over the place*.

Habitual *be*: Perhaps one of the most distinctive features of BL, at least in the view of speakers of WME, is the use (or absence) of *be*. Most often, *be*, “sometimes written and pronounced *bees* or *be's*,”¹⁰⁹ is an aspectual verb used in

BL and “in some rural European American varieties”¹¹⁰ to mark action that occurs routinely, intermittently, or habitually over a period of time (c.f. the idea of imperfect aspectual verbs showing a “disposition” toward an action). *The coffee be cold* means that *Every day the coffee is cold*. If *be* is deleted, as in *The coffee cold*, that means *Today the coffee is cold*.¹¹¹ The adverbial expressions (*every day*, *today*) may be included for emphasis or clarity, as in *Every day the coffee be cold* and *The coffee cold today*. However, it would be grammatically incorrect to say, **Every day the coffee cold*, or **The coffee be cold today*.¹¹² In varieties of English that use habitual *be*, the AUX *do* is added to form questions, tag questions, and negatives:

Do he be walking every day?

*She don't be sick, do she?*¹¹³

*That man be here every night; he don't want no girl.*¹¹⁴

Remote time stressed *béen*: In BL, “When stressed, *béen* can serve to mark a special aspectual function, indicating that the event or activity took place in the ‘distant past’ but is still relevant.”¹¹⁵ The state indicated by stressed *béen* begins in the remote past and extends up to the moment of utterance.¹¹⁶ Compare this “remote perfect aspect”¹¹⁷ to the sense of the WME sentence, *I have done my homework* or *I finished it áges ago*. Stressed *béen* can also indicate just that the event was initiated in the past, but may not extend to the present, as in *He béen ate it*, meaning *He ate it a long time ago*.¹¹⁸ A BL speaker who says *I béen know that guy* means *I have known that guy for a long time*.¹¹⁹ Remote time *béen* can be used ironically, as in this example, spoken by a seventy-two-year-old Black woman in Philadelphia: *He [the dentist] finish so quick. I ask him was he finished, and he say, ‘I béen finished!’* The implication here is that the dentist was so thoroughly finished, it was as though his work were completed years ago.¹²⁰

As in this ironic example, “the ‘remoteness’ of the time involved is a subjective matter: if you compliment someone on a new outfit, they might say, *I béen had this*, as a mid-twentieth-century WME speaker might have said, ‘Oh, that old thing?’ as a way of deflecting or downplaying the compliment.”¹²¹ Also, stressed *béen* can be used with auxiliaries “to create complex constructions in which the period designated by *béen* remains in effect until a time earlier than the moment of speech”:

We had béen married when this lil’ one came along. (spoken by a seventy-one-year-old Philadelphian. The WME rendering would be *We had been married awhile . . .*)

They coulda béen ended that war. (spoken by a twenty-nine-year-old Philadelphian. The WME rendering would be *They could have ended that war much earlier.*)¹²²

Remote time *béen*, in common use in BL, is, in some contexts, readily misunderstood by WME speakers. The sentence *She béen married* is typically interpreted by BL speakers to mean that she got married a long time ago and is still married (the correct BL reading). WME speakers commonly misunderstand this sentence, assuming it means she had been but is no longer married.

Unstressed *been*: This usage contrasts with the preceding stressed remote time *been*. Unstressed *been* occurs in BL variants with the meaning of WME *has/have been*, as in *He been sick* for *He has been sick*. “Unlike remote time *been*, unstressed *been* can co-occur with time adverbials (e.g. *He been sick since last week*) and does not connote remoteness.”¹²³ Unstressed *been* can also occur with the completive *done*:

By the time I got there, he been done gone.
*They done been sitting there an hour.*¹²⁴

Perfective *be*: In Old English, the perfect aspect was marked by both *have* and *be*. *Have* “was used only with the past participles of transitive verbs”: verbs that take a direct object as their complement (see 7.1.2). *Be* was used to mark the perfect aspect with the past participles of intransitive verbs—verbs that do not take a direct object as their complement (see 7.1.1). In Old English, *be* was especially used to mark the perfect aspect with verbs of motion. These usages of *be* were very old fashioned and conservative when they appeared in the King James Bible:¹²⁵

*The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord.*¹²⁶ (c.f. *have become*)
*Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground.*¹²⁷ (c.f. *has fallen*)
*He is not here: for he is risen, as he said.*¹²⁸ (c.f. *has risen*)

In early Middle English, we find *have* with both intransitive verbs (including the MV *be*) and with verbs of motion; however, *be* long continued to be commonly used to mark the perfect aspect.¹²⁹ And the perfective *be* persists in present perfect verbs in “some isolated varieties of American English”:

I’m been there before. (WME *I’ve been there before.*)
You’re taken the best medicine. (WME *You have taken the best medicine.*)

This construction occurs most frequently in first-person singular contexts (e.g. *I’m forgot*) but can also occur in the first-person plural and in second-person contexts as well (e.g. *we’re forgot*, *you’re been there*). Occasionally, the perfect

can even be formed with invariant *be*, as in *We be come here for nothing* or *I'll be went to the post office*.¹³⁰ But in contemporary English, the perfective *be* lingers along with the perfective *have*:¹³¹

*He is gone, but he will never die.*¹³²

*After he has gone, the waitress turns to the manager.*¹³³

*I knew when he was gone that the show was over.*¹³⁴

*When he had gone, I closed the store early.*¹³⁵

Indignant come: In informal varieties of spoken English, *come*, *go*, and *start* followed by the present participle form of a verb are used as imperfect aspectual verbs to mark the speaker's indignation about a behavior. Spears notes examples such as the following as peculiar to BL: *He come walking in here like he owned the damn place*.¹³⁶ But other varieties use the same construction to mark counter-expectation through indignation:

*You can't come barging in here.*¹³⁷

*We go crashing into poor neighborhoods with undercover officers looking to make arrests.*¹³⁸

*I'm not going to quit my job and start lording it around like I'm the king of the world.*¹³⁹

So what? There is no such thing as “broken English.” All varieties of English, whether WME or non-WME, formal or informal, are equally rule governed and orderly. If they were not, then people could not communicate their needs and interests and succeed in having them met. Additionally, the blueprint of English accommodates all of these non-WME patterns and rules, and people usually manage to communicate across and despite these differences in how the furniture is arranged.

EFL-related aspect use: simple present versus present progressive: Languages also use aspect and tense together in different ways. For example, German uses the simple present in both contexts where English would use the simple present and contexts where English would use the present progressive. German L1 speakers often use the present progressive where WME requires the simple present, as in the following exchange: *A: Do you know Sapsucker Woods? B: *Yes, my wife is often going there with the children* instead of *my wife often goes there*. German L1 speakers may also use the simple present—as they would in German—where WME would use the present progressive, as in **I send you a photo of Rita taken in Berlin*, instead of *I am enclosing/sending you a photo*.¹⁴⁰

EFL-related aspect use: simple present versus present perfect: Although German has a present perfect construction (using the verb *haben*, which has the same meaning as its English cognate *have*), where English would use the present perfect, as in a sentence like *I have lived in Vienna since 1970/for 25 years*, German uses the simple present. “As a result, German L1 speakers may fail to use the present perfect in these English contexts and, overgeneralizing the use of the present progressive,” produce sentences like **I am living in Vienna since 1970. *I am living in Vienna for 25 years.*¹⁴¹

EFL-related aspect use: simple past versus perfect aspect: While English generally uses the simple past-tense forms of verbs for describing past action, French commonly uses the *passé composé* form of the verb, which comprises a form of the verb *avoir* (“to have”) followed by the past participle of the main verb, much like the English perfect aspect. French L1 speakers thus commonly describe a series of past action using the present perfect. German also commonly uses the present perfect to describe past action, and thus German L1 speakers commonly produce English sentences with the present perfect forms of verbs, where WME uses the simple past.¹⁴²

6.1.2.3 Voice

The concept of voice (active; passive) applies only to transitive verbs: those verbs that take as their complement a nominal functioning as a direct object (DO). Intransitive verbs (verbs that do not take a DO) have zero voice. For transitive verbs, there are two voices in English: active and passive; active is the more common, default voice.

- In **active voice** sentences, the agent performing the action is named in the subject of the sentence; the predicate then follows with a transitive MV, and after the verb, the person or thing being acted upon—the patient—is named in the NOMINAL:DO.
- In **passive voice** sentences, the order is reversed: the patient is named by the subject; the verb that follows changes to a *be* AUX followed by the past participle of the transitive MV; and the agent is either named after the verb (in a PP beginning with *by* or less often *with*), or is not mentioned explicitly in the sentence.

Compare the following examples:

Active voice: *I charm her.*¹⁴³

Passive voice: *She is charmed by me.*¹⁴⁴ *Oh, she is charmed!*¹⁴⁵

In each sentence, the action is named by a form of the verb *charm*, and *I* or *me* names the agent, the one who does the charming.

- In the **active voice** sentence, the agent—*I*—is named in the NP:SUBJ. The patient—*her*—is named after the verb, in the DO position in the predicate.
- In the **first passive voice sentence**, the patient—*she*—is named in the NP:SUBJ; the verb changes form from the active voice *charm* to the passive voice *is charmed*; and the agent—*me*—is named in the predicate, as the PCOMP of “by.”
- In the **second passive voice sentence**, the patient—*she*—is named in the NP:SUBJ; the verb—*is charmed*—is in the passive voice form; and the agent—*I/me*—is deleted completely.

The passive voice allows us

- To talk about actions that have no agents (e.g. chemical reactions).
- To not mention the agent of an action (e.g. when we want to avoid taking or giving blame).
- To reorder the information in a sentence so that the patient becomes the topic by being mentioned first.

Note that intransitive verbs—verbs that don’t take a DO—can’t take passive voice. In the sentence *I fell*,¹⁴⁶ there is no patient, no DO, and therefore no passive voice form. In a sentence in which the MV is copular *be* (e.g. *The problem is money*),¹⁴⁷ there is no possible passive voice version (**Money is been the problem*): the verb *be* is not transitive, does not take a DO, and cannot be said to be in active voice. The same holds true for the many verbs that take adjectival or adverbial complements (e.g. *He drives to work*.¹⁴⁸ **To work is driven by him*). We will discuss various sorts of transitive verbs in 7.1; in 10.1.5, we will again discuss passive voice in the context of rearranging sentences and dependent clauses.

The **passive voice** verb takes the form of a *be* AUX followed by the past participle of a verb, unlike the **progressive aspect**, in which the *be* AUX is followed by the present participle:

Active voice V: *I approach each one.*¹⁴⁹

Passive voice V: *Each one is approached by me.*¹⁵⁰

Progressive aspect V: *Each one is approaching me.*

A single complete verb can be in both the progressive aspect and the passive voice, in which case it will have two *be* auxiliaries. The first *be* AUX (*be* AUX1) followed by the present participle marks the progressive aspect, while the second *be* AUX (*be* AUX2) followed by the past participle marks the passive voice:

be AUX1 + PRESENT PARTICIPLE = V with the progressive aspect

I am_[be AUX1] approaching each one.

be AUX2 + PAST PARTICIPLE = V with the passive voice

Each one is _[be AUX2] **approached** *by me.*

be AUX1 + *being* (*be* AUX2 in the present participle form) + PAST PARTICIPLE = V with the progressive aspect and the passive voice

Each one is _[be AUX1] **being** _[be AUX2] **approached** *by me.*

So what? Is passive voice wrong? You have probably been told that passive voice is bad, weak, or otherwise a no-no. In itself, there's nothing wrong with passive voice: all speakers and writers of English use it, whether ordinary folks or highly regarded prose stylists. Passive voice is one of a variety of devices we have for rearranging the order of constituents in sentences to improve the flow of information in discourse (see 10.1). The problems with passive voice are, first, when we overuse it: as a writer, you may feel like using a lot of passive voice makes your writing sound more serious and sophisticated, since a lot of bad academic writing uses too much passive voice. But for your reader, a passage with a lot of verbs in the passive voice becomes hard to follow because it becomes hard to keep agents and patients clear, hard to identify the kernel sentence, hard to know who is doing what to whom. It is true that passive voice is a mainstay of much writing in the experimental sciences, in which, for example, chemical reactions or diseases are described as having no actor that causes them. However, this is merely a convention of current writing practice in those fields: it is not, necessarily, how scientists must write, nor is it how scientists have always written.¹⁵¹

Second, passive voice can create an ethical problem when it allows the writer to inappropriately avoid ascribing responsibility for an action: after all, passive voice lets the writer completely delete any mention of the agent who performed the action and to say *Each one was approached* instead of *I approached each one*; *The window was broken*¹⁵² instead of *I broke the window*,¹⁵³ and *Mistakes were made*¹⁵⁴ instead of *We've made mistakes*.¹⁵⁵ Nonetheless, there are situations in which no one is responsible for an action or in which it is more tactful not to lay blame; in those cases, the passive voice is appropriate.¹⁵⁶

Passive *get* and *go*: In a broad range of American English varieties, we find *get* and *go/went* used to mark passive voice. This usage also shows up in published writing and quoted speech:

*If you're that stupid, you deserve to get eaten.*¹⁵⁷ (c.f. *to be eaten*)

*The local airport went unused for a decade.*¹⁵⁸ (c.f. *was unused*)

EFL-related passive voice use: Some verbs can be either transitive (*She opened the door*)¹⁵⁹ or intransitive (*The door opened*).¹⁶⁰ Such verbs are called “ergative verbs”¹⁶¹ and you might notice that in their intransitive use, they are akin to a passive voice verb (*The door was opened by a maid*).¹⁶² “Many Korean verbs that are commonly passivized correspond to English ergative verbs,” and Korean L1 speakers tend to produce sentences with these verbs with *be* followed by the past participle where WME only requires the past form of the verb: **The expression on her face was suddenly changed from sadness to rage*, instead of *The expression on her face suddenly changed from sadness to rage*.¹⁶³

6.1.3 Tense, Mood, Aspect, Voice: Putting Them All Together

Complete verbs in English must always include an MV and, in actual usage, about 90 percent of English verbs comprise a lone MV, in the past- or present-tense form, unaccompanied by an AUX or other AUX-like verb.¹⁶⁴ Of the remainder, most complete verbs comprise an MV preceded by some combination of the most common AUX verbs: a modal, perfect aspect *have*, progressive aspect *be*, and/or passive voice *be*. A verb with one AUX is more common than a verb with two. Least common are the more complicated verbs that we can create using semi-modal verbs and/or imperfect aspectual verbs; those AUX-like verbs allow us to create complete verbs comprising more than four verbs. Though unusual, they are common enough that if we want to parse real language, we have to know about them and the forms that these complete verbs might take.

As we did above, with just modal auxiliaries and the aspect auxiliaries *have* and *be*, we can now add the passive voice AUX *be* and work through a whole verb paradigm for the tense, modality, aspect, and voice of the most common multi-word verbs:

I approach each one. (PRES tense; IND mood; Ø aspect; ACT voice)
Each one is approached by me. (PRES tense; IND mood; Ø aspect; PASS voice)
I approached each one. (PAST tense; IND mood; Ø aspect; ACT voice)
Each one was approached by me. (PAST tense; IND mood; Ø aspect; PASS voice)
I may approach each one (PRES tense; modal; Ø aspect; ACT voice)
Each one may be approached by me. (PRES tense; modal; Ø aspect; PASS voice)
I might approach each one. (PAST tense; modal; Ø aspect; ACT voice)
Each one might be approached by me. (PAST tense; modal; Ø aspect; PASS voice)
I have approached each one. (PRES tense; IND mood; PERF aspect; ACT voice)
Each one has been approached by me. (PRES tense; IND mood; PERF aspect; PASS voice)
I had approached each one. (PAST tense; IND mood; PERF aspect; ACT voice)
Each one had been approached by me (PAST tense; IND mood; PERF aspect; PASS voice)

- I am approaching each one.* (PRES tense; IND mood; PROG aspect; ACT voice)
Each one is being approached by me. (PRES tense; IND mood; PROG aspect; PASS voice)
- I was approaching each one.* (PAST tense; IND mood; PROG aspect; ACT voice)
Each one was being approached by me. (PAST tense; IND mood; PROG aspect; PASS voice)
- I have been approaching each one.* (PRES tense; IND mood; PERF PROG aspect; ACT voice)
Each one has been being approached. (PRES tense; IND mood; PERF PROG aspect; PASS voice)
- I had been approaching each one.* (PAST tense; IND mood; PERF PROG aspect; ACT voice)
Each one had been being approached. (PAST tense; IND mood; PERF PROG aspect; PASS voice)
- I may have approached each one.* (PRES tense; modal; PERF aspect; ACT voice)
Each one may have been approached. (PRES tense; modal; PERF aspect; PASS voice)
- I might have approached each one.* (PAST tense; modal; PERF aspect; ACT voice)
Each one might have been approached. (PAST tense; modal; PERF aspect; PASS voice)
- I may be approaching each one.* (PRES tense; modal; PROG aspect; ACT voice)
Each one may be being approached. (PRES tense; modal; PROG aspect; PASS voice)
- I might be approaching each one.* (PAST tense; modal; PROG aspect; ACT voice)
Each one might be being approached. (PAST tense; modal; PROG aspect; PASS voice)
- I may have been approaching each one.* (PRES tense; modal; PERF PROG aspect; ACT voice)
Each one may have been being approached. (PRES tense; modal; PERF PROG aspect; PASS voice)
- I might have been approaching each one.* (PAST tense; modal; PERF PROG aspect; ACT voice)
Each one might have been being approached. (PAST tense; modal; PERF PROG aspect; PASS voice)

When we add semi-modal and imperfect aspectual verbs to our analysis, we get greater complications and subtler nuances in the English verb. The resulting verb constructions are highly idiomatic—which makes them easy for native speakers to understand and vexing for non-native speakers to learn. Consider the following sentence: *She had wanted to be working by now.*¹⁶⁵ The complete verb is *had wanted to be working*. The first word in the verb—*had*—is the past-tense form of *have*, so the complete verb is in the past tense. And we know that *had* is the perfect aspect AUX because it is followed by the past participle of the next word in the verb, *wanted*. Thus far, we have the past perfect. *Wanted* is followed by *to*

and then the verb *be*, which is the base form of that verb; *wanted to* is a semi-modal, marking modality in the complete verb. So we have past perfect modal. *Be* is followed by the present participle *working*, which means that this *be* marks the progressive aspect and *working* is the MV. So, *had wanted to be leading* is the past perfect modal progressive of *leading*. In most verbs the modal AUX or semi-modal verb would precede the perfect AUX. But semi-modal and imperfect aspectual verbs allow us to rearrange the most common order in the complete verb.

When we use semi-modals, we can easily have more than one modal-marking verb in a single complete verb: *I was hoping to be able to attend*.¹⁶⁶ *Was* followed by the present participle *hoping* gives us the past progressive. *Hoping to* and *be able to* are both semi-modal verbs, and *attend* is the MV. So we have the past progressive modal modal of “attend.” This sort of “double modal” is acceptable in all English varieties and marks that the speaker feels a greater distance from the action named in the verb, indicating the speaker’s sense that it is even less likely that “I” will get to attend than if “I” *was hoping to attend* or “I” *was able to attend*.

Let’s go a step further: *As a communication scholar, I might have been hoping to be able to put on my communication hat and think through Christian acts in terms of what they communicate verbally and nonverbally to the world*.¹⁶⁷ *Might* is a past-tense modal AUX. *Have*, followed by the past participle *been*, is the perfect aspect AUX. *Been*, followed by the present participle *hoping*, is the progressive aspect AUX. *Hoping to* and *be able to* are both semi-modals, and *put* is the MV. So we have the past modal perfect progressive modal modal of “put.”

So what? I expect you get the point: such elaborate verbs are unusual in English, but they are possible. And we use them to carefully express very particular relationships among actors and events. The more elaborate the verb, the more speakers are trying to distance themselves from the action or event named, a linguistic politeness gesture by which the speaker is being less assertive, thus providing space and options for the listener and for the characters in the story being told, including the speaker himself.

We get similar variations in the verb when we add the imperfect aspectual verbs. Consider the following examples of various combinations of aspect-marking verbs:

- **Perfect imperfect:** *Several members of the legislature have begun working on school safety measures*.¹⁶⁸
- **Progressive imperfect:** *New training protocols are beginning to work*.¹⁶⁹
- **Imperfect perfect:** *He pretended to have cured patients who showed little improvement or actually got worse*.¹⁷⁰

- **Imperfect progressive:** *More and more voters seem to be coming around to a logical conclusion.*¹⁷¹
- **Imperfect perfect progressive:** *I seem to have been dancing in the rain a lot lately.*¹⁷²
- **Perfect imperfect progressive:** *All too often, the Astros have seemed to be waiting for their slugging first baseman to put a couple of runs on the board.*¹⁷³
- **Perfect progressive imperfect:** *Governors have been trying to fix the State Police for decades.*¹⁷⁴

We can also have more than one of the same aspect marked in a single verb, as in:

- **Progressive imperfect progressive:** *Norman is beginning to be seeing different incarnations of Norma.*¹⁷⁵
- **Imperfect progressive imperfect:** *Broadcasters seem to be beginning to find a solution.*¹⁷⁶
- **Progressive imperfect imperfect:** *The market is beginning to start to levitate again.*¹⁷⁷

To summarize tense, modality, aspect, and voice:

Tense	A finite verb always has a tense. A verb has only one tense: <u>present</u> or <u>past</u> . The tense of the first word in a finite verb is the tense of the complete verb.
Modality	A finite verb always has a modality. A finite verb is, usually, either in the <u>indicative</u> mood or <u>modal</u>. Indicative mood: A complete verb is in the indicative mood when it has no modal Aux or semi-modal verb. The unmarked indicative mood asserts the speaker's belief that the action is real and actual. Modal: A complete verb is modal when it has a <u>modal</u> Aux or <u>semi-modal</u> verb followed by the base form of a verb. With the use of semi-modal and imperfect aspectual verbs, a complete WME verb may have more than one modal-marking verb, each of which marks a separate instance of the verb being modal. A verb may therefore be multiply modal. Marking the verb as modal indicates the speaker's assertion or belief that the action is unreal or hypothetical.
Aspect	A finite verb may have <u>no aspect</u> ($\emptyset$-<u>aspect</u>), or a finite verb may have any combination of the <u>perfect</u>, <u>progressive</u>, and <u>imperfect</u> aspects. With the use of semi-modals and imperfect aspectual verbs, a complete verb may even have more than one instance of the same aspect. Each aspectual verb marks a separate aspect. No aspect ($\emptyset$-aspect): a complete verb has no aspect if it includes no aspect-marking verb.

Perfect aspect: a complete verb has the perfect aspect if it includes a *have* Aux followed by the past participle of a verb.

Progressive aspect: a complete verb has the progressive aspect when it includes a *be* Aux followed by the present participle of a verb.

Imperfect aspect: a complete verb has the imperfect aspect when it includes a single-word imperfect aspectual verb followed by the present participle form of a verb, or a multi-word imperfect aspectual verb (V + *το*) followed by the base form of a verb.

Voice A finite **transitive** verb may have active or passive voice. All other verbs have no voice ($\emptyset$ -voice).

Active voice is the default voice in English transitive verbs and is unmarked. In an active voice sentence, the AGENT (the entity performing the action named by the V) is named by the NOMINAL:SUBJ.

Passive voice: a complete verb is in the passive voice when it has a *be* Aux followed by the past participle of a verb. The PATIENT is named by the NOMINAL:SUBJ. The AGENT may be named in a PP with *by* or *with* or may be deleted. All passive-voice verbs are transitive.

No voice ($\emptyset$ -voice): if the MV of a complete verb is not transitive, then the complete verb has no voice: the label of “voice” simply does not apply.

6.1.4 Imperative Mood

Moods are grammatical forms that signal modality. Grammarians and linguists have identified several moods in English. The most commonly discussed is the imperative mood. Sentences in the imperative mood are used to deliver directives, such as

Orders or commands: *Take this to the cellar.*¹⁷⁸ *Write it down.*¹⁷⁹

Instructions: *Add the eggs, one at a time.*¹⁸⁰

Invitations: *Come on in.*¹⁸¹

Wishes: *Have a nice day!*¹⁸²

The verbs in such sentences are regarded as modal because the action they name is not actual: just because the speaker commands, instructs, invites, or wishes the hearer to perform an action, it does not mean that the hearer will actually do so. Such directives are closely related to politer commands or requests, except that the politer version would include a modal AUX:

You should take this to the cellar. Would you take this to the cellar?

You should add the eggs.

You may come on in.
You should have a nice day.

The mood expressed by imperative verbs places the speaker closer to the action than does the mood expressed by a verb with modal auxiliaries and semi-modal verbs: imperative mood verbs are more immediate, directive, and personal.

In the imperative mood there is no explicit AGENT for the verb: the AGENT seems to be elided. We will further examine the imperative mood construction and its AGENT when we look at different ways we can rearrange sentences and dependent clauses (10.1.2).

6.1.5 Subjunctive Mood

Traditional grammar also identifies the subjunctive mood in English. When we express a wish or desire for some state of affairs, or propose a counterfactual state of affairs, we may use verbs in the subjunctive mood. Verbs in the subjunctive mood commonly appear in clauses marked by the expletives *whether*, *that*, or *if*.¹⁸³

*Political commentators greeted with derision the proposal **that** armed guards be posted in all U.S. schools.*¹⁸⁴

***Whether** you be trans, **whether** you be black, **whether** you be Latino, **whether** you be disabled—we're here to be a platform for you.*¹⁸⁵

***If** I were second, or **if** I were 50th, I'd still be ahead of you.*¹⁸⁶

Be is the fixed present-tense subjunctive; the fixed past form is *were*, as in ***If** she were alive today, she would be so proud.*¹⁸⁷

We also find the subjunctive mood expressed using the base form of the verb:

*We suggest **that** the interested reader seek more detailed coverage.*¹⁸⁸

*The governor will insist **that** his appointee run as a Republican.*¹⁸⁹

The MV in each sentence has modal-like meaning: *suggest* or *insist* implies that something has not happened, and may not. Those verbs frame the noun clause beginning with *that*, in which the main verbs (*seek*; *run*) are in the base form: the third-person singular subjects (*the interested reader*; *his appointee*) would, in an independent clause (a sentence), require the inflected form of the verb (*the interested reader seeks*; *his appointee runs*). I've chosen examples with third-person singular subjects to illustrate more clearly that *seek* and *run* are odd, subjunctive verb forms. But even if the sentences were

*We suggest **that** you seek legal representation.*¹⁹⁰

*I will insist **that** you run this.*¹⁹¹

although the verbs *seek* and *run* appear to be the present-tense second-person forms, they are actually the base forms, marking the subjunctive, because the MVs in the container clauses (*suggest*; *insist*) frame the whole action of each sentence as hypothetical.

In English, the subjunctive mood is marked in the verb in one of three ways:

1. By using *be* (present) or *were* (past) as the MV with a subject of any person or number.
2. By using, with a subject of any person or number, *be* as a semi-auxiliary or *were* as an AUX followed by the present participle or past participle form of the MV, a semi-modal verb, or an imperfect aspectual verb.
3. By using the base form of the verb with any subject, regardless of person or number (including the third-person singular).

There are a number of verbs that are regularly followed by a clause beginning with *that*, *if*, or *whether* and including the subjunctive *be*, *were*, or base form; among them are:

advise	ask	command	demand
desire	insist	propose	recommend
request	suggest	urge	

Note that several of these verbs can also function as semi-modal verbs: *I demand/desire/propose to see the manager*.¹⁹² Several can also take as their complement an NP:DO followed by an infinitive phrase: *I advise/ask/command/desire/urge you to see the manager*. These overlapping usages point to the overlapping function of all three forms (subjunctives; semi-modals; V + NP:DO + INFP) in naming hypothetical actions.

There are also a number of common idioms in English that take a clause beginning with *that* and a verb in the subjunctive mood; some examples include:

It is best	It is crucial	It is desirable
It is essential	It is a good/bad idea	It is imperative
It is important	It is recommended	It is urgent
It is vital		

The subjunctive *were* is a partial AUX in that, while it cannot occur in front of the subject in interrogatives¹⁹³ and it cannot occur in tag questions, it can serve as what the negative *-n't* attaches to: *I'm swamped, and even if I weren't, you know I won't work for the CIA*.¹⁹⁴ While serving to mark the subjunctive mood, both subjunctive *be* and *were* can also serve to mark either the progressive aspect or the passive voice, depending on the form of the following MV:

Present Subjunctive Progressive: *It is recommended that you be waiting at the stop a few minutes early.*¹⁹⁵

Past Subjunctive Progressive: *If I were buying real estate right now, I'd wait til September.*¹⁹⁶

Present Subjunctive Passive: *Provost Rogers recommended that a new major be created for a B.S. degree in Environmental & Natural Resources.*¹⁹⁷

Past Subjunctive Passive: *Duckworth acknowledged that if she were offered the job of Veterans Affairs secretary, she certainly would be interested.*¹⁹⁸

Past Subjunctive Progressive Imperfect: *If I were starting to teach, I would want to feel that I was undertaking a job which warranted my enthusiastic efforts.*¹⁹⁹

Past Subjunctive Modal: *If I were going to cook tomatoes, I'd use Romas.*²⁰⁰

So what? There are, of course, more ways in which the subjunctive verb *be/were* combines with other AUX, semi-modal, and imperfect aspectual verbs, but I expect you get the picture. And as with “modal modal” verbs, using the subjunctive and modal verbs together may at first look silly, but it is just one more in the variety of subtle ways English has for expressing the speaker’s attitude toward and relationship to the action being named. There is a reason that this is the longest chapter in the book: the English verb is very complicated.

The subjunctive *be* occurs in the familiar rhyme of the giant in “Jack and the Beanstalk”:

*Fee, fi, fo, fum,
I smell the blood of an Englishman!
Be he live or be he dead
I'll grind his bones to make my bread.*

The use of *be* here is a present subjunctive; the relevant clauses might be paraphrased as *Whether he be alive, or whether he be dead. . .*

This all being said, in all varieties of spoken American English and increasingly in writing, the oddity of the subjunctive *were* is being leveled to *was* with first- and third-person singular subjects:

*If I was able to track the shuttle's position, whoever's been using it will as well.*²⁰¹
(c.f. *If I were able to track.*)

*If she wasn't released on her own recognizance soon, the infant would have to be turned over to a relative.*²⁰² (c.f. *If she weren't released.*)

6.1.6 Auxiliary *dó*

The verb *dó*, spoken with stress, is used as an AUX that adds emphasis to verbs in declarative sentences (sentences typically used to make statements or claims):

*I dó believe in spooks!*²⁰³ *Oh, you did do your homework.*²⁰⁴

Notice that AUX *dó* is followed by the base form of a verb and that, as with any first AUX, semi-modal, or imperfect aspectual verb in a verb string, *dó* carries the tense of the whole verb: in the second example above, *did* marks the past tense. AUX *dó* never appears in combination with other auxiliaries but does appear with semi-modals and imperfect aspectual verbs:

***dó* + semi-modal verb:** *They dó want to meet and kind of talk this out.*²⁰⁵
(emphatic modal of “meet”)

***dó* + imperfect aspectual verb:** *I have gotten to the point where sometimes I dó try to employ mindfulness.*²⁰⁶ (emphatic imperfect active of “employ”)

***dó* + semi-modal verb + imperfect aspectual verb:** *I really did want to start sewing again.*²⁰⁷ (emphatic modal imperfect of “sewing”)

***dó* + imperfect aspectual verb + semi-modal verb:** *Though I did manage to be able to connect via wifi and use their app to view and download as expected, transferring video to my phone was a bit clunky.*²⁰⁸ (emphatic imperfect modal of “connect”)

The sense of emphatic *dó* is very different from the non-WME aspectual verb completive *done* in a sentence like *I done forgot what you wanted*, discussed above.

Note that, just as with *have* and *be*, *do* can function as both an AUX and as a lexical verb, as in *I did my homework*.²⁰⁹ And, like other lexical verbs, *do* as a lexical verb can take auxiliaries:

*I will do my homework.*²¹⁰ *I have done my homework.*²¹¹ *I'm doing my homework.*²¹² *I did do my homework.*²¹³

6.1.7 Generic Past used to

Another common constituent of verbs in English is *used to* (*usetá*), which marks a special tense called the “generic past.” It is always followed by the base form of a verb:

usetá + MV: *I used to buy books at garage sales.*²¹⁴

usetá + semi-modal + MV: *Black parents used to have to buy books about white children and color in the faces.*²¹⁵

useta + imperfect aspectual verb + MV: *I used to try to write lyrics when I drove around in my work truck*).²¹⁶

Used to is understood as marking the *generic* past because it “indicates something that generally and habitually occurred.”²¹⁷ It is thus related to the present and past tenses, which can convey a sense of habitual action:

Present: *I buy books at garage sales every day.*

Past: *I bought books at garage sales every day.*

Generic Past: *I used to buy books at garage sales every day.*

Useta is also related to habitual *be*; *useta* is habitual and completive, indicating action performed habitually in the past but that is no longer done.

6.1.8 Non-WME Absent *be*

Another notable feature of BL and Southern American English varieties is the absence of forms of *be*, also called “zero copula.” Tensed forms of *be* are called “copular” because they couple, or join together, the subject and the complement that follows the *be* form. Note that absent *be* is used to mark events that are ongoing or repeated but of limited duration, while invariant *be* is used to mark events that are ongoing or repeated but of extended duration.²¹⁸ This sort of marking of aspect in the verb is obligatory in BL, while tense marking is optional, whereas in WME, tense marking is obligatory, while it is possible to have Ø aspect. Thus, a BL sentence like *He sleepin’* is not merely or always the equivalent of WME *He is sleeping*. Rather, it may simply be saying that “he usually or routinely or frequently sleeps,” without any necessary implication about whether he is sleeping now.²¹⁹

Not all *be* forms can be deleted: only present-tense contractible forms of *be*, specifically *is* and *are*, can be absent.²²⁰ Thus, in these varieties, the final versions of the following sentences are appropriate:

You are ugly → *You’re ugly* → *You ugly.*

She is taking the dog out → *She’s taking the dog out* → *She taking the dog out.*²²¹

Notice that the form of *be* can be deleted when it is functioning as the MV (*You are ugly*) and when it is functioning as the progressive aspect AUX (*She is taking the dog out*). In most American informal spoken varieties, both uses of *be* can be—and often are—deleted from questions: *You in there?*²²² *Taking it out now?*²²³ (for *Are you in there?* *Are you taking it out now?*). Start listening and you will hear *be*-deletion in the everyday conversation around you: *Who ___ you gonna call?*²²⁴ *___ you gonna eat that?*²²⁵ *___ you comin’?*²²⁶

However, in WME, BL, and Southern American English, we cannot contract past-tense forms of *be* (*was*, *were*): *You were ugly* → **You're ugly* (with past-tense meaning), and therefore we cannot delete those past forms, so we do not find **Yesterday you ugly* or **Last night she taking the dog out*. And in American varieties, *am* and *'m* are never deleted, even though the contraction *I'm* occurs routinely in all varieties of American English. However, both *am* and *'m* can be deleted in Caribbean Creole English, as when a Barbadian fisherman explained, *I cutting off de heads*. Base-form *be* also cannot be deleted from infinitive constructions (after *to*) and after modal auxiliaries.²²⁷

There are also several restrictions on the zero copula. Only *is* and *are* can be deleted, but they cannot be deleted from the end of a sentence (“*That's what he is*, but not **That's what he*”) or when they are stressed for emphasis. Neither can negative *is* or *are*—as *ain't*—be deleted. And generally, the *be* forms can't be deleted from other contractions, such as *what's/what're*, *it's*, and *that's*, although some greetings allow for *be* deletion, as in *Wa'apnin* for *What's happenin* and *What up?* for *What's up?*²²⁸ Forms of *be*, including *am* and past tense forms, are sometimes absent “in varieties developed in the process of learning English as a [foreign] language [EFL].”²²⁹

6.1.9 How Many bes Are There?

We have thus far encountered a large number of ways in which *be* functions in WME and non-WME varieties of English, and we will encounter a few more in the remainder of the book:

- Finite lexical verb *be* in the present (*am*, *are*, *is*) and past (*was*, *were*) tenses.
- Non-finite base form *be*, present participle *being*, and past participle *been* used as part of finite verbs (e.g. *will be*, *am being*, *have been*).
- As part of WME semi-modal verbs: *be about to*, *be going to* (*be gonna*), *be supposed to* (*be supposeta*), *be to*.
- As part of non-WME semi-modal verbs (future *be*; *be fixin' to*; *Imma*; *poseta*).
- Progressive aspect AUX *be*.
- Non-WME aspectual verbs (habitual *be*; remote time stressed *béen*; unstressed *been*; perfective *be*).
- Passive voice AUX *be*.
- Subjunctive MV *be* and *were* and subjunctive partial AUX *be*.
- Copular *be* (7.1.2.2) and the non-WME zero copula (6.1.8).
- Existential *be* (10.1.3) in expletive-*there* sentences (e.g. *There is money on the table*).²³⁰
- Present participle *being* as the head of nominal, adjectival, and adverbial participle phrases.
- Infinitive *to be* as the head of nominal, adjectival, and adverbial infinitive phrases.

The question must be raised: how many *bes* are there in English? As we saw in 1.2, there are words like *play*_{VERB} and *play*_{NOUN} that may be regarded as variants of the same word but may more productively be regarded as homonyms. As a general rule, I will try to treat each of these *bes* as separate forms that simply resemble each other and that are, of course, historically related.

6.2 Identifying Verbs

Many words in English may be used as more than one part of speech without changing their form. In the sentences *I play piano* and *They went to see a play*, how do we determine whether either use of *play* is a verb? We can use

The tense or mood shift test for verbs: Change the word in question into the past-tense verb form, or put the auxiliary verb *will* in front of the word. If the sentence is still grammatically well formed, then the word is a verb.²³¹

Applying this test to the first sentence, we get: *I play the piano* → *I played the piano*; *I will play the piano*. But if we apply it to the second sentence, we get: *They went to see a play* → **They went to see a played*; **They went to see a will play*. This test only works for finite verbs functioning as the MV of a sentence or dependent clause.

6.3 Key Points

- Verbs (V) are an open class of content words that name actions (meaning) and function as the head of a verb phrase (VP) that functions as the predicate in a sentence or dependent clause.
- Verbs are commonly divided into several subcategories, including finite and non-finite, lexical verbs, and auxiliary verbs (AUX).
- Finite verbs are marked for several features, including tense (present, past); modality (indicative, modal, imperative, subjunctive); aspect (perfect, progressive, imperfect, habitual); and voice (active, passive).
- Present tense, indicative mood, and Ø-aspect are the default or unmarked features of WME verbs. For transitive verbs, active voice is the default. All other features are marked by changes in spelling (e.g. *swim*, *swam*, *swum*); inflectional suffixes (e.g. *baking*, *baked*); or the addition of AUX, semi-modal, or imperfect aspectual verbs (for modal and subjunctive modality; perfect, progressive, and imperfect aspect; and passive voice).
- Speakers use “tense” to locate an action in time but more broadly to place an action in relation to themselves and to other events in the discourse.
- Speakers use “modality” to express their attitude or understanding about whether an action is actual or hypothetical.

- Speakers use “aspect” to express their attitude or understanding about the duration, continuity, and completeness or adequacy of an action in relation to other actions and events in the discourse.
- Speakers use “voice” to shift the focus of a sentence between the AGENT (the doer of the action) and the PATIENT (the recipient of the action).
- Because there are so many irregularities in the WME verb system, especially in the realization and ways of marking tense, mood, and aspect, it is one of the portions of English grammar with the most diverse and distinctive range of non-WME forms, as speakers of different varieties strive to regularize the system and to shape it to match their groups’ perceptions and understanding of how the world works.

6.4 Exercises: Verbs: Tense, Mood, Aspect, Voice

Identify the Complete Finite Verb 1: Made-up sentences

In the following sentences, identify each complete finite verb and, for each, identify the tense (present; past), modality (indicative mood; modal; subjunctive mood; imperative mood), aspect (progressive; perfect; imperfect, Ø), and voice (active; passive; Ø). **ALSO:** identify the person (first; second; third) and number (singular; plural).

Example: They were running for office.

They were running for office. Third-person plural indicative past progressive active

- A. They are taking the train to town.
- B. The Marxists have been agitating for workers’ rights again.
- C. The demonstrators broke the windows.
- D. We had alerted the police.
- E. Our equipment has been delivered.
- F. The workers are starting to unpack the boxes
- G. That unfinished house has been being built for years.
- H. I may have to leave the office early today.
- I. The committee will try to be finished with the report by Friday.
- J. They be studying grammar.
- K. I enjoy a good demonstration.
- L. You might like it too.
- M. The demonstrators done been arrested.
- N. He is gone.
- O. You may have to start thinking about a new candidate.
- P. He crazy.
- Q. We are going to have to be going.

- R. Despite all the noise, she managed to start thinking about the project.
- S. Today, the artist is supposed to decide to finish polishing the marble.
- T. If I were going to begin considering at least exploring the possibility of downsizing and consolidating government, I would first examine the United States Custom Service.²³²

Generate the kernel sentence

For each of the following, provide a correct kernel sentence as directed (some answers may vary).

Example: First-person singular indicative present progressive of *sleep*.

I am sleeping.

- A. Third-person singular feminine present indicative perfect progressive active of *study*.
- B. Second-person plural present modal perfect passive of *expect*.
- C. Third-person singular feminine past modal of *run*.
- D. First-person singular past indicative of *look*.
- E. First-person plural present indicative progressive passive of *deceive*.
- F. Second-person singular past indicative perfect active of *eat*.
- G. Third-person plural present modal perfect progressive passive of *convince*.
- H. Third-person singular masculine past indicative passive of *know*.
- I. First-person plural past modal perfect modal active of *practice*.
- J. Third-person plural present modal modal of *leave*.
- K. Second-person singular present modal perfect imperfect active of *eat*.
- L. First-person plural past indicative imperfect imperfect active of *escape*.
- M. Third-person singular past imperfect modal passive of *appreciate*.
- N. First-person singular completive of *lose*.
- O. Second-person plural past subjunctive progressive passive of *tell*.

Identify the Complete Finite Verb 2: A real text

Identify each complete finite verb that is functioning as a main verb in a clause and, for each, identify its person, number (gender), tense, modality, aspect, and voice. Use the passage from the Chapter 1 Exercises on page 28, “Jimmy’s Sales Tip: Sam’s, Costco.”

Example: *They were running for office.*

Third-person plural indicative past progressive of *run*.

Notes

- 1 For an extensive list of over 370 irregular verbs in English (as of 1 Dec 2025), see englishpage.com/irregularverbs. See also the extensive list and discussion of irregular verbs at wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_English_irregular_verbs.

- 2 *Be* historically involves the collapsing together of several verb paradigms. The only other verb in English that exhibits this sort of blending is *go/goes, went, going, gone*.
- 3 *Must* is regarded as being in the present tense because, if we paraphrase it, we have to use a present-tense semi-modal verb in its place: *I must go home* is paraphrased by *I have to go home* rather than *I had to go home*. Similarly, the partial modal *ought to* is regarded as being in the past tense because, if we paraphrase it, we have to use a past-tense modal AUX in its place: *I ought to go home* is paraphrased by *I should go home* rather than *I shall go home*. The question of whether modal auxiliaries have tense remains quite controversial, hinging on whether “tense” relates primarily to “time” or to the physical, temporal, or social distance of the action from the speaker.
- 4 Joe Whitfield. “Moving the Chains: Soccer Balls.” *Albany (Georgia) Herald*. 8 May 2023.
- 5 Anonymous. Comment on, “What Is a Player before He Kicks the Ball??” *forum.officiating.com/football*. 10 Oct 2005.
- 6 Anonymous. Answer to, “Question Number: 26789. Law 11-Offside.” *asktheref.com*. 18 Sep 2012.
- 7 Anonymous. Answer to, “Question Number: 28662. Kicks from the Penalty Mark.” *asktheref.com*. 17 Aug 2014.
- 8 Anonymous. *Facebook*. 6 Apr 2025.
- 9 My treatment of semi-modal and imperfect aspectual verbs is not the one usually found in the literature on English syntax or grammar. It emerged from my own observations of the ways in which we use English finite and non-finite verb constructions to express or assert the degree to which an action is real, partially realized, or not real, and from my frustrations with the conventional ways of discussing English verbs. There is more than one spectrum that connects the well-established modal and aspectual AUX verbs both with what I am calling “semi-modal verbs” and what I am calling “imperfect aspectual verbs,” and with participle and infinitive phrases. As I address each of these word and phrase classes, I will return repeatedly to the relationships among them.
- 10 COCA. Accessed 13 Jul 2025. Mark Bittman. “The Minimalist; Barbecue, Indirectly.” *The New York Times*. 28 Jul 2004.
- 11 Anonymous. *Facebook*. 28 Mar 2025.
- 12 Miranda Levenstein. “Be Prepared Palmiers.” *Huffington Post*. 6 Dec 2017.
- 13 Anonymous. Comment on Lauren Smith. “Top 15 Recipes for Autumn Lovers.” *theoatmealartist.com*. 4 Oct 2014.
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Verb Phrases (VP)

A finite verb functions as the head of a verb phrase (VP); the VP, in turn, functions as a predicate (VP:PRED). A VP always contains a complete finite verb and may include complements and/or modifiers. The modifiers of a verb are all adverbial, whether adverb phrases, adverbial PPs, or other adverbial constituents. Adverbial modifiers of a verb may appear before or after or even in the middle of the **complete verb**: *I hardly slept.*¹ *I slept in my own bed.*² *I have not slept yet.*³

Adverbial modifiers of verbs always occur near the verb. Adverbial constituents further removed from the verb typically have some other function in the sentence or dependent clause, the most common being sentence modifier. We will examine adverbs and adverb phrases in Chapter 8, and we will more fully examine adverbials (including sentence modifiers) and their functions in 11.3.

Verb complements generally appear after the verb and come in a range of patterns. Verbs are often categorized by the kinds of complements they can take.

7.1 Verb Complements

Remember that a complement is a required constituent that *completes* the sense of a head within a container constituent, such that, without the complement, the container constituent would not be grammatically well formed or clearly convey essentially the same meaning. While modifiers are optional constituents, complements are obligatory constituents. In the sentence *Townshend smashed his guitar*,⁴ the NP *his guitar* completes the sense of the verb *smashed* by telling what *Townshend* (the subject of the verb) *smashed*. Without the NP complement *his guitar*, the sentence would make little sense. Certainly, we can contrive contexts in which the sentence ?*Townshend smashed* would make sense. But in most contexts, the verb *smashed* requires an NP or other nominal as a complement. In this case, that nominal complement is called a direct object (DO) because it names the thing upon which the subject (*Townshend*) directly performs the action named by the verb (*smashed*).

As a native speaker of English, you don't have to think very much about what kinds of complements or patterns of complement can accompany a particular verb: you just know what "sounds right." In this part of our discussion of grammar, we will spend most of our energy focusing on the most common kinds and patterns of verb complementation in English.⁵ We will have some reference below to verbs related by meaning (for example, verbs that take an adverbial complement that names a location, time, or manner; and quotative verbs, which take people's utterances as their complements), but mostly we will focus on broader categories of complement pattern characterized by form and function, rather than meaning.

A good way to identify the complement of the verb is to start by analyzing the basic structure of the whole sentence. Once you have identified the verb and its subject, you want to ask a question that will lead you to identify the complement of the verb. For most sentence patterns, particularly the most common verb complement patterns, there will be a common-sense question, based on the subject and the verb, a question that will lead you to identify the verb complement(s)—and so their pattern.

Some of the terms for verb complement patterns (intransitive, transitive, and ditransitive) may be familiar, and you will regularly see them in dictionary entries.

7.1.1 Verbs with No Complements: Intransitive Verbs

Some verbs in English take no complement at all. Such verbs are called intransitive verbs since they don't take an NP:DO:

*I am shopping.*⁶

I slept.

*My back aches.*⁷

*The old willow tree fell.*⁸

In the first sentence, the verb *am shopping* needs no complement: in WME, we do not "shop something" the way we "smash something." An even better example is the verb *sleep* in the second sentence: after all, we don't "sleep something"; we just *sleep*. When you are looking for an example to serve as a benchmark for intransitive verbs, I recommend using the verb *sleep* as your point of comparison.

When we label a verb by its complement pattern, we need to remember that, while a verb may commonly be used without a complement, the verb is not, itself, intransitive. The appropriate complement pattern label depends on the context of actual use. This is particularly true of ergative verbs (discussed in 6.1.2): verbs that can be transitive, as in *She opened*_[VERB] *the door*_[NP:DO], or intransitive, as in *The door opened*.

Also, do not be confused by an adverb or adverbial phrase following the intransitive verb and modifying it, as in *I slept well*.⁹ *I slept in my own bed*. *I slept until noon*.¹⁰ *Well*, *in my own bed*, and *until noon* are each adverbial: they answer adverbial questions about the verb, telling *how* the *sleeping* went (*well*), *where* the *sleeping* took place (*in my own bed*), and *when* the sleeping occurred (*until noon*). *How*, *where*, and *when*, are, among others, adverbial questions (see Chapter 8). Also, *well*, *in my own bed*, and *until noon* are modifiers of the verb *slept*, both by providing adverbial information about the act of *sleeping* and by being optional constituents: if we drop them from the sentence, the sentence is still well formed. And, *well*, *in my own bed*, and *until noon* are not functioning as sentence modifiers since we cannot move them to the front of the sentence without sounding like Yoda (try it). Because we can drop them without changing the sense of the verb, we know they are modifiers, but because we can't move them, we know that these modifiers are attached to the verb.

7.1.2 Verbs with One Complement

7.1.2.1 Monotransitive Verbs

Monotransitive verbs are those that take a single NP or other nominal (for simplicity, we'll just talk about NPs) as a complement when that NP is functioning as a direct object (DO) of the verb. The NP:DO names the patient: the person, place, or thing that is directly receiving the action or that is being acted upon by the agent, who is the doer of the action named by the verb. Monotransitive verbs are very common in English usage, and transitive verbs—those verbs that take a direct object as a complement (even when they take other complements as well)—are generally regarded as the strongest and clearest verbs because they can express most directly who is doing what to whom.

*I*_[NP:SUBJ] *approach*_[V] *each one*_[NP:DO].
*Mario*_[NP:SUBJ] *chased*_[V] *DK*_[NP:DO].¹¹
*Vanderbilt*_[NP:SUBJ] *has developed*_[V] *internal funding programs*_[NP:DO].¹²

In each sentence, the verb is followed by an NP. Each of these NPs completes the sense of the verb by telling what or who received the action or on what or whom the action was performed. Thus, *each one* was the thing *approached*, and *DK* was the one *Mario chased*.

To identify the NP:DO, and to determine whether the NP following the verb is functioning as a DO, you need to ask, “What (or who) did S V?” That is, what has *Vanderbilt developed*? The answer to this question determines that there is a DO and identifies what it is: *internal funding programs*. If, for a given sentence, you get an answer to the question “What did S V?” then you know you have a transitive verb and possibly a monotransitive verb.

The passivization test: An even better test for whether a verb is transitive, a test that we will use frequently, is the passivization test. In Chapter 6 we looked at the passive voice as simply involving placing a *be* AUX before the past participle form of the MV within the complete verb. But we can also think about the passive voice as a rearrangement of the order of constituents in an active voice sentence. Only sentences with transitive verbs—verbs that take an NP:DO as one of their complements—can be rearranged from active to passive voice. That fact will prove very useful for identifying verbs and for understanding the relationships among constituents in a sentence.

Here's how to transform a sentence with an active voice transitive verb into a sentence with a passive voice verb (note: even in a passive voice construction, the verb is still being used transitively):

Active: NP_[AGENT]:SUBJ + MV + NP_[PATIENT]:DO →

Passive: NP_[PATIENT]:SUBJ + *be* AUX + MV_[PAST PARTICIPLE] + {*by* + NP_[AGENT]:PCOMP}

That looks too much like algebra, doesn't it? But it's not so bad, really. It translates like this: in the active voice sentence, we have a first NP that names the agent: the character performing the action named by the verb. That first NP is functioning as the subject of the sentence (NP_[AGENT]:SUBJ), followed by a complete verb ending in the main verb (MV), followed by a second NP that names the patient: the person or thing being acted upon or receiving the action. That second NP is functioning as the direct object (NP_[PATIENT]:DO). The complete verb in an active voice sentence may, of course, have more constituents than just the MV, but the MV is the crucial constituent for the shift from active to passive voice.

There might also be sentence modifiers, or modifiers of the verb, but since they are modifiers, and therefore optional, we do not need to worry about them here: we're just dealing with obligatory constituents of the sentence.

When we convert the complete verb from active to passive voice, the structure of the whole sentence changes: the NP_[PATIENT] in the active voice sentence becomes the subject of the passive voice sentence, followed now by the complete verb, which is changed into the passive form by adding an appropriate form of the *be* AUX (the AUX that marks the passive voice) right before the MV and changing the form of the MV to the past participle. We then make the NP_[AGENT] the complement of the preposition *by* (or much more rarely *with*) in a prepositional phrase at the end of the sentence. Note that the PP that comprises *by* + NP_[AGENT] is often deleted from the passive voice version of the sentence. The function of this PP is labeled as AGENTIVE since the NP that is the complement of the PP names the agent performing the action named by the verb. In traditional grammar, the agentive phrase is understood as modifying the verb; more recent work in grammar treats the agentive phrase as having a greater role in the sentence because the

by phrase includes the NP naming the actual agent in the sentence. We'll discuss agentive PPs more fully in 11.3.3.

In the following examples note the shifting of the NP:SUBJ and the NP:DO, as well as the changes in the complete verb with the addition of the *be* AUX:

Active: *I approach each one.*

Passive: *Each one is approached by me.*

Passive, agentive PP deleted: *Each one is approached.*

Active: *Mario chased DK.*

Passive: *DK was chased by Mario.*

Passive, agentive PP deleted: *DK was chased.*

Active: *Vanderbilt has developed internal funding programs.*

Passive: *Internal funding programs have been developed by Vanderbilt.*

Passive, agentive PP deleted: *Internal funding programs have been developed.*

Active: *Big cities with congestion issues were watching congestion pricing.*

Passive: *Congestion pricing was being watched closely by big cities with congestion issues.¹³*

Passive, agentive PP deleted: *Congestion pricing was being watched.*

Active: *A hammer and nails built the framing.*

Passive: *The framing was built with a hammer and nails.¹⁴*

Passive, agentive PP deleted: *The framing was built.*

In the transformation of a sentence from active to passive voice, the tense stays the same and remains marked on the first word (AUX or MV) of the verb.

The final sentence, about the framing, is an example of the less common PP using *with* instead of *by*. In such sentences, the function of the PP (e.g. *with a hammer and nails*) is said to be “instrumental” rather than agentive since the PCOMP (here, *a hammer and nails*) is the instrument by which someone performed the action named by the verb, rather than the actor or agent who used the instrument to perform the action (we’re putting responsibility for the action on the instrument, rather than the actor). We can use such instrumental passives when we don’t know or are avoiding saying who the agent is.

Important! When analyzing the complement of a verb that is in the passive voice, you must first convert the verb—and the whole sentence—to its active voice order.¹⁵ Linguists commonly think of the passive voice construction as a rearrangement or transformation of the default active voice construction.

7.1.2.2 Intransitive Copular Verbs with a Nominal or Adjectival Subject Complement

Copular verbs—most notably *be* functioning as a MV—take a single nominal (most often an NP), ADJP or adverbial as a complement called a subject complement (SC; we will discuss ADVERBIAL:SC in 7.1.2.3). The NOMINAL:SC or ADJP:SC (called in traditional grammar a “predicate nominative” and “predicate adjective,” respectively) either renames the subject or names a quality that is being ascribed or joined to the subject.

So what? Copular *be* is the most commonly used verb form in English!

Tiffany blue is_[V] my favorite color_[NP:SC].¹⁶
You were being_[V] nice_[ADJP:SC].¹⁷
The 62-year-old Briton seems_[V] a caricature of an old-fashioned explorer_[NP:SC].¹⁸
The coffee smells_[V] good_[ADJP:SC].¹⁹
She has become_[V] the most well-traveled woman in the world_[NP:SC].²⁰
Around them, the small crowd grew_[V] quiet_[ADJP:SC].²¹
The crowd went_[V] crazy_[ADJP:SC] *when Kool Moe Dee took the stage*.²²

Here is a fairly complete list of copular verbs; they can be broadly divided into two subcategories:

Copular verbs that indicate a state: *act, appear, be, fall, feel, look, prove, remain, seem, smell, sound, stay, taste.*

Copular verbs that indicate a result: *become, get, go, grow, run, turn.*

Copular verbs of state can all be paraphrased by copular *be*:

Your newish guy *acts/appears/feels/looks/seems/sounds/is* *nice*.²³
The coffee *smells/tastes/is* *delicious*.
The small crowd *remained/stayed/were* *calm*.
First-quarter earnings *fell/were* *short of estimates*.²⁴
Wiretaps and bugs *proved/were* *effective in garnering intelligence*.²⁵

Copular verbs of result can all be paraphrased by *become*:

Around them, the small crowd *got/grew/turned/became* *quiet*.
When recess rolled around, the children *went/ran/became* *wild*.²⁶

Copular verbs are intransitive. They do not take a DO as a complement and cannot be put in the passive voice. Given a sentence in which the MV is a

form of *be* and the complement of the verb is a NP or other nominal, you may be tempted to identify that nominal as a DO. Consider the difference between *Ivanov bumped the goalie*, and *Ivanov is the goalie*.²⁷ In the first sentence, as we try to parse it into its major constituents, we will first identify the verb as *bumped*. To find the subject, we ask, *Who bumped?* The answer, *Ivanov*, identifies the NP:SUBJ. *Ivanov bumped whom or what?* then identifies the DO as *the goalie*, the person or thing immediately affected by *Ivanov bumping*. If we proceed through the same questions for the second sentence, we seem to get the same result: *is* is the verb; *Who is?* gives us the subject, *Ivanov*; and *Ivanov is who or what?* gives us *the goalie*, which then appears to be an NP:DO. How do we know that, in the second sentence, this is not the case and that, instead, *the goalie* is an NP:SC?

There are two things we have to remember: first, when the MV is some form of *be*, and the complement of the verb is a nominal, the NOMINAL:SUBJ and the NOMINAL:SC name the same person or thing. When the MV is transitive, the NOMINAL:SUBJ and the NOMINAL:DO do not usually name the same thing: in a sentence like *Ivanov bumped the goalie*, part of the meaning is usually not that “Ivanov is the goalie.” Except in the context of a joke or a science fiction story about human cloning, the only time that the NOMINAL:SUBJ and the NOMINAL:DO name the same thing in a single sentence is when we use a reflexive pronoun for the DO, as in *Ivanov bumped himself*.

Second, you can’t put copular *be*—or most other copular verbs—into passive voice: *Ivanov is the goalie* → **The goalie is been Ivanov*. *The coffee smells delicious* → **The coffee is smelled delicious*.

Mostly, you just have to remember that when the main verb is a form of *be*, the complement of the verb will be a NOMINAL:SC; an ADJP:SC; or, as we will see in a moment, an ADVERBIAL:SC. Since *be* is the most common MV in the language, you will see plenty of examples of it, and that should help you learn to recognize it and its complements.

Some copular verbs do have alternate transitive meanings. Consider the difference between *My mother felt sorry for her*²⁸ and *My mother felt the goose*.²⁹ In the former sentence, *felt* is an intransitive copular verb that can be paraphrased by a form of *be* (*My mother was sorry*), and it cannot be put in the passive voice (**Sorry was felt by my mother*). In the latter sentence, *felt* cannot be paraphrased by a form of *be* (**My mother was the goose*), the NPs *My mother* and *the goose* name two different objects, and the sentence can be put in the passive voice (*The goose was felt by my mother*).

Try this: Look at the list of copular verbs, and see which ones also have transitive uses.

Copular *be* is not the auxiliary verb *be*. Consider the difference between *Jacob is walking down Nostrand Avenue*³⁰ and *Jacob is caring and cordial*.³¹ In the first sentence, the complete verb, *is walking*, includes the AUX *be* marking the progressive aspect. We know this because we can drop the AUX and change the MV to its finite form and have a sentence with much the same meaning as the original: *Jacob walks down Nostrand Avenue*. By contrast, in the second sentence, the complete verb is just *is*—copular *be*. If we drop that verb and try to change *caring* into a finite verb, we do not get a comparable sentence: **Jacob cares and cordial*. As we noted in Chapter 4, many words ending in *-ing* have developed into full-on adjectives that are simply homophones of the present participle; some, such as *interesting*, are much more common as adjectives than as verbs. We can show the difference between these two sentences' verbs another way. Because *caring* is an adjective, it is gradable: *Jacob is more caring and cordial than August*. The adjective can also take an intensifying adverb as a modifier: *Jacob is very caring and cordial*. By contrast, *walking* is not gradable and cannot take an intensifying adverb as a modifier: **Jacob is more walking than August*. **Jacob is very walking down Nostrand Avenue*.

7.1.2.3 Intransitive Copular *be* with an Adverbial Subject Complement

Copular *be* can also take adverbial complements. These adverbials are always locative complements (LC) naming a location—a *where*—or temporal complements (TC), naming a time—a *when*:

Copular *be* with an LC

*You*_[NP:SUBJ] *are*_[V] *here*_[AdvP:LC].³²
*They*_[NP:SUBJ] *were*_[V] *home*_[NP:ADVERBIAL:LC].³³
*They*_[NP:SUBJ] *were*_[V] *up a creek*_[PP:ADVERBIAL:LC].³⁴

Copular *be* with a TC

*My daughter's party*_[NP:SUBJ] *was*_[V] *yesterday*_[NP:ADVERBIAL:TC].³⁵
*The deadline*_[NP:SUBJ] *is*_[V] *tomorrow at 5:00 PM*_[AdvP:TC].³⁶

In each of these sentences, the copular *be* works just as it does with a nominal or adjectival subject complement, connecting the location or time named in the complement back to the subject NP. We will also call this kind of complement a subject-complement (SC).

A few other copular verbs, including *fall*, *remain*, and *stay*, can also take adverbial SCs; and the verbs *lie* and *live* can function as copular verbs that only take adverbial SCs:

*July 4th falls (is) on a Thursday this year.*³⁷

*We stayed (remained/lay/lived/were) there.*³⁸

In each sentence, the adverbial following the verb is a complement and not a modifier; it cannot be moved or deleted and leave a well-formed sentence (try it).

7.1.2.4 Intransitive Verbs with an Adverbial Complement

There are a number of verbs that are not copular verbs but routinely take adverbial complements. These verbs break down into three large groups, based on the kinds of meaning conveyed by the complements (we have just seen two of them):

- **Locative complements (LC)** tell *where* an action takes place, where the action is directed, or where it ends.

*They*_[NP:SUBJ] *went*_[V] *home*_[NP:ADVERBIAL:LC]³⁹
*About Fouad*_[NP:SUBJ] *drove*_[V] *up the street*_[PP:ADVERBIAL:LC]⁴⁰
*I*_[PRON:SUBJ] *am seeing*_[V] *into the future*_[PP:ADVERBIAL:LC]⁴¹
*Jeff Beck*_[NP:SUBJ] *looked*_[V] *toward Ravel*_[AdvP:LC]⁴²

- **Manner complements (MC)** tell *how* an action is performed.

*They*_[NP:SUBJ] *went*_[V] *by train*_[PP:ADVERBIAL:MC]⁴³
*He*_[NP:SUBJ] *drove*_[V] *well*_[AdvP:MC]⁴⁴
*Imdad Khan*_[NP:SUBJ] *can see*_[V] *without using his eyes*_[PP:ADVERBIAL:MC]⁴⁵
*I*_[PRON:SUBJ] *looked*_[V] *carefully*_[AdvP:MC]⁴⁶

- **Temporal complements (TC)** tell *when*, or the time during which an action was performed.

*They*_[NP:SUBJ] *went*_[V] *on Tuesday*_[PP:ADVERBIAL:TC]⁴⁷
*He*_[NP:SUBJ] *drives*_[V] *every day*_[NP:ADVERBIAL:TC]⁴⁸
*You*_[NP:SUBJ] *can see*_[V] *constantly*_[AdvP:TC]⁴⁹
*I*_[PRON:SUBJ] *looked*_[V] *at noon*_[PP:ADVERBIAL:TC]⁵⁰

The adverbials in each predicate are complements and not modifiers because we cannot drop them, and we cannot move them without changing their meaning or creating an inversion (see 10.1.6). And we know that these verbs are not copular verbs because they do not simply ascribe a quality or description to the subject. Rather, the adverbial in the predicate is more closely connected to the verb.

We can identify the complement in each type of sentence by using questions. Once we have found the verb and subject, to identify the verb type and to find the verb complement, we need to use an adverbial question.

- **For an LC**, the question needs to be related to location, such as “Where V S?” or “Where do/does/did S V?” *Where does Abou Fouad drive? Abou Fouad drives up the street.*
- **For an MC**, the question needs to be related to manner, such as “How do/does/did S V?” or “In what manner did S V?” or “By what means did S V?” *How did they go? They went by train.*
- **For a TC**, the question needs to be related to time, such as “When do/does/did S V?” or “At what time do/does/did S V?” *When did they go? They went on Tuesday.*

In each case, the verb itself suggests the question: one *goes/went* somewhere, or by means of some vehicle, at some time or on some day. One *drives/drove* somewhere; one *sees* somehow or in some particular manner; one *looks* at some particular time. The answer to the question will be the verb complement.

These verbs are intransitive because they do not take a NOMINAL:DO as a complement; even when the complement appears to be a nominal, as in *They went home*, it is functioning adverbially. Try putting these verbs in the passive voice. Unfortunately, we have a number of phrases that are nominal in form but typically adverbial in function, all related to time, including *all of the time*, *today*, *yesterday*, *tomorrow*, *Monday/s* (as in *I work Mondays*, which implies *on Monday*), *every day*, *someday*, *some days*, etc.

7.1.2.5 Quotative Verbs

Quotatives are verbs that are used to mark a complement as being reported speech, writing, or thought, where the words or thought are commonly placed in quotation marks. In the sentence, *The director said, “That’s a wrap,”*⁵¹ the verb *said* is a quotative, and the quoted speech, “*That’s a wrap*,” is the verb complement. The form of that complement is a sentence (SENT), and that Sent is functioning as a quotation (SENT:QUOT). Quoted language can take the widest possible variety of forms. Consider this sentence: *When they asked him where he thought babies came from, he replied, “from God.”*⁵² Here, the quotative verb is *replied*, and its complement, “*from God*,” is a PP:ADVERBIAL:QUOT.

We also commonly use quotative verbs with indirectly quoted speech, writing, and thought, placing the quoted material in a noun clause: *I asked where I should send the check.*⁵³

WME quotative verbs include *say*, *reply*, *state*, *utter*, *ask*, *mumble*, *shout*, *write*, *think*, *wonder*; and the whole range of verbs that can be used to introduce a quotation in speech or writing. In written English, especially in fictional

narrative, we find a broad range of verbs used as quotatives. In spoken WME the most common quotative is *say*; however, the non-WME quotatives *be like*, *go*, and, to a lesser degree, *be all* are growing in usage.

Since about 1980, **quotative *be like*** has spread swiftly across the English-speaking world. We often see this usage in reported dialogue:

He was like, "Where do you wanna go?"

I was like, "I dunno."

He was like, "Okay."

I was like, "Where are we going?"

*He was like, "Don't worry about it."*⁵⁴

While predominantly associated with the speech of White middle-class teenagers, by 2005 *be like* was being used at least some of the time by "virtually all native speakers of American English under the age of forty."⁵⁵

The older WME quotatives *go* and *say* are limited in their use to marking the speaker's rendering of what someone might literally have said. Likewise, studies of the use of *be like* have found that the third-person forms are used with direct, expressed speech, but unlike *go* and *say*, the first-person forms are most frequently used to introduce inner speech (e.g. *I was like, "I am so screwed"*). Quotative *like* is also commonly used with descriptions of gestures (*So I'm like* [speaker shrugs]).⁵⁶ Yet, although quotative *be like* has spread among American English users, there are some constructions in which its use is not yet fully integrated; specifically, while it is possible, it is still unusual to hear *be like* used in negative constructions and interrogatives where the use of *say* still sounds perfectly normal: among adult speakers of American English, one is more likely to hear:

When people ask what I do, I don't say, "I own a store."

Did he say, "You're cute"?

than

When people ask what I do, I'm not like, "I own a store."

*Was he like, "You're cute"?*⁵⁷

However, the use of *be like* in both negative and interrogative constructions is significantly more common among American English speakers born after 1980, as in, "*I'm not like, you know the cuffs aren't on, like I'm not like fully boo'ed up, but like, I am dating and it's going okay.*"⁵⁸ As with many changes in a language, the use of quotative *be like* seems to have originated with younger speakers and to be "trickling up" and spreading as those speakers age. It seems likely that, within a generation or so, quotative *be like* will be as completely integrated into common usage as quotative *say*.

Quotative *go* came into common use in American English in the 1940s. We still find it in sentences like, *He goes, "Do you know the make and model of your phone?"*⁵⁹ However, as a quotative verb, *go* seems to be giving way to *be like*; that the usage is in transition can be illustrated by utterances like the following, taken from an interview of Blake Mycoskie, the then-48-year-old founder of TOMS Shoes:

*I'm like, "Oh, that's cool." And . . . she goes, "When I bought this pair of shoes, they gave a pair to a child in Argentina . . ." And she just went on and on. . . . So I was like, "Excuse me, actually, I'm that guy. . . ." And she goes to me, she looks at me like deer in headlights, she's so, like, "What?"*⁶⁰

Quotative *be all* is a still later addition to non-WME. Originating in California, its use continues to spread:

Then, after a while, I was all, "See you later, good luck!"
He was all, "I don't know."

Just as *be like* seems to be superseding *go* as a non-WME quotative, *be all* may be poised to supersede *be like*,⁶¹ as evidenced in these sentences from an interview: *I got a call from one of my friends and he was like, man, I'm so sad. And I was all like, why?*⁶²

Some speakers of BL also use a **quotative *say***, as in *I told him, say, "Where you going?"* However, this usage "is rapidly receding. In fact, quotative *be like* is taking over in [BL], as it is in other dialects."⁶³

Are quotative verbs transitive? Yes and no. When we take the examples of WME sentences with quotative verbs from above, and put them in passive voice, the resulting sentences sound possible, but to my ear, odd:

?*"That's a wrap" was said by the director.*
?*When they asked him where he thought babies came from, "from God" was replied by him.*
?*Where I should send the check was asked by me.*

Some quotative verbs do commonly appear in passive voice sentences, but those sentences tend not to use the sort of straightforward transformation of active to passive. Rather, we get expletive-*it* sentences (see 10.1.4), as in, *It was said of Wilberforce that good causes stuck to him like pins,*⁶⁴ and, *It was stated that galaxies work just like the solar system.*⁶⁵ We find other sorts of sentence structures with quotative verbs in passive voice, such as, *The employers across the Kingdom of Bahrain are not a closeknit collection of "royals," as was stated in the article,*⁶⁶ and, *Ida was said to have made 27 loaves of bread a week.*⁶⁷ Occasionally, a quotative verb will be used in an actual passive voice construction:

“No one has the intention of erecting a wall!” was uttered by General Secretary Walter Ulbricht of the Communist Party of the GDR on June 15, 1961.⁶⁸
That goal was stated by Obama himself.⁶⁹

To add to the sense that quotative verbs are transitive, we can often substitute a third-person pronoun for the quoted language, as in, *The director said, “That’s a wrap”* → *The director said it*. This use of the pronoun replacement test seems to suggest that the quoted language is functioning nominally. We will return to quotative verbs in 7.1.3.6, where we will see that, while it is not clear whether the QUOT is a DO, some quotative verbs can take, as an indirect object (IO), the person to whom the quoted language is directed.

7.1.3 Verbs with Two Complements

7.1.3.1 Ditransitive Verbs

The next three verb complement patterns each include two complements. They therefore require more care if we are to identify them consistently. In each case, the key is finding the borders between the constituent phrases that make up the predicate and correctly identifying the form of each constituent.

Of these three complement patterns, you are probably most familiar with ditransitive verbs: those that take two NPs or other nominals as complements, where each complement functions as an object of the verb. The first nominal functions as the indirect object (IO), while the second functions as the DO. Remember that the DO is the patient: the person, place, or thing acted upon by the subject. In *Bartholdi designed the Statue of Liberty*,⁷⁰ the NP *the Statue of Liberty* is functioning as the DO, naming the thing *Bartholdi designed*. In a sentence with two NPs after the verb, the first functioning as the IO and the second as the DO, the second NP names the patient, while the first, the NP:IO, names the recipient or beneficiary of the act. In the sentence *France gave the United States the Statue of Liberty*,⁷¹ *the Statue of Liberty* is the thing acted upon, the thing that *France gave*; *the United States* names the recipient or beneficiary of the act (of France’s giving). So, once again, to find the DO, we have to ask, “What did the S V?” In this case, “What did *France* give?” And the answer, *the Statue of Liberty*, is the DO. To find the IO, we must ask, “To or for whom did the S V DO?” In this case, “To whom did *France* give *the Statue of Liberty*?” The answer, *the United States*, is the IO. Note that *the United States* cannot be the DO since *the United States* was not the thing *given*. That is, *the United States* is not the thing acted upon directly by the subject. Also note that the two NPs, *the United States* and *the Statue of Liberty*, name two distinct and different objects.

The preceding discussion suggests the first of two ways to identify this type of verb and its complements. That first way is the “*to/for*” test: the IO always names the person or thing *to* or *for* whom the action was done; to find the IO and

DO, we can revise the sentence by putting the nominal that we think is functioning as the DO right after the verb and the nominal that we think is functioning as the IO at the end of the sentence in a PP beginning with *to* or *for*:

France gave the United States_[NP:IO] the Statue of Liberty_[NP:DO].
France gave the Statue of Liberty_[NP:DO] to the United States_[PP:IO].

*Zelda made me_[NP:IO] a sandwich_[NP:DO]*⁷²
Zelda made a sandwich_[NP:DO] for me_[PP:IO].

We encounter the ditransitive construction as both V + IO + DO and V + DO + PP. When we encounter the latter form of the ditransitive construction, we will say that the PP:IO.

Here is a list of common ditransitive verbs, divided by those that take *to*, those that take *for*, and those that can take either:

Ditransitive verbs that take to (e.g. I sent her a letter. → I sent a letter to her.)

accord	afford	allocate	allow	assure	award	charge
deal	deliver	deny	drop	feed	fine	forgive
give	grant	hand	lend	mail	offer	overpay
owe	pass	pay	permit	profit	render	sell
send	show	supply	take	teach	tell	wish

Ditransitive verbs that take for (e.g. I did him a favor. → I did a favor for him.)

appoint	bake	build	buy	call	catch
cause	compose	cook	cost	cut	design
do	draw	earn	find	get	hire
hunt	keep	leave	lose	make	name
order	perform	play	prescribe	purchase	save
set	sing	spare	win		

Ditransitive verbs that take to or for (e.g. I wrote them a note. → I wrote a note to/for them.)

assign	bring	guarantee	promise	quote	read
refuse	rent	serve	throw	write	

Note that, with the verbs that can take either *to* or *for*, each usage has a distinctly different idiomatic meaning:

*I threw my dog a ball.*⁷³ → *I threw a ball to my dog.*⁷⁴

*I threw my dog a party.*⁷⁵ → *I threw a party for my dog.*⁷⁶

The second test for identifying ditransitive verbs is to put the sentence in passive voice. If the nominals following the verb are, in fact, the IO and DO, respectively, they both name objects that are being acted upon (albeit in different ways, one directly and one indirectly). This class of verbs are called “ditransitive” precisely for this reason: they are transitive in two ways, with respect to two different objects. We can change the sentence from active to passive voice by moving either the NOMINAL:DO or the NOMINAL:IO to the subject slot. This test works very well for ditransitive verbs that, in the *to/for* test, take the preposition *to*. With verbs that take *for*, moving the NOMINAL:IO to the SUBJ position sounds odd to my ear, and is extremely uncommon:

France gave the United States_[NP:IO] the Statue of Liberty_[NP:DO].

NOMINAL:DO → **SUBJ:** *The Statue of Liberty_[NP:SUBJ] was given to the United States.*⁷⁷

NOMINAL:IO → **SUBJ:** *The United States_[NP:SUBJ] was given the Statue of Liberty.*⁷⁸

*Grandma baked me_[NP:IO] a cake_[NP:DO].*⁷⁹

NOMINAL:DO → **SUBJ:** *A cake_[NP:SUBJ] was baked for me.*⁸⁰

?NOMINAL:IO → **SUBJ:?** *I_[NP:SUBJ] was baked a cake.*⁸¹

All three versions of each example sentence have the same basic meaning, but each has a different focus or emphasis. In 10.1.5, we will discuss how passivizing a sentence allows us to alter the order of information for the purpose of controlling information flow.

There are also a small number of ditransitive verbs that do not appear to take *to* or *for*. In current American English, *ask*, instead, takes *of*:

Ask

*I asked him_[NP:IO] a question_[NP:DO].*⁸² *I asked a question of him.*⁸³

*He was asked a question.*⁸⁴ *A question was asked of him.*⁸⁵

And the verb *bet* does not appear to have a sentence structure involving a preposition at all:

Bet

*I bet him \$100 that he would like it.*⁸⁶ **I bet \$100 to/with/?against him that he would like it.*

*He was bet \$20 (that) he wouldn't take such action.*⁸⁷ **\$20 was bet him.*

EFL-related indirect object use: While IO + DO constructions are common across many languages, they are, of course, realized in ways different from English. For example, Spanish lacks the V + IO + DO construction, but has the construction V + DO + PP:IO. However, in Spanish, the PP:IO may be placed before the DO, leading Spanish L1 speakers to produce sentences like, **Pablo sent to the girl_[PP:IO] a letter_[NP:DO]*. In Korean, the functions of DO and IO are marked by the addition of case endings on nouns, leading to freer word order; the predicate of a sentence in Korean might be ordered as DO + IO + V or as IO + DO + V. Korean L1 speakers may thus produce sentences like **Technical journal and proceedings of symposia and conferences are cited to review previous works and to give_[V] a hint_[NP:DO] readers_[NP:IO] about New York*, instead of *give a hint to readers or give readers a hint*. Another example from a Korean L1 speaker: **This article gives_[V] to us_[PP:IO] the information_[NP:DO]*⁸⁸

7.1.3.2 Complex Transitive Verbs with a Direct Object and a Nominal or Adjectival Object Complement

In this verb complementation pattern, the NP:DO follows the verb directly. The second complement is called an object complement (OC) because, just as an SC refers back to or renames the subject of a copular verb, so an OC refers back to or renames the DO. Thus, in *Madison considered Monroe_[NP:DO] a friend_[NP:OC]*,⁸⁹ *Monroe* is the DO—the person whom *Madison considered*. *A friend* is the OC: it refers back to or renames the DO, *Monroe*. As with copular verbs and their SCs, we can paraphrase the relationship between the DO and the OC by putting an appropriate form of *be* between them. Thus, *Madison considered Monroe a friend* implies that, in Madison's consideration, *Monroe was a friend*. Inserting an appropriate form of *be* between the DO and the OC is the surest test for identifying verbs that take a DO and an OC.

However, object complements come in three flavors: although the DO is always a nominal, the OC may be a nominal, an ADJP, or an adverbial (we will consider this last OC in 7.1.3.3).

*The international community considered the country_[NP:DO] a development success story_[NP:OC]*⁹⁰
*They elected him_[ProNP:DO] president of the sophomore class_[NP:OC]*⁹¹
*He and his wife found Cincinnati_[NP:DO] charming_[AdjP:OC]*⁹²
*They all considered the South_[NP:DO] valuable_[AdjP:OC]*⁹³

Here are lists of common verbs that can take a DO + OC. Some more commonly take a NOMINAL:OC, some an ADJP:OC, but most can take either:⁹⁴

appoint	believe	brand	call	certify	christen	consider
cut	declare	deem	designate	drive	dub	elect
find	get	have	hold	imagine	judge	knock
label	leave	like	make	name	paint	plane
prefer	presume	proclaim	pronounce	prove	render	rub
shoot	show	sweep	term	think	turn	want
wipe						

Here are a few more sentence examples:

*I believe him_[PRON:DO] innocent of the crimes_[ADJP:OC].*⁹⁵
*Carrots turn you_[PRON:DO] yellow_[ADJP:OC] the niacin turns you_[PRON:DO] red_[ADJP:OC].*⁹⁶
*I made you_[PRON:DO] a hero_[NP:OC].*⁹⁷

We now have two verb complement patterns in which the complement consists of two NPs: NP:IO + NP:DO and NP:DO + NP:OC—and even an example of a verb, *make*, that can take *both* complement patterns. There are two ways to distinguish between them. First, while the DO and OC name the same thing, the IO and DO must name different—or at least distinct—things. The *be* insertion test helps us here. The test will work for the DO + OC complement but not for the IO + DO complement: *France gave the United States_[NP:IO] the Statue of Liberty_[NP:DO]* does not imply that *the United States was the Statue of Liberty*. But *They elected him_[NP:DO] president_[NP:OC]* implies that *he was president*. Likewise, the *to/for* test, which works for identifying the IO and DO, will not work with DO + OC verbs: *France gave the United States_[NP:IO] the Statue of Liberty_[NP:DO]* means *France gave the Statue of Liberty to the United States*. But you cannot turn *They elected him_[NP:DO] president_[NP:OC]* into **They elected president to/for him*.

Further, because it includes a NOMINAL:DO in its complement, we can put DO + OC verbs in active or passive voice:

Active: *They elected him_[NP:DO] president_[NP:OC].*

Passive: *He was elected president by them.*

However, we cannot make the OC the subject of a passive voice sentence: **President was elected him by them*.

7.1.3.3 Complex Transitive Verbs with a Direct Object and an Adverbial Object Complement

Verbs that take a DO and an **adverbial object complement (OC)** look—and are analyzed—much like verbs that take a nominal or adjectival OC.

*Cris put the camera_[NP:DO] there_[AdvP:OC]*⁹⁸
*Driver found the book_[NP:DO] in a secondhand store_[PP:ADVERBIAL:OC]*⁹⁹
*I left the plate_[NP:DO] on the counter_[PP:ADVERBIAL:OC]*¹⁰⁰

As with verbs that take a DO and a nominal or adjectival OC, we can easily check that the adverbial OC is related to the DO by the *be* insertion test: if we can put an appropriate form of *be* between the DO and the following adverbial (AdvP or PP:ADVERBIAL) and have a reasonable paraphrase of the relationship between those two phrases, then the adverbial is functioning as an OC—that is, it is related to the DO. So, *Cris put the camera_[NP:DO] there_[AdvP:OC]* implies that *the camera* was there; *Driver found the book_[NP:DO] in a secondhand store_[PP:ADVERBIAL:OC]* implies that *The book* was in a secondhand store. Also, unlike sentence modifiers, these adverbials are not easily moved.

*?There, Cris put the camera. *Cris, there, put the camera.*
*?In a secondhand store Driver found the book. *Driver, in a secondhand store, found the book.*
**On the counter I left the plate. *I, on the counter, left the plate.*

Another clue to identifying this verb complement pattern is that these verbs take locative adverbials—adverbials that answer the question, “Where did S V DO?” “Where did *Cris put the camera*?” *There*.

Finally, like all verbs that take a NOMINAL:DO as part of their complement, DO + ADVERBIAL:OC verbs can be put in passive voice:

The camera was put there (by Cris).
The book was found in a secondhand store (by Driver).
The plate was left on the counter (by me).

Here is a list of common verbs that take a DO + ADVERBIAL:OC:

appoint	burn	call	cut	drive	elect
find	get	have	hold	imagine	knock
lay	leave	like	make	melt	paint
pick	place	plane	prefer	put	round
rub	sand	send	serve	set	smooth
shoot	show	sweep	take	throw	turn
want	wipe				

One way to spot these verbs is to follow them by *it* + PP:ADVERBIAL; we immediately notice that it is highly idiomatic as to which **preposition** is used with each verb:

*pick it **off** the shelf*
*place it **on** the shelf*

*serve it **from** the shelf*
*send it **to** the shelf*

Also, verbs with related meanings will often take the same **preposition**: *Buy lumber from a dealer who can cut/plane/round/rub/sand/smooth it to the required thicknesses.*¹⁰¹

7.1.3.4 Complex Transitive Verbs with a Direct Object and a Participle Phrase

A number of verbs in English take as complements a **Nominal:DO** followed by a **participle phrase (PARTP)** that functions as a **second verb complement (VC)**. We know that these verbs are transitive—that the nominal that follows the verb is functioning as a DO—because we can put them in passive voice:

Active voice: *They had left the engine_[NP:DO] running_[PARTP:ADVERBIAL:VC].*¹⁰²
Passive voice: *The engine had been left running.*¹⁰³

How do we know that the PARTP *running* is a complement and not merely a modifier of the head noun of the DO? First, in the transformation from active to passive voice, the PARTP does not move with the NOMINAL:DO to the subject position. This shows that it is a separate constituent from the NOMINAL:DO. Second, the PARTP is not an optional constituent: while it is true that, if we drop it, we still have a well-formed sentence (*They had left the engine*), it is also true that dropping the PARTP sharply changes the meaning of the verb *left*, implying that they had abandoned the engine, rather than they had left the engine on. Notice also that, in this sentence, the PARTP *running* provides adverbial information: it tells *how* or *in what state they left the engine*. We will thus label such participle phrases functioning as verb complements as adverbial (PARTP:ADVERBIAL:VC). Here are a few more examples:

Active voice: *The police officer kept him_[PRON:DO] talking for two hours_[PARTP:ADVERBIAL:VC].*¹⁰⁴
Passive voice: *He was kept talking.*¹⁰⁵

Active voice: *She lost money_[NP:DO] investing in the stock market_[PARTP:ADVERBIAL:VC].*¹⁰⁶
Passive voice: *Money was lost (by her) investing in volatile stocks.*¹⁰⁷

Active voice: *Researchers have spent countless hours_[NP:DO] compiling evidence_[PARTP:ADVERBIAL:VC].*¹⁰⁸
Passive voice: *Countless hours have been spent compiling data.*¹⁰⁹

In the transformation from active to passive voice, the NP:DO moves, but the PARTP:VC stays put.

Be careful: When a PARTP functions as a second verb complement, it is adverbial. But participle phrases can also function as adjectival post-modifiers of nouns (12.1.2), much as a PP:ADJECTIVAL can. A PARTP:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF N is, of course, a constituent of the NP. If the PARTP is an adjectival modifier of a noun, and the NP is functioning as the DO, in the transformation from active voice to passive voice, the PARTP:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF N must move with the head noun that it modifies, as in the following example:

Active voice: *She had opened the door leading onto the back porch.*
¹¹⁰
[PARTP:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF "door"]

Passive voice: *The door leading onto the back porch had been opened by her.*

**The door had been opened by her, leading onto the back porch.*

Active voice: *A state of emergency would not solve the problems facing the country.*
¹¹¹
[PARTP:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF "country"]

Passive voice: *The problems facing the country would not be solved by a state of emergency.*

**The problems would not be solved by a state of emergency facing the country.*

In the following example, both arrangements of the sentence are possible:

Active voice: *You can feel the wind blowing across the desert.*¹¹²

Passive voice: *The wind blowing across the desert [PARTP:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF "wind"] can be felt by you.*

Passive voice: *The wind can be felt by you, blowing across the desert.*
[PARTP:ADVERBIAL:VC]

However, in the first passive voice version, *blowing across the desert* is adjectival, telling *which or what kind of wind*; it can be paraphrased using an adjective clause (ADJCL; 10.2.1): *The wind that is blowing across the desert can be felt by you*. In the second passive voice version, *blowing across the desert* is adverbial, telling *when the wind can be felt*; it can be paraphrased using an adverb clause (ADVCL; 10.2.3): *The wind can be felt by you as it is blowing across the desert*. You can choose to parse these PARTPs either way, depending on the context.

Here is a list of some of the verbs that take this complement pattern:

catch	discover	feel	find	hear	imagine	invest
issue	leave	lose	make	observe	obtain	open
pass	provide	publish	raise	release	remember	sacrifice
save	see	sign	smell	spend	squander	write

And here are a few more sentence examples:

Active voice: *Voith issued a statement calling the new law “terrific news.”*¹¹³

Passive voice: *A statement calling the new law “terrific news” [PARTP:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF “statement”] was issued by Voith.*

*A statement was issued by Voith, calling the new law “terrific news” [PARTP:ADVERBIAL:VC].**

It is worth noting that when the DO is a personal pronoun or a proper noun, only one passive voice version is possible:

Active voice: *You guys saw him coming to a lot of games.*¹¹⁴

Passive voice: **He coming to a lot of games was seen by you guys.*

*He was seen by you guys coming to a lot of games [PARTP:ADVERBIAL:VC].**

Active voice: *I saw David coming from the west.*¹¹⁵

Passive voice: **David, coming from the west, was seen by me.*

*David was seen by me, coming from the west [PARTP:ADVERBIAL:VC].**

However, as we’ve already seen with these verbs, when the NOMINAL:DO is a common NP, both passive voice versions are possible:

Active voice: *He saw the man coming up the stairs.*¹¹⁶

Passive voice: *The man coming up the stairs [PARTP:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF “MAN”] was seen by him.*

*The man was seen by him, coming up the stairs [PARTP:ADVERBIAL:VC].**

In 12.1 we will look at this complementation pattern again.

7.1.3.5 Complex Transitive Verbs with a Direct Object and Infinitive Phrase

A number of verbs in English take as complements a **Nominal:DO** followed by an infinitive phrase (INFP) that functions as a second verb complement (VC). We know that these verbs are transitive—that the nominal that follows the verb is functioning as a DO—because we can put them in passive voice.

1. **Active voice:** *Those orientations allow people [NP:DO] to be ruthless [INFP:VC].*¹¹⁷

Passive voice: *People are allowed to be ruthless.*¹¹⁸

2. **Active voice:** *I ask God [NP:DO] to heal them [INFP:VC].*¹¹⁹

Passive voice: *God is asked to heal the spirit and cure the body.*¹²⁰

3. **Active voice:** *Parents will bring pressure to bear on the tobacco companies.*¹²¹

Passive voice: *Pressure is brought to bear on the tobacco industry.*¹²²

4. **Active voice:** *These classes encourage students to think critically.*¹²³

Passive voice: *Students are encouraged to think critically.*¹²⁴

We know the INFPs are complements because we cannot drop them without either creating an ungrammatical sentence, as in the first two sentences, or radically changing the meaning of the sentence, as in the third and fourth sentences.

Is the INFP:VC nominal, adjectival, or adverbial? To see if these INFPs are nominal, we apply the pronoun replacement test. In the first two sentences above, we might be able to replace the INFP with a third-person pronoun:

Those orientations allow people this.

I ask God this.

But we clearly can't make the pronoun replacement in the third and fourth sentences:

**Parents will bring pressure this.*

**These classes encourage students this.*

Rather, in the third and fourth sentences, we could replace the INFP with an adverb:

Parents will bring pressure there.

These classes encourage students thus.

This suggests that we might parse *Parents will bring pressure to bear on the tobacco companies* as saying *where parents will bring pressure*, and *These classes encourage students to think critically* as saying *how these classes encourage students*. But, at least to my ear, no such adverbial paraphrase works for the first two sentences. Finally, I also can't see a parse that construes any of these INFPs as adjectival—as telling *which* or *what kind of* about the preceding noun. Indeed, such a parse would indicate the INFP was modifying the noun in the preceding DO, as in *Thor has nothing to lose*,¹²⁵ where the INFP *to lose* is adjectival, telling *what kind of nothing*. Given that we cannot clearly discern whether these INFP:VCs are nominal or adverbial (though clearly not adjectival), we will simply label them as verb complements. Note, however, that in each example, the NP:DO names the agent—the doer—of the action named by the INFP:VC: *people are to be ruthless*; *God is to heal them*; *pressure is to bear*; and *students are to think critically*.

Here is a list of the most common verbs that take the pattern V + NOMINAL:DO + *to*-INFP:VC:

allow	ask	believe	bring	consider	convince	encourage
expect	feel	find	force	get	have	hear
help	intend	invite	know	lead	let	like
make	need	persuade	put	require	see	show
teach	tell	want	watch			

The verbs in the gray boxes take a DO followed by the bare infinitive, the infinitive without the particle *to* (see 12.2):

*She felt the baby move.*¹²⁶

*Luckily, the professor still let me take the exam.*¹²⁷

Help can take either the *to*-infinitive or the bare infinitive:

*It helped me realize what this was.*¹²⁸

*It helped me to realize that I wanted to be my own artist.*¹²⁹

We label the infinitive without *to* as the “bare infinitive” rather than describing it as a tensed form because the NP preceding the infinitive does not have to agree with the verb in person and number, as it would if the verb were finite.

Two special cases: existential sentences. When it comes to saying that something exists, English is pretty awkward. We cannot say (or at least we do not say), *Lessons to be learned from this disease exist*, or *Lessons to be learned from this disease are*. Instead, we say, *There are lessons to be learned from this disease*.¹³⁰ The word *there* at the beginning of the sentence is an **expletive**: a non-referential place-filler. We do the same thing with an expletive *it*: when we want to express the meaning of *Time to do your part is* or *exists now*, we instead say, *It is time to do your part*.¹³¹

So what? In these existential sentences, we have the same pattern in the predicate: a verb followed by a NP and an INFP. In each case, the INFP is functioning as an adjectival modifier of the preceding noun. In *There are lessons to be learned from this disease*, the INFP tells *which* or *what* kind of lessons; in *It is time to do your part*, the INFP tells *which* or *what* kind of time.

There are also existential sentences with the verb *make* that have this same V + NP + INFP:

*It only **makes** sense to go with a namebrand product*_[INFP:NOMINAL:AGENT]¹³²
*To go with a namebrand product*_[INFP:NOMINAL:SUBJ] *only makes sense.*

*It just **makes** sense to have someone sing*_[INFP:NOMINAL:AGENT]¹³³
*To have someone sing*_[INFP:NOMINAL:SUBJ] *just makes sense.*

In these sentences, *it* is again an expletive: it does not refer back to some antecedent. In the first version of each example, the existential sentence, the INFP isn't a complement or a modifier; rather, it is a nominal and is the agent of the MV *make*, as we see in the second, declarative version of each sentence. We will discuss these expletive-*there* and *it* sentences in greater detail in 10.1.3 and 10.1.4, respectively.

Finally, there is a short list of transitive verbs that can take as a second complement either a PARTP or an INFP; this list includes *get*, *have*, *leave*, *like*, *need*, *take*, and *want*. For some of these verbs, there is little difference in the meaning of the two constructions; in the following two sentences, the VP:PREDs have similar meanings:

*I don't think my friend would **like** me doing that*.¹³⁴
*A number of people would **like** me to do that*.¹³⁵

For others, there are distinct idiomatic differences:

*On days that I didn't feel like exercising, she'd **get** me going*.¹³⁶
*Boss bae said she'd **get** me to go to church*.¹³⁷

In the first sentence, *get me going* means "to rouse me to action." In the second sentence, *get me to go* means "to persuade me to attend."

We will examine this verb complement pattern further in 12.2.

7.1.3.6 Transitive Quotative Verbs

Some quotative verbs take two complements: a PP or NP that functions like an IO, naming the person being spoken to; and the quoted language, which functions like a DO. A common example is the verb *tell*:

Active voice: *Nancy told me*_[PRON:IO] *there was a remote possibility that she could be transferred*_[NCL:QUOT].¹³⁸
Passive voice: *I was told (by Nancy) there was a remote possibility that she could be transferred*.

Passive voice: ?*That there was a remote possibility that she could be transferred was told to me by Nancy.*

Active voice: *L. V. Hurst told me_[PRO:N:IO] an intriguing variation on the jugline method_[NP:QUOT]**

Passive voice: *An intriguing variation on the jugline method_[NP:QUOT] was told to me_[PP:IO] by L. V. Hurst.*¹³⁹

Passive voice: *I was told an intriguing variation on the jugline method.*

Another common example is the verb *say*:

Active voice: *Someone said to me_[PP:IO] the other day, “You need to look harder”_[SENT:QUOT]*¹⁴⁰

Active voice: *She also said to me_[PP:IO] that her fluency wasn’t very good_[NCL:QUOT]*¹⁴¹

Passive voice: *Every quote in that piece_[NP:QUOT] was said to me_[PP:IO] by someone I met.*¹⁴²

Note that with *say*, when we put the sentence into passive voice, while we can move the QUOT to the subject position, we cannot move the IO; instead, we have to use the verb *told*:

Passive voice: *I was told every quote in that piece by someone I met.*

Active voice: *In late July, pollsters asked likely Arkansas voters_[NP:IO] the same question_[NP:QUOT]**

Passive voice: *In late July, likely Arkansas voters_[NP:IO] were asked the same question_[NP:QUOT]**

Passive voice: *In late July, the same question_[NP:QUOT] was asked of likely Arkansas voters_[PP:IO]*¹⁴³

These quotative verbs are highly idiomatic. Note that in the example with *ask*, in the second passive voice version, where the QUOT is the subject, the preposition *of* must be added before the NP:IO.

There are a number of quotative verbs in English that can take both quoted language and an audience as complements; these include *ask*, *comment*, *demand*, *inform*, *say*, *shout*, *tell*, and *warn*, as well as verbs indicating internal conversation, such as *consider*, *ponder*, *think*, and *wonder*. As with intransitive quotative verbs, the quotation may be direct (taking quotation marks) or indirect, and the quote may take a variety of grammatical forms.

Non-WME quotatives: When the quote is an embedded question in the form of a noun clause, as in WME *I asked him if he could go with me*, BL speakers

may instead use inversion of the subject with the AUX to form the embedded question: *I asked him could he go with me* (see 10.1.1).¹⁴⁴

EFL-related quotative verb use: As we have seen, English has numerous quotative verbs and uses them in its own idiomatic ways: some take two complements, and some take only one. For example, “In English, *tell* can mean ‘relate’ (*He told her*_[PRON:IO] *a story*_[NP:QUOT]), ‘inform’ (*He told me*_[PRON:IO] *that he wasn’t coming*_[NCL:QUOT]), and ‘instruct’ or ‘order’ (*He told me*_[PRON:IO] *to do it right away*_[INF:P.VCOMP]).¹⁴⁵ Note that in each of these examples, *tell* takes two complements. By contrast, *say* commonly takes one complement, as in *She said, “I was completely shocked but honored”*_[SENT:QUOT].¹⁴⁶ The German verb *sagen*, which is etymologically related to English *say*, is used “not only for the quotative sense of *say*, but also for the inform and instruct/order senses of *tell*,”¹⁴⁷ with the result that German L1 speakers produce sentences like, **He said me her name* (for *He told me her name*); **He said to her she should come* (for *He told her she should come*); and **He told to Judith, “I am coming”* (for *He said to Judith, “I am coming”*).¹⁴⁸

7.1.4 Phrasal Verbs (PV)

“Grammar books” almost never discuss phrasal verbs (PV), a huge set of remarkably common, highly idiomatic constructions that are notoriously difficult for non-native speakers to master. PVs combine a verb with a particle (a little word that, in other contexts, would function as a preposition or adverb) to create an idiom that behaves like a single word. The meaning of a PV can always be paraphrased by a single word, but the meaning of a PV is not simply the sum of the literal meanings of the verb and the particle.

*In Kansas, a breeder had to put down 1,200 dogs after failing to inoculate them for distemper.*¹⁴⁹ (*put + down* ≠ “euthanize”)

*Saddam Hussein’s troops put down the rebellion.*¹⁵⁰ (*put + down* ≠ “quelled”)

*He tried to beat up his lawyer.*¹⁵¹ (*beat + up* ≠ “pummel”)

*Everything will turn out for the best.*¹⁵² (*turn + out* ≠ “conclude”).¹⁵³

PVs have patterns of form much like other categories of words and phrases, and those patterns affect what comes after and completes the meaning of verbs in innumerable, highly idiomatic ways. Because of the patterns of their forms, I have chosen to treat PVs along with verb complements. Sometimes, the particle can be separated from the verb and placed after a NOMINAL:DO (which leads to the notorious “ending a sentence with a preposition”; more on that below) so that the PV and the verb complement seem to be tangled together. Often the particle stays close to the verb, even when the verb is shifted to passive voice.

7.1.4.1 Intransitive PVs

Of the most common varieties of PVs, the first we will examine are intransitive, comprising only a verb and a particle and needing no complement:

*When I told him, he blew up.*¹⁵⁴

*He backed down.*¹⁵⁵

*The truck broke down.*¹⁵⁶

*We all sat around and wondered, wow, who did this?*¹⁵⁷

*I tend to let things just blow over.*¹⁵⁸

In each example, the particle cannot be dropped or moved: if we try to move the particle away from the verb, we get some of our best examples yet of Yoda-speak—or plain nonsense:

**Up he blew.* **He up blew.*

**Down he backed.* **He down backed.*

**Down the truck broke.* **The truck down broke.*

**Around we all sat.* **We all around sat.*

**Over I tend to let things just blow.* **I over tend to let things just blow.*

The simplest way to think about these intransitive PVs is as if they were just one word. But this puts us up against the pseudo-rule about not ending a sentence with a preposition. The first thing to get over is that these particles are not functioning as prepositions. The words that look like prepositions here are post-posed particles, each a part of a phrasal idiom (the term “preposition” applies to these words when they are “pre-posed,” appearing before a nominal that functions as the PCOMP). To avoid ending some of these sentences with a “preposition,” you would have to change the wording: *He blew up* would have to become *He exploded*; *He backed down* would have to become *He relented*. In each case, the change to avoid the pseudo-rule results in a change of tone: the one-word paraphrase of a PV is typically a Latinate word (originating in Latin or French) and therefore sounds more formal than the commonly Germanic PV idioms. Sometimes there is simply no way to convey the meaning or sense you want to evoke and to avoid ending a sentence with a particle.

7.1.4.2 PVs with One Particle and One Complement

7.1.4.2.1 TRANSITIVE SEPARABLE PVS

Many PVs take a NOMINAL:DO. These verbs fall into two subclasses: in the first, the NOMINAL:DO may precede or follow the particle: that is, the **particle** may be *separated* from the verb by the NOMINAL:DO.

*I can let **down** my hair with you.¹⁵⁹ I can let my hair **down**.¹⁶⁰*
*McCullum knocked **over** a cocktail table.¹⁶¹ I knocked a table **over**.¹⁶²*
*Saddam Hussein's troops put **down** the rebellion. Three kings attempt to put the rebellion **down**.¹⁶³*
*He tried to beat **up** his lawyer. He tried to beat his lawyer **up**.*

With transitive separable PVs, when we substitute a PRON for the NOMINAL:DO, the particle must follow the NP:

*I can let **down** my hair with you. I can let my hair **down** with you.*
I can let **down it with you. I can let it **down** with you.*

*McCullum knocked **over** a cocktail table. McCullum knocked a cocktail table **over**.*
McCullum knocked **over it. McCullum knocked it **over**.*

Because of this restriction on particle movement, we can use the pronoun replacement test to distinguish transitive separable PVs from transitive inseparable PVs, which we will look at below.

Also, the transitive separable PVs can be easily confused with a verb followed by a PP. For example, the sentence *McCullum knocked over a cocktail table* might be parsed in two ways:

McCullum_[NP:SUBJ] knocked_[V] over a cocktail table_{[PP:ADVERBIAL:VC]'}
McCullum_[NP:SUBJ] knocked over_[PV] a cocktail table_{[NP:DO]'}

There is a simple test to tell which parse is correct: if the sentence includes a NOMINAL:DO, then it can be put in passive voice:

Active voice: *McCullum **knocked over** a cocktail table. McCullum **knocked** a cocktail table **over**.*

Passive voice: *A cocktail table **was knocked over** (by McCullum).*

No matter which active voice version of the sentence we start with, the passive voice version keeps the particle with the verb, showing that the combination of V + PARTICLE works as an idiomatic unit. By contrast, if the constituent following the verb actually were an adverbial PP functioning as some kind of adverbial verb complement, it would sound odd if the sentence were put in passive voice:

Active: *Abou Fouad drove_[V] up the street_{[PP:ADVERBIAL:LC]'}*
?“Passive”: *?The street was driven up by Abou Fouad.*

Since there is no actual NOMINAL:DO in this sentence, the sentence cannot be put into the passive voice. For comparison, there is a separable transitive PV *drive up*, meaning “to inflate”:

Active: *The basic forces of supply and demand drove up prices* _{[VERB] [NP:DO]}.¹⁶⁴

Active: *A shortage of parts [drove [prices _[NP:DO]] up* _[VERB].¹⁶⁵

Passive: *Prices were driven up even further*.¹⁶⁶

7.1.4.2.2 TRANSITIVE INSEPARABLE PVS

In the second type of transitive PV, the particle cannot be separated from the verb (e.g. *We toyed with the idea*; **We toyed the idea with*). Rather, although it appears that we have an idiomatic expression in which a verb must be followed by a PP that begins with a particular preposition, instead we have a PV whose complement consists of a particle followed by a NOMINAL:DO. We know that the combination of PARTICLE + NOMINAL that follows the verb is not simply a PP since, when we put the verb in passive voice, the particle stays with the verb when the nominal shifts to the subject position:

Active: *We toyed with the idea of turning pro*.¹⁶⁷

Passive: *Timbromania was toyed with as a term to affix to this new hobby*.¹⁶⁸

Active: *More than 4 million residents rely on them*.¹⁶⁹

Passive: *This breed is relied on by farmers in the tropics*.¹⁷⁰

Active: *The burglar broke into the building*.¹⁷¹

Passive: *Brooklyn Decker's cars were broken into by baby-yoghurt-loving bears*.¹⁷²

Putting the verb in passive voice shows that the nominal is functioning as a DO: because the particle stays with the verb after the passive transformation, we know we have a PV.

We should pause here to note that **a number of phrasal verbs are ergative**: they can be used either transitively or intransitively:

Transitive: *The crew had shut down the engines* _[NP:DO].¹⁷³

Intransitive: *The engines had shut down*.¹⁷⁴

Transitive: *You burned down the house* _[NP:DO].¹⁷⁵

Intransitive: *The house burned down*.¹⁷⁶

Transitive: *I woke up the dog* _[NP:DO].¹⁷⁷

Intransitive: *The dog woke up*.¹⁷⁸

7.1.4.3 Transitive PV with Two Inseparable Particles

Some transitive PVs take two inseparable particles. We know that the second particle is not a preposition because the nominal that follows it moves to the subject position when we shift the sentence to passive voice:

Active voice: *Since we have a job, we put_[V] up_[PARTICLE 1] with_[PARTICLE 2] those conditions_[NP:DO].*¹⁷⁹

Passive voice: *There are a lot of behaviors that used to be put up with at work that I don't think are put up with anymore.*¹⁸⁰

Active voice: *He was expecting that the Europeans would look_[V] down_[PARTICLE 1] on_[PARTICLE 2] an American_[NP:DO].*¹⁸¹

Passive voice: *An able-bodied husband would be looked down on if he couldn't support his family.*¹⁸²

Active voice: *Obama barged_[V] in_[PARTICLE 1] on_[PARTICLE 2] a private meeting of the developing countries_[NP:DO].*¹⁸³

Passive voice: *I was barged in on recently, after my private gondola doors were closed.*¹⁸⁴

Active voice: *We should look_[V] forward_[PARTICLE 1] to_[PARTICLE 2] fair week_[NP:DO] all year long!*¹⁸⁵

Passive voice: *Fair Week is looked forward to all year by our youth.*¹⁸⁶

7.1.5 Prepositional Verbs

English has a large number of verbs that are not phrasal verbs, but that idiomatically require as their complement a DO followed by a PP with a specific preposition as its head. We will call these idiomatic combinations **prepositional verbs**, since these verbs require very specific prepositions as the head of their PP:VC. As an example, *Fast X director Louis Leterrier's wife talked him_[PRON:DO] into making the movie_[PP:VC].* "To talk someone into something" is a fixed idiom in English: we can't merely "talk someone." So the PP *into making the movie* is a second complement of the verb *talk*. We might argue that the PP is an object complement (OC): that in the context of *her talking*, he was *into making the movie*. However, this seems a stretch to me. Some grammarians argue that the PP is an adverbial complement of the verb, and this seems more plausible, as the idiom *to talk into* metaphorically makes "talking" a force that moves the audience "into" something.

*They have stacked the odds_[NP:DO] against me_[PP:ADVERBIAL:VC] a little bit.*¹⁸⁷

*The big resort-casino chains have stacked the odds_[NP:DO] in their favor_[PP:ADVERBIAL:VC].*¹⁸⁸

*Clark talked him_[NP:DO] out of it_[PP:ADVERBIAL:VC]*¹⁸⁹
*The analyst cut \$10_[NP:DO] off the price target_[PP:ADVERBIAL:VC]*¹⁹⁰

We know these verbs are transitive, since we can put them into passive voice:
*The odds have been stacked against me since day one.*¹⁹¹

In each of these examples, we could reasonably argue that the PP is adverbial: *against me*, *in their favor*, and *off the price target* all tell *how they have stacked the odds* and *cut \$10*; and as with *talked him into it*, *out of it* points to a metaphorical destination. Note that *out of* is simply a two-word preposition (see 3.1). Also, all of these PPs are complements: they cannot be moved to the front of the sentence or between the subject and verb; and they cannot be dropped without altering the sense of the verb, or making the sentence ungrammatical.

7.1.6 Transitive Separable PV with a PP Complement

Just when you thought verb complementation couldn't get any wackier, we have an idiomatic pattern in which a transitive separable PV takes a DO and a PP as complements. When we shift the verb to passive voice, the particle and the PP both stay with the verb.

Active voice: *The Beast may have rage issues, but he mostly takes_[V] his anger_[NP:DO] out_[PARTICLE] on the inanimate furniture_[PP:ADVERBIAL:VC]*¹⁹²

Active voice: *McCaffrey takes_[V] out_[PARTICLE] his anger_[NP:DO] on the official*¹⁹³
[PP:ADVERBIAL:VC]

Passive voice: *This aggravation is mostly taken out on the nurse.*¹⁹⁴

Active voice: *I'd have enjoyed helping him fill_[V] up_[PARTICLE] his head_[NP:DO] with new stuff_[PP:ADVERBIAL:VC]*¹⁹⁵

Active voice: *She would fill_[V] his head_[NP:DO] up_[PARTICLE] with all of these lies.*¹⁹⁶

Passive voice: *Your head would be filled up with scraps of information.*¹⁹⁷

EFL-related phrasal verb use: EFL students whose first language (L1) does not have phrasal verbs (e.g. Hebrew) tend to avoid phrasal verbs in English, preferring the single-word equivalents, while EFL students whose L1 has phrasal verbs more readily learn and use them.¹⁹⁸ Even when the student's L1 has phrasal verbs, if a verb in their L1 has no particle, they may omit the particle from the English equivalent. For example, the equivalent of "listen to" in Spanish is *escuchar*, leading Spanish EFL students to produce **Every day I listen the radio* instead of *listen to*. Likewise, when the L1 verb is phrasal but the equivalent in English is a single-word verb, the EFL student may insert an equivalent English particle, as when a Korean speaker writes, **There are hundreds of other ways for terrorists to enter to the United States.*¹⁹⁹

7.2 Summary of Verb Complement and Phrasal Verb Patterns

7.1.1 No Complement (Intransitive)

7.1.2 One Complement:

7.1.2.1 V + NP:DO (Transitive or Monotransitive Verbs)

7.1.2.2 V + NP/ADJP:SC (Intransitive Copular Verbs with a Nominal or Adjectival Subject Complement [SC])

7.1.2.3 *BE* + AdvP:SC/PP:ADVERBIAL:SC (Intransitive Copular *be* with Adverbial Subject Complement [SC])

7.1.2.4 V + ADVERBIAL:ADVC (Intransitive Verbs with Adverbial Complement [ADVC])

7.1.2.5 V + QUOT (Intransitive Quotative Verbs)

7.1.3 Two Complements:

7.1.3.1 V + NP₁:IO + NP₂:DO (Ditransitive Verbs)

7.1.3.2 V + NP:DO + NP/ADJP (Complex Transitive Verbs with Direct Object [DO] and Object Complement [OC])

7.1.3.3 V + NP:DO + AdvP/PP:ADVERBIAL:OC (Complex Transitive Verbs with Direct Object [DO] and Adverbial Object Complement [OC])

7.1.3.4 V + NP:DO + PARTP (Complex Transitive Verbs with Direct Object [DO] and Participle Phrase [PARTP])

7.1.3.5 V + NP:DO + INF (Complex Transitive Verbs with Direct Object [DO] and Infinitive Phrase [INFP])

7.1.3.6 V + NP:IO + QUOT (Transitive Quotative Verbs)

7.1.4 Phrasal Verbs

7.1.4.1 Phrasal Verbs with One Particle and No Complement: V + PARTICLE (Intransitive Phrasal Verbs)

7.1.4.2 Phrasal Verbs with One Particle and One Complement:

7.1.4.2.1 V + PARTICLE + NP:DO (Transitive Separable Phrasal Verbs)

7.1.4.2.2 V + PARTICLE + NP:DO (Transitive Inseparable Phrasal Verbs)

7.1.4.3 Transitive PV with Two Inseparable Particles

7.1.5 Prepositional Verbs

7.1.6 Transitive Separable PV with a PP Complement

So what? While this list includes all of the most common patterns of verb complementation and PVs, it is by no means complete. In fact, it would be impossible to construct a perfectly complete list of verb complement

patterns and PVs in English because the language keeps changing. But this list and the accompanying discussion should help you have some confidence about trying to identify patterns you haven't seen before.

7.3 Key Points

- A finite verb functions as the head of a verb phrase (VP); the VP, in turn, functions as a predicate (VP:PRED) in a sentence or dependent clause. A VP comprises a V, its modifiers, and complement(s).
- There are hundreds of verb complementation patterns in English.
- The most common complementation patterns involve copular *be* (the most common MV in English), which takes a subject complement (SC); the SC may be nominal, adjectival, or adverbial.
- Also common are verbs whose complement includes an NP or other nominal functioning as a direct object (NOMINAL:DO). A verb with a DO as its complement is transitive and may be arranged in active or passive voice.
- Phrasal verbs (PV) comprise a verb and, at a minimum, one particle. Together, the V + PARTICLE combination forms an idiom whose meaning is not simply the sum of its parts. There are thousands of PVs in English, appearing in numerous patterns.

7.4 Exercises: Verb Complements and Phrasal Verbs

Identify the Verb Complement Pattern 1: Made-up sentences

In each of the following sentences, for each finite verb, identify the complete verb phrase; identify any modifiers of the verb; identify the complete complement of the verb; and identify the verb complementation pattern.

- A. I went to the movies.
- B. My brother bought me some popcorn.
- C. He and I watched a Harrison Ford movie.
- D. Of course, Ford played the hero.
- E. The hero seemed unsure of himself.
- F. The hero put down the treasure.
- G. We found the character hard to tolerate
- H. When the film was over, we had had enough of the dark.
- I. We went out into the blinding daylight.
- J. Movies are good on a rainy day.
- K. We heard birds singing in the trees.
- L. I wanted us to walk home.
- M. Suddenly, it rained.
- N. We played in the puddles.
- O. That night, I slept well.

Identify the Verb Complement Pattern 2: Real sentences

Use the same instructions as in “Identify the Verb Complement Pattern 1,” but use the passage on page 28, “Jimmy’s Sales Tip: Sam’s, Costco.”

Example: *Kossar’s Bagels and Bialys in New York sells a circular pletzel.*²⁰⁰

(1) VP: *sells a circular pletzel*

Modifiers of V: none

V: *sells*

Verb Complement: *a circular pletzel*

Complementation Pattern: V + NP:DO (Monotransitive)



Figure 7.1

Notes

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Adverbs (Adv) and Adverb Phrases (AdvP)

Adverbs are a mixed category, primarily comprising content words (e.g. *slowly*, *here*, *now*) but also including function words (e.g. *very*, *just*, *not*). In traditional grammar, the term “adverb” refers to words that modify a verb, adjective, or another adverb, telling *when*, *where*, *why*, *how*, *how much*, *how often*, *how long*, and other versions of those sorts of information. In reality, adverbs and AdvPs also modify whole sentences, dependent clauses, infinitive phrases, and participle phrases; and we have seen that AdvPs can function as several different types of verb complement. In 11.3, we will talk more generally about adverbial constituents, but for now, we start out by looking at garden-variety adverbs.

Adverbs often end in *-ly*, and we can easily convert many adjectives to adverbs by adding *-ly*: for example, the ADJ *light* becomes the ADV *lightly*. Of course, some local spelling conventions apply: *happy* becomes *happily*, not **happyly*. However, not all words that end in *-ly* are adverbs: *costly*, *crumbly*, *deadly*, *friendly*, *lovely*, *slovenly*, etc., are all adjectives; these adjectives do not form adverbs by adding *-ly*. And many common adverbs do not end in *-ly* and are not derived from adjectives, including *far*, *fast*, *just*, *never*, *not*, *often*, *only*, *quite*, *rather*, *so*, *soon*, *too*, *very*, etc. *Not* (and its contracted form *n't*) is the most common ADV.

Also, like adjectives, adverbs come in two forms: gradable and absolute (or non-gradable). Gradable adverbs have three forms or degrees: the base, the comparative, and the superlative:

Base: *fast*, *happily*, *well*

Comparative: *faster*, *more happily*, *better*

Superlative: *fastest*, *most happily*, *best*

The three ways in which we conventionally form the different degrees of adverbs are much like the three ways in which we form the three degrees of adjectives. Gradable adverbs of one syllable generally take the endings *-er* and *-est* to mark degree. Gradable adverbs of two or more syllables typically take the words *more* and *most* to mark the comparative and superlative. *Well* is one of a small set of

irregular exceptions: *well/better/best*; *badly/worse/worst*; *a little/less/(the) least*; *much/more/(the) most*.¹ Absolute or non-gradable adverbs do not show degree. Examples include the negative adverbs *not* and *never*; intensifying adverbs like *just*, *only*, *quite*, *rather*, *so*, *too*, *very*; and some common content adverbs like *here*, *there*, *now*, *then*.

Non-WME adverbs: -ly absence: Even in contemporary WME, “some adverbs that formerly ended in an *-ly* suffix no longer take *-ly*. Thus, in informal contexts, most general American English speakers say *They answered wrong* instead of *They answered wrongly*.”² Likewise, American English speakers commonly say *I feel bad* rather than *I feel badly*; even street signs say *Go Slow*, not *Go Slowly*. In Southern varieties, “particularly Southern mountain varieties such as Appalachian and Ozark English,” *-ly* absence extends to more words. “These items may be relatively unobtrusive (e.g. *She enjoyed life awful well*) or quite obtrusive (e.g. *I come from Virginia original*).”³

*That was awful nice of you.*⁴

*But, you know, it's a **real** simple program.*⁵

*I could hear the owls and the wolves away off in the woods, and it seemed **terrible** still.*⁶

8.1 Adverb Phrases

Adverbs often appear alone, although they may appear with modifiers as the head of an adverb phrase (AdvP). In general, an AdvP takes the form [AdvP:MOD OF ADV] + ADV + [PP:ADVERBIAL: MOD OF ADV]. That is, an AdvP always has an adverb as its head, and it may take an AdvP as a pre-modifier and/or a post-modifying adverbial PP. AdvPs can function in a large variety of roles.

Complement of V: Just as we saw with adverbial PPs, an AdvP can function as the complement of a verb:

SC: *Winter is here.*⁷

LC: *Teachers and students walked inside to begin their school day.*⁸

TC: *Secretary of State Madeleine Albright will go soon after.*⁹

MC: *Machado has played well.*¹⁰

OC: *She left the box here.*¹¹

Modifier of V: As a modifier of a verb (AdvP:MOD OF V), an AdvP will appear very close to the verb that it modifies. It can appear immediately after the verb, immediately before the verb, or even between an AUX and the MV:

*She slept well.*¹²

*She slept very well.*¹³

*He hardly ate a bite.*¹⁴

*He has hardly eaten in the last three days.*¹⁵

*He just barely beat me at the finish line.*¹⁶

*I do not like green eggs and ham.*¹⁷

*I did not quite make it.*¹⁸

We know these ADVPs are modifiers because, if we drop them, the sentences are still well formed. Below, we will look at how we know that they are adverbial.

SENTMOD: ADVPs commonly appear as sentence modifiers. As we've already seen, as sentence modifiers, ADVPs can be moved to three locations in the sentence: the beginning, the end, and between the subject and the verb.

*Very frequently that happens.*¹⁹

*That happens very frequently.*²⁰

*That very frequently happens.*²¹

Modifier of ADJ: ADVPs that modify adjectives are mostly intensifiers such as *very, so, too, extremely, hardly, terribly*, etc.

*This is very good.*²²

*Charmin's so squeezably soft, it's irresistible!*²³

Modifier of ADV: ADVPs that modify adverbs are also mostly intensifiers:

*We have hardly ever seen anything of the kind.*²⁴

*Cats were so well regarded in Ancient Egypt.*²⁵

Intensifying adverbs can also function as modifiers of function words that we do not normally think of as taking modifiers. Here are some examples; these lists are by no means complete:

Modifier of D:

- *The very/ really/ absolutely/ potentially **first**: Fans get really dedicated to the really first thing that they heard.*²⁶
- *The absolutely/ almost/ apparently/ really/ seemingly/ then/ ultra/ very **last**: It was the very last move of the night.*²⁷
- *Just/ only/ even/ exactly/ merely/ precisely/ simply **the**: We want the news to be just the facts.*²⁸

Modifier of Indefinite PRON:

- *Absolutely/ almost/ barely/ basically/ essentially/ even/ just/ literally/ most/ nearly/ particularly/ practically/ really/ virtually **anybody**: Almost anybody could benefit from putting these all-around monsters in play.*²⁹
- *Even/ just/ merely/ only **someone**: He was merely someone I had stumbled upon in the stacks.*³⁰

Modifier of P: e.g. (*just inside/ nearly off/ not quite within/ not since/ right in front of/ well away*):

- *And here's the sarcophagus right in front of me.*³¹
- *There's already a party well in advance of the actual party.*³²
- *Perhaps not since Nathan Hill's *The Nix* (2016) have we seen a debut as hugely ambitious as this one.*³³

Modifier of Subordinating Conjunction (SConj): e.g. (*just/not until; not/ only since; right up until*):

- *Beat just until the flour is moistened.*³⁴
- *Ohio State University used to be high on Nakshatra Mohan's list of potential colleges, but not since Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine signed Senate Bill 1 into law.*³⁵

Just as we did with adverbial PPs, we can sum up the features that define each of the functions of AdvPs:

	In this function is AdvP required or optional?		In this function is AdvP movable?	In this function, where is the AdvP located?
	Required	Optional		
VC	X		No	Usually after the verb
MOD OF V		X	Not usually	Usually immediately before or after the verb, or between Aux and V
SENTMOD		X	Yes	At the beginning or end of the clause, or between the SUBJ and PRED
MOD OF ADJ		X	Not usually	Before the Adj
MOD OF ADV		X	Not usually	Before the Adv
MOD OF D		X	No	Before the D
MOD OF INDEFINITE PRON		X	No	Before the PRON
MOD OF PREP		X	No	Before the PREP
MOD OF SCONJ		X	No	Before the SCONJ

8.2 Identifying Adverbs

There are three tests for identifying ADVs. The most general, which we have already encountered, is:

The adverb question test: If we are testing whether a word or phrase complements a verb or modifies a verb, a clause, an adjective, or an adverb, if the word or phrase answers an adverb question about the verb, clause, adjective, or adverb, then the word or phrase is an adverbial that modifies or complements the verb, clause, adjective, or adverb. Adverb questions include *when*, *where*, *why*, *how*, *how much*, *how often*, *how long*, etc.

Adverbs provide particular kinds of information about qualities (named by adjectives and adverbials) and actions (named by verbs, clauses, and non-finite verb phrases). Those kinds of information include location in space (*where*) or time (*when*); reason (*why*); manner (*how*; *to what degree*); frequency (*how often*); amount (*how much*); and duration (*how long*). If you can bend one of those ADV questions around a word, then the word is an ADV. In the sentence *He hardly ate his dinner*, we know that *hardly* is an AdvP modifying the verb *ate* because it answers the ADV question, “How (in what manner; to what degree) did he eat his dinner?”

Note that AdvPs modifying verbs, adjectives, or adverbs are like adjectives that modify nouns in that they cannot be moved to a different position relative to the word they modify:

*He hardly ate his dinner. *He ate hardly his dinner.*

*This is very good. *This is good very.*

*We have hardly ever seen anything of the kind. *We have ever hardly seen anything of the kind.*

And they cannot be separated from the word they modify: **Hardly he ate his dinner. *He ate his dinner hardly.*

The close connection between the AdvP and the verb, ADJ, or ADV it modifies provides us with a simple test for whether or not an AdvP is functioning as a sentence modifier or clause modifier: the movability test.

The movability test for AdvP:SENTMOD and AdvP:CLAUSEMOD: In a clause, given a word or phrase before the subject, after the predicate, or in the slot between the subject and the verb, if you can move that word or phrase from its position to one or both of the other clause modifier positions without changing the meaning of the clause, then the word or phrase you have moved is a clause-modifying adverbial—which we refer to as a sentence modifier (SENTMOD) or clause modifier (CLAUSEMOD).

In *That happens very frequently*, we know that *very frequently* is an AdvP because it answers the question, “How often does that happen?” We know that it is a modifier because it is optional: if we drop it from the sentence, the sentence is still well formed: *That happens*. And we know that it is a sentence modifier because we can move it, without altering meaning, as we saw above.

We can use the adverb question test to identify AdvPs modifying adjectives—although the question those AdvPs answer will almost always be *how*. In the sentence *We may get a completely unreliable story*,³⁶ the AdvP *completely* answers the question of *how unreliable* or *to what degree unreliable*.

AdvPs can modify adjectives, but AdvPs cannot modify nouns. Sometimes, however, in an NP like *a completely unreliable story*, we may be unsure as to which words are adjectives, which are adverbs, and what is modifying what. To determine which words are adverbs, first find the head noun of the NP—in this case, *story*. Then apply

The pair test for adverbs modifying adjectives: Generally, if a substantive word in an NP *cannot* be paired up with the head noun but can be paired with a nearby adjective, then that word is an adverb modifying an adjective.³⁷

Let’s start at the beginning of the NP *a completely unreliable story*, and pair each modifier with the head noun *story*: the determiner *a* pairs with *story* in *a story*, so *a* is specifying the noun *story*. However, *completely* does not pair with *story*: **completely story*, while it might be poetic, is not a well-formed phrase in any variety of English. The ADJ *unreliable* pairs with *story*: *unreliable story* sounds right, so *unreliable* is an ADJ. We can pair *completely* with *unreliable* to make a well-formed ADJP, *completely unreliable*. Therefore, *completely* is an AdvP modifying the adjective *unreliable*.

There is often great flexibility as to where an adverb may be placed in a clause:

*It requires training that you don’t have.*³⁸

***Typically**, it requires training that you don’t have.*

*It **typically** requires training that you don’t have.*

*It requires training that, **typically**, you don’t have.*

*It requires training that you, **typically**, don’t have.*

*It requires training that you don’t **typically** have.*

*It requires training that you don’t have, **typically**.*

So what? In 11.3 we will discuss in more detail how the positioning of an AdvP in a clause shifts its function and its “scope of reference”: which words or phrases the AdvP connects or relates to most closely.

Non-WME adverbs: There are a number of non-WME adverbs that appear in (and often help to mark) particular vernacular varieties of American English.

Liketa: Common in Appalachian English, the non-WME Adv *liketa* is used to indicate that some event was narrowly avoided or averted. It is often used in a figurative “rather than literal sense; for example, in a sentence such as *It was so cold, I liketa froze to death*, the speaker may never have been in any real danger of freezing, but the use of *liketa* underscores the intensity of the condition.”³⁹

A number of non-WME intensifying adverbs are common in some Southern vernaculars. The WME Adv *right*, as in *He lives right around the corner*, “is currently limited to contexts involving location or time.”

However, in Southern-based vernaculars, *right* may be used to intensify the degree of other types of attributes, as in *She is right nice*. Other adverbs, such as *plumb*, serve to indicate intensity to the point of totality, as in *The students fell plumb asleep*. In some parts of the South, *slam* is used to indicate “totality” rather than *plumb*, as in *The students fell slam asleep*; *clean* may be used in the same way in other areas, including some Northern dialects (e.g. *The hole went clean through the wall*). The use of *big* in *big old dog*, *little* in *little old dog*, and *right* in *It hurts right much* also function as intensifiers in these varieties.⁴⁰

Note also the New England regional use of *wicked* as an intensifier, as in *That would be wicked cool*,⁴¹ and *My boy’s wicked smart*.⁴²

In BL, steady is often used as an intensifier after habitual *be* but before a present participle⁴³ “to refer to an intense, ongoing activity,” as in *They be steady messing with you*.⁴⁴ This use of *steady* may also imply that action is occurring right now.⁴⁵

And although it looks like a negation, **in BL we find “ain’t but and don’t but for ‘only,’** as in ‘He ain’t but fourteen years old’ for [WME] ‘He’s only fourteen years old’ or ‘They didn’t take but three dollars’ for ‘They only took three dollars.’”⁴⁶

The word fucking is a non-WME adverbial intensifier, common in American vernaculars. It is used with adjectives (*This is just fucking crazy*)⁴⁷ and verbs (*You can say whatever you fucking like*)⁴⁸ as well as with adverbs (*You have never seen people drive so fucking slowly*).⁴⁹ Of course, *fuck* (and its inflected forms *fucking*, *fucked*, and *fucker*) can be used in various contexts as a noun, adjective, verb, and interjection. Unusually for English morphology, *fucking* can also be used as an infix (e.g. *abso-fucking-lutely*).⁵⁰

EFL-related adverb use: Different languages have different rules about adverb placement, and speakers often carry over the rules from their L1 into English. For example, the English adverb *always* cannot appear in sentence-initial

position, but its Spanish equivalent *siempre* can, leading Spanish speakers to produce sentences like, **Always the teachers talk in English*. French permits such adverbs of frequency to appear between a verb and its NP:DO, while English does not, leading French speakers to produce sentences like **John watches often television*, instead of *John often watches television*; the latter sentence order would be ungrammatical in French: **Jean souvent regarde la television*.⁵¹

8.3 Negation

Negation is a complex topic in English grammar. English has a great variety of ways to express negative meaning, including determiners (e.g. *neither, no, none of, not*); indefinite pronouns (e.g. *no one, nobody, none, nothing*); conjunctions (*neither . . . nor, except when*); adverbs (*hardly, never, not, rarely, seldom*); verbs (e.g. *avoid, deny, refuse, exclude, contradict, prohibit, bar*); prepositions (e.g. *without, against, but for, except*); and prefixes (e.g. *de-, dis-, in-, mis-, non-, un-*). The most common negator is the adverb *not* (sometimes contracted to *n't*), which is most often used to negate verbs.

In WME varieties, verb negation occurs in a limited number of constructions.

1. In a verb comprising only an MV, we must add an AUX *do*; the negative marker *not* is then attached to the AUX *do*, and the MV takes its base form:

Present tense:

Affirmative: *I go to the store.*

Negative: *I do not/don't go to the store.*

Past tense:

Affirmative: *I went to the store.*

Negative: *I did not/didn't go to the store.*

We say that the negative marker *not* “is attached” to the AUX because, when we contract *not*, it joins the preceding AUX.

2. However, if the MV is copular *be* alone, the negative marker *not* is attached directly to the *be* form:

Present tense:

Affirmative: *She is at the store.*

Negative: *She is not/isn't at the store.*

Past tense:

Affirmative: *She was at the store.*

Negative: *She was not/wasn't at the store.*

3. In a multi-word complete verb, if the first AUX is a modal, the perfect aspect AUX *have*, the progressive aspect AUX *be*, or the passive voice AUX *be*, the negative marker *not* is attached directly to the first AUX in the verb:⁵²

Modal AUX: *She can/cannot/can't go to the store.*

Perfect AUX *have*: *She has/has not/hasn't gone to the store.*

Progressive AUX *be*: *She is/is not/isn't going to the store.*

Passive AUX *be*: *The ball was/was not/wasn't kicked by Franz.*

4. In a multi-word complete verb, if the first word in the verb is a semi-modal or an imperfect aspectual verb, then we must add an AUX *do* at the beginning of the complete verb, attach the negative marker *not* to the AUX *do*, and change the following verb to its base form:

Semi-modal:

Affirmative: *I have to go to the store.*

Negative: *I do not have to/don't have to go to the store.*

Imperfect aspectual verb:

Affirmative: *I started going to the store.*

Negative: *I did not start/didn't start going to the store.*

We should note that if *have* is the MV without an AUX, there are some fixed expressions in which *n't* can attach to it, as in

*She hasn't a clue.*⁵³

*The girl hasn't a penny to her name.*⁵⁴

*I haven't a worry in the world.*⁵⁵

Such expressions are linked to a usage that lingers in some British English varieties, where, like *be* as an MV, *have* as an MV can take the attached *n't*.

In the system of verb negation in English, there is a problem with negation of present-tense *be* in the first-person singular, as it doesn't follow the rest of the paradigm:

		Affirmative	Negative
SG	First person	I am	I am not/I'm not/?I amn't ?I ain't
	Second person	you are	you are not/you're not/you aren't
	Third person	he, she, it is	he, she, it is not/he's, she's, it's not/ he, she, it isn't
PL	First person	we are	we are not/we're not/we aren't
	Second person	you are	you are not/you're not/you aren't
	Third person	they are	they are not/they're not/they aren't

WME varieties have no way to contract *am not* so that the *n't* attaches to *am*. This gap leads us to the most prominent form of non-WME negation: the use of *ain't*.

Ain't does not originate in American English; rather, it entered the language along with other still-common contractions in seventeenth-century British English. During the twentieth century, the use of contractions in formal writing was generally disapproved of by teachers and other language authorities. But while the number of language authorities who still disapprove of the use of other contractions has declined, those authorities never attacked the use of words like *can't* and *don't* with the bitter revulsion they still heap on the merest whiff of *ain't*. And yet, *ain't* appears at some point in the usage of most speakers of American English, even if only when safely cradled in real or imagined quotation marks, as when a speaker of otherwise formal WME says jauntily, “You *ain't* seen nothing yet!”⁵⁶

Although it is typically regarded as a “bad English” contraction of *am not*, in actual usage, *ain't* is used not only to mean *am not* but also where WME would use other forms of:

be + *not*—including *aren't* and *isn't*;

have + *not*—including *haven't* and *hasn't*; and

do + *not*—including both the present-tense *don't* and *doesn't*, and the past-tense *didn't*.

All of these uses of *ain't* are found in most non-WME varieties of American English, with the exception of the use of *ain't* in place of the WME *didn't*, which has only been observed in BL.⁵⁷

Here are some examples of each use of *ain't*, with WME versions:

Ain't* for Forms of *be* + *not

*I ain't trying to hide nothing now.*⁵⁸ [c.f. *I am not/I'm not*]

*The hell you say! You ain't a day over forty.*⁵⁹ [c.f. *you are not/you're not/you aren't*]

*Julia Roberts, she ain't a backup date either.*⁶⁰ [c.f. *she is not/she's not/she isn't*]

Ain't* for Forms of *have* + *not

*I ain't never seen nothing like that in my life.*⁶¹ [c.f. *I have not/I haven't*]

*You ain't heard nothing yet!*⁶² [c.f. *you have not/you haven't*]

*He ain't had nothing to eat.*⁶³ [c.f. *he has not/he hasn't*]

Ain't* for Forms of *do* + *not

He thinks I ain't got no more aces. [c.f. *I don't*]⁶⁴

I ain't go to school yesterday. [c.f. *I did not/I didn't*]

He ain't tell him he was sorry. [c.f. *he did not/he didn't*]⁶⁵

Interestingly, the non-WME aspectual verb, habitual *be*, commonly found in BL, does not take *ain't* in the negative—nor, for that matter, in the interrogative form. Rather, with habitual *be*, BL uses *do* and *don't*. The negative of *John be walkin'* (which means that *John habitually or usually walks*) is *John don't be walkin'*. **John ain't be walkin'* is simply ungrammatical. The interrogative version of the same sentence would be *Do John be walkin'?* “This is also true of so-called tag questions, in which the speaker assumes a positive response, as in *John be listenin'*, *don't he?* or a negative response, as in *John don't be listenin'*, *do he?*”⁶⁶

So what? Even though a form is non-WME, it is still rule-governed!

Multiple negation or negative concord: Throughout the first several hundred years of the life of the English language, “double negatives” or multiple negation, more formally called “negative concord” (where “concord” means “agreement”), was a common device in all English varieties, as it still is in many languages. Indeed, we find it in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* in his description of the Friar: *Ther nas no man nowher so vertuous*.⁶⁷ And in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*, Celia says, *I pray you, bear with me; I cannot go no further*.⁶⁸ In languages and varieties of English that use negative concord, typically, everything that can be negated in a sentence must be, as in, “*Don't nobody want no raw chicken*.”⁶⁹ Each major constituent of the sentence is negated: the NP:SUBJ, *nobody*; the verb, *don't want*; and the NP:DO, *no raw chicken*. Negative concord sentences with two negations are quite common (hence the use of the phrase “double negative” to describe this construction). Sentences with three or more negations are less common, but they occur and are rule-governed, according to the conventions of the variety of English.

In the eighteenth century, prescriptive grammarians declared that negative concord was improper and illogical: after all, in math, if we multiply two negative numbers, we get a positive number. By this reasoning, in a double negative, one negative term negates the other, creating an affirmative. In actual usage, this logic fails: in the many vernacular varieties of English where negative concord is used, the negatives have an additive function, creating greater emphasis on the negation.

Negative concord appears in four different patterns in non-WME varieties of American English.⁷⁰ The first and most common form of negative concord, which appears in nearly all American vernacular varieties, marks the negative on an AUX verb and on one or more indefinite pronouns or determiners after the verb, as in:

I wasn't doing nothing.⁷¹ [c.f. *I was doing nothing*, or *I wasn't doing anything*.)
I didn't say nothing to no police.⁷² (c.f. *I said nothing to any police*, or *I didn't say anything to any police*, or *To no police did I say anything*.)

Second, in some Northern vernaculars and in most Southern vernaculars, we find a negative indefinite PRON in the subject position, and the negative marked on the AUX verb, as in:

*Nobody didn't come up with nothing.*⁷³ (c.f. *nobody came up with anything*, or *somebody didn't come up with something*.)

*Nothing can't change that.*⁷⁴ (c.f. *Nothing can change that* or *Everything can't change that*.)

Third, in most Southern vernaculars, we also find the negative AUX verb and the indefinite subject inverted:

*Didn't nobody know who I was.*⁷⁵ (c.f. *Nobody knew who I was*, or *Everybody didn't know who I was*.)

*Can't nothing be the same after a day like today.*⁷⁶ (c.f. *Nothing can be the same*, or *Everything can't be the same*.)

In BL these negative AUX-inversion constructions can also occur in a dependent clause, specifically a noun clause, as in:⁷⁷

*She didn't say [*that didn't nobody want to ride the bus*]_[NOUN CLAUSE] (c.f. *that nobody wanted to ride the bus*, or *that everybody didn't want to ride the bus*.)*

Fourth and finally, in some Southern and BL varieties, we find multiple negations marked in different clauses within the same sentence, as in:

There wasn't much that I couldn't do. (c.f. *There was little that I couldn't do* or *I could do most things*.)

I wasn't sure that nothing wasn't going to come up. [c.f. *I wasn't sure that something wasn't going to come up* or *I thought something might come up*.]⁷⁸

While double negation has been a feature of most English vernacular varieties, and even of the literary language historically, sentences with three and four negatives have been exclusively a feature of BL.⁷⁹ However, in this last category of negation, where multiple terms are negated in more than one clause within the same sentence, an interesting condition holds: if a sentence consists of only one clause, negating all negatable terms creates a negative meaning, but if a sentence contains two or more clauses, negating all negatable terms creates a positive meaning, while having all negatives with one positive term indicates negative meaning:

*It ain't nobody [*I can trust*]_[ADJECTIVE CLAUSE] (c.f. *I can trust no one*.)*

*It ain't nobody [*I can't trust*]_[ADJECTIVE CLAUSE] (c.f. *I can trust everyone*.)*

Wasn't no girls [could go with us]_[ADJECTIVE CLAUSE] (c.f. *None of the girls could go with us.*)

Wasn't no girls [couldn't go with us]_[ADJECTIVE CLAUSE] (c.f. *All the girls could go with us.*)

Ain't none of these dudes [can beat me]_[ADJECTIVE CLAUSE] (c.f. *None of these dudes can beat me.*)

Ain't none of these dudes [can't beat me]_[ADJECTIVE CLAUSE] (c.f. *All of these dudes can beat me.*)⁸⁰

In BL, multiple negation reflects on an event's location in time. The double negative, *Ain't got none*, implies that the speaker doesn't have any *now*. However, the triple negative, *Ain't never got none*, can be understood as meaning that the speaker “hardly *ever* has any of whatever the desired ‘thing’ is,” neither in the past nor the present nor the future. And in the quadruple negative, *Ain't never had none neither*, the speaker is saying that they have “never had (and quite probably never will have) any of the desired ‘thing.’”⁸¹

So what? The “logic” of negative concord is clearly not simply mathematical. Rather, multiple negations have significant implications for the speaker's state and attitude.⁸²

EFL-related use of double negatives: Spanish, Portuguese, and other Romance languages “allow double negative constructions”; speakers of those languages may therefore carry that pattern over into English, producing sentences like *He doesn't know nothing about the activities of his wife*.⁸³

Leveling to *were* with negative past tense *be*: The regular past tense of verbs in English takes a single form for all persons and numbers—except for the verb *be*, which has two past-tense forms: *was* and *were*. In a move that regularizes the irregularity of *be*, some varieties of American English “level” the past-tense form of *be* so that it is *were* for all persons and numbers—but only when the verb is negated:

It weren't me that was there last night.

*She weren't at the creek.*⁸⁴

“The leveling of past *be* to *weren't* appears to be regionally restricted to some coastal dialect areas of the Southeast such as the Eastern Shore of Virginia and Maryland, and the Outer Banks of North Carolina.”⁸⁵ This usage is sometimes presented in fictional representations of Southern speech as *warn't*:

*I never said nothing, because I warn't expecting nothing different.*⁸⁶

*Only to be real honest, we warn't really like the Three Musketeers; it was more like three fellas that two of 'em warn't talking with one of 'em any more 'n they could help.*⁸⁷

Agreement with the form *don't*: A final irregularity in the negation of verbs in American English has to do with the leveling of the present-tense form of *do* when it is negated. WME would have the third-person singular as *doesn't*, but one will often hear

*She don't like the scarves I've been wearing on my head.*⁸⁸

*Man, it don't matter what I eat, I can't gain weight.*⁸⁹

“Virtually all vernacular varieties show this pattern, but in different degrees.”⁹⁰

Other EFL patterns of negation: English language learners may exhibit forms of non-WME negation, as the speaker carries grammatical patterns from their native language into English. For example, in Spanish, the main verb of a sentence is negated by placing the negative word *no* in front of the verb. This pattern leads native Spanish speakers to say

**He no like the man.*

**Finally, the society's customs and beliefs not always pass from one age group to another.*⁹¹

In negating verbs in embedded clauses, or in participle and infinitive phrases, native Spanish speakers commonly “use *don't* when *not* is required,” as in *Nevertheless, the practice of sports along the campus installations can help foreign students to don't become segregate.*⁹² However, such forms do not seem to persist in “the vernacular English variety of such speakers once they have completed their transition to English.” A possible exception is that, in some Hispanic English varieties, *no* is used as a tag question, as in *They're going to the store, no?*⁹³ However, this use of *no* is not a full negative: its WME version would be something like, *They're going to the store, aren't they?* The question has the force of undercutting the negation.

EFL-related use of negative adverbs of frequency: When a negative polarity adverb (e.g. *never, seldom, rarely, hardly*) begins a sentence in English, the NP:SUBJ and the AUX must be inverted; if the verb does not include an AUX, then a form of *do* must be added and inverted with the subject:

She_[NP:SUBJ] had_[AUX] never_[ADV] slept_[V] so deeply.
*Never_[ADV] had_[AUX] she_[NP:SUBJ] slept_[V] so deeply.*⁹⁴

I_[NP:SUBJ] seldom_[ADV] have_[V] reason to feel like a soldier.
*Seldom_[ADV] do_[AUX] I_[NP:SUBJ] have_[V] reason to feel like a soldier.*⁹⁵

In Romance languages, such as Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian, when a sentence begins with the equivalent negative polarity adverb, there is no inversion. Speakers of these Romance languages thus produce sentences like **Rarely Jorge forgets to do his homework*, rather than the WME *Rarely does Jorge forget to do his homework*.⁹⁶

8.4 Key Points

- Adverbs are a mixed category of both content words (e.g. *slowly, here, now*) and common function words (e.g. *very, just, not*).
- Like adjectives, adverbs may be gradable (e.g. *happily, more happily, most happily*) or non-gradable (e.g. *too; so; very*).
- An adverb functions as the head of an adverb phrase (AdvP). An AdvP may itself include an adverb phrase as a pre-modifier and/or post-modifying PP:ADVERBIAL.
- AdvPs tell *when, where, why, how, how much, how often, how long*, and other versions of those sorts of information.
- According to traditional grammar, an AdvP may modify a verb, adjective, or another adverb. AdvPs also modify whole sentences, dependent clauses, infinitive phrases, and participle phrases, as well as determiners, prepositions, and subordinating conjunctions; and AdvPs can function as several different types of verb complement.
- AdvPs functioning as sentence or clause modifiers are movable to the beginning or end of the clause and often to the slot between the SUBJ and PRED.
- The most common forms of negation involve placing the ADV *not*, or its contracted forms, with a V. Some of the most highly marked features of non-WME varieties involve negation, negative concord, and most notably the non-WME but common *ain't*.

8.5 Exercises: Adverb Phrases

Find the Adverb Phrases 1: Made-up sentences

There are 28 adverb phrases in the following paragraphs. List all of them in order and, for each one, identify its function in its sentence. A dictionary may prove helpful.

Example: *Frequently, I read Jim's blogposts.*
frequently AdvP:SENTMOD

- (A) Today my brother Jim and I shopped for dictionaries. (B) The large ones were much too expensive for us. (C) Also, we knew that unabridged dictionaries are nearly always intended for libraries. (D) They are not used easily at home for conveniently quick reference.

- (E) Suddenly, Jim had a brainstorm. (F) “Let’s buy two very different dictionaries and use them simultaneously. (G) That way, we can compare rather different styles of definition, and the differences will automatically give us a better understanding of the meanings of the words.”
- (H) At the book store the owner, Mr. Baker, welcomed us cheerfully. (I) We told him we wanted two distinctly different abridged dictionaries. (J) We mentioned that our teachers often tell us to look words up, but that a single definition rarely helps us. (K) “I know exactly what you need,” Mr. Baker replied. (L) “The *American Heritage Dictionary* and the *Oxford American Dictionary* take different approaches to language. (M) If you have both, you will readily learn how to use words more precisely.”
- (N) At home we carefully examined the dictionaries, comparing the definitions of individual words. (O) Then we discussed what we had found. (P) Soon, we began to notice distinct differences between the two books’ definitions. (Q) To our surprise, we discovered that many definitions seemed deliberately crafted to capture different senses of words. (R) This would prove one of the most valuable lessons we would ever learn!

Find the Adverb Phrases 2: Real sentences

For each of the following passages, list all of the adverb phrases in order and, for each one, identify its function in its sentence.

- (A) The river was way down behind the house and there warnt nothing in front but a road, and not much of a road at that, only some weeds with ruts on either side, and he had sense enough to know that no boat would be coming down that way; so he was right puzzled about it all right.⁹⁷
- (B) “I aint getting smart, and why does it worry you if I dont go on KP because they gonna get the dishes washed if I aint there just like they are if I am, and it dont make any difference to me whether they do or not, as far as that goes. (C) And if they want to send me on back home, that’s all right with me too. I never wanted no trouble about it.”⁹⁸
- (D) And he kind of grinned around at the others again, settling down some more, and then he chuckled and said, “He thought if you went on sick call, you had to go on KP anyhow.” (E) Then he laughed some and said, “You ever heard anything like that before?” and laughed some more like it was real funny and like he hadnt heered nothing more comical in his life, but none of the others did, they only looked at him; and then he chuckled some more and wiped the tears out of his eyes and stopped and said right quick, “Well, you better be sure to get your name on the sick book in the morning then, understand?”⁹⁹
- (F) Then she told me all about the bad place, and I said I wished I was there. (G) She got mad then, but I didn’t mean no harm. (H) All I wanted was to go somewheres; all I wanted was a change, I warn’t particular.¹⁰⁰



Figure 8.1

Notes

- 1 Note that the phrases *the least* and *the most* not only can be adverbs, as in the ADjP *the least/most impressive*, but can also function as a DP (*the least/most noise*) and even an indefinite PRONP (*We each want to get the most and give the least*; *Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)*. Accessed 14 Jul 2025. Scott Peterson. "Iran Nuclear Talks a 'Complete Failure.'" *Christian Science Monitor*. 25 May 2012).

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Conjunctions (CONJ)

Conjunctions are a category of function words and an extremely stable closed class; indeed, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *and* and *but* are among the very oldest words in the language; *or*, though a relative latecomer, has been in the language for nearly 800 years. In traditional grammar, conjunctions are divided into two classes: coordinating conjunctions (CCONJ) and subordinating conjunctions (SCONJ). CCONJs are used to join together and separate or mark the boundaries of words, phrases, and clauses **that have the same function within a phrase or clause**. CCONJs include *for*, *and*, *or*, *but*, *nor*, *yet*, *so*—easily remembered by the acronym *fanboys*.¹ CCONJs also include the paired correlative conjunctions (CORRELCONJ) *either . . . or*, *neither . . . nor*, *not only . . . but also*, *both . . . and*, *just as . . . so*, and *whether . . . or*. Although grammar books don't typically treat them as such, several punctuation marks also often function as CCONJs, including commas, colons, semicolons, parentheses, dashes, hyphens, and virgules (slashes).

SCONJs are used to join an adverb clause (ADVCL or “subordinate clause”) to its container clause. The list of SCONJs is significantly longer than the list of CCONJs, and we will examine them in detail with the discussion of adverb clauses in 10.2.3.1. However, among the most common SCONJs are words like *after*, *although*, *as*, *because*, *since*, *though*, *unless*, *until*, *when*, *whenever*, *where*, *wherever*, and *while*. Note that some of these words can also be prepositions (*after*, *as*, *since*, *though*, *until*). The difference between prepositions and SCONJs is that, to form a complete phrase, the preposition needs no more than a following NP or other nominal as a complement (making a PP), while an SCONJ must be followed by a complete independent clause (forming an adverb clause—ADVCL):

PP = P + [NP]: *Your mom has been bragging about you since [the game].*²
AdvCL = SCONJ + [CLAUSE]: *Since [the game was a sellout], Holliday got his friend a media credential.*³

9.1 Coordinating Conjunctions

CCONJS most frequently join together sentence constituents that have the same form as well as the same function. CCONJS can also join complete clauses, including sentences.

*AI_[NP:SUBJ] **and** algorithms_[NP:SUBJ] aid automation_[NP:DO] **and** autonomy_[NP:DO]*⁴
*I was born in China_[SENT] **but** I don't speak Mandarin_[SENT]*⁵
*Fires don't pick red_[ADJP:MOD OF "states"] **or** blue_[ADJP:MOD OF "states"] states*⁶
*Think about what your technology needs will look like in one_[DETP:SPEC OF "YEARS"] two_[DETP:SPEC OF "years"] **or** even five_[DETP:SPEC OF "years"] years*⁷

Also, constituents of different forms can be joined by a CCONJ so long as those constituents are performing the same function in the sentence:

*In Ica I think it's either pizza_[NP:SC] **or** eating at your hotel_[PART:NOMINAL:SC]*⁸
*He still felt at home_[PP:ADJECTIVAL:SC] **and** happy to be there_[ADJP:SC]*⁹

Finally, to counter a perennial bugaboo, it is perfectly fine to start a sentence with a CCONJ:

*I did not count any dialogue. And, elliptical verb phrases were not considered fragments*¹⁰
*Some might think Felz took over the city manager position at the worst possible time. But, in truth, it was the best possible time*¹¹

“This technique, which adds a touch of informality, can lighten up a passage that feels too somber. In serious contexts, use it no more than once or twice a page, especially with *and*.”¹²

9.2 Conjoining Punctuation

Punctuation, of course, only pertains to writing: there are no commas in our spoken language. However, punctuation is an attempt, in written language, to reproduce two features of spoken language. First, punctuation represents the pauses we take as we speak, whether to breathe, to gather our thoughts, or for emphasis. Second, punctuation serves to guide the reader in how to relate both sentence constituents and complete sentences to each other. In conversation, our audience can hear the shifting tone of our voice and see our facial expressions, body posture, and gestures, all of which serve to emphasize and clarify meaning.

But writing is disembodied, and punctuation marks (and more recently, emoji) are used in our everyday writing, texting, and other digital communications to clarify meaning by putting some degree of embodiment into our writing (overwhelmingly, the most commonly used emoji are faces and hands).¹³

But whether in the formal context of writing for school or work, or the informal contexts of texting with friends, the conventions of punctuation, even conjoining punctuation, are socially constructed and enforced. And although often presented by teachers and style guides as subject to hard, eternal rules, the uses of punctuation, and conjoining punctuation in particular, are actually diverse, fluid, intuitive, and subject to changes in fashion.¹⁴

Sometimes we conjoin more than two constituents with CCONJS or CORREL-CONJS alone, but more often we use commas (as we just saw with *Think about what your technology needs will look like in one, two, or even five years*). And for long lists of constituents, each of which may have a different constituent structure, we may use semicolons. We also often use semicolons or colons to conjoin large clause elements or entire clauses; we can use hyphens, dashes, parentheses, and virgules for similar conjoining roles. The following discussion of the uses of conjoining punctuation is adapted from several sources, including

- *Merriam-Webster's Guide to Punctuation and Style* (hereafter *MWG*).¹⁵
- Warriner's *English Grammar and Composition*.¹⁶
- The article on "Punctuation" in Lovinger's *The Penguin Dictionary of American Usage and Style*.¹⁷
- "Appendix 1: Punctuation" in Williams and Bizup's *Style*.¹⁸

All are solid, conservative sources on the topic, with a blend of rigid clarity and mushy directives that characterize all the style-guide treatments of punctuation I've ever seen. My discussion combines matters of grammar with matters of conventional style and offers some guidance for formal usage of conjoining punctuation. Along the way, I attempt to pull back some curtains and debunk some myths. Commas, the most commonly used conjoining punctuation mark, will form the base of our discussion, with side trips to conjoining functions of other punctuation marks.

9.2.1 Commas

Like conjunctions, commas and other conjoining punctuation both conjoin and separate: they typically mark the end of one constituent and the beginning of another while serving as the glue between them. Commas "set off attributions, definitions, explanations, elaborations, and identifications."¹⁹ That is, commas mark the barrier between, but connect together, the quote or other borrowed material and its author (attributions), and explanatory asides such as non-essential

adjectival modifiers, parenthetical utterances, and lists of examples (definitions, explanations, elaborations, and identifications). Commas are also used “to separate three or more items in a series.”²⁰

A brief commentary on the “Oxford” or serial comma: Speaking of “three items in a series,” according to the Oxford University Press style manual,²¹ when you have a series of three or more constituents that function in the same way in a sentence, they should be punctuated as follows: *They already have wreaked havoc on Pennsylvania’s grapevines, apples, peaches, and hops.*²² However, in many cases, the final comma is not required to avoid ambiguity. One might just as well have written the sentence without the third comma, without changing meaning or sacrificing clarity: *They already have wreaked havoc on Pennsylvania’s grapevines, apples, peaches and hops.* However, in some cases, without the final serial comma—often now referred to as “the Oxford comma”—ambiguity will arise, or meaning will be distinctly different. In the following two sentences, crucial meaning hinges on the second comma:

We invited the strippers, Stalin, and JFK to the party.

*We invited the strippers, Stalin and JFK, to the party.*²³

At a first reading, the second comma is required to make clear that we have three items: the strippers; Stalin; and JFK. Without the comma, we have two “strippers,” whose names, “Stalin and JFK,” are given in an appositive. However, if we make *strippers* singular, and the sentence reads, *We invited the stripper, Stalin, and JFK to the party*, it is then possible that *Stalin* is an appositive, and ‘we invited a stripper named Stalin to the party, and we invited JFK.’ So even with the Oxford comma, if *stripper* is singular, the sentence is ambiguous, referring to two or three individuals. Some major style manuals say to never use the Oxford comma; some say you should always use it.²⁴ But there is clearly no rule that works for all contexts, other than being alert for potential ambiguity and punctuating to enhance clarity for your audience.

“If all items in a series are joined by *and* or *or/nor*, do not use commas to separate them,”²⁵ since the conjunctions are fulfilling that function and the punctuation would be redundant. The exception is sentences in a series: short sentences may be conjoined (or separated) with a comma alone²⁶ (e.g. *The stage was set, the guests were seated*).²⁷ Also, to conjoin two short sentences, it is safe to use a CCONJ without a preceding comma “if you introduce them with a modifier that applies to both of them”:²⁸

*After the financial crisis, Mercedes began investing in electric vehicle development and Schiebe changed jobs again.*²⁹

“Some writers signal a close link between short grammatical sentences with a CCONJ alone, omitting the comma. But a warning: though writers of the best

prose make this choice, some teachers consider it an error.³⁰ Longer sentences should be conjoined with a semicolon or with a comma followed by a CCONJ,³¹ so not this:

**Results are properly objects of celebration and regret_[SENT], only actions should be objects of moral praise and blame_[SENT].*

But this:

*Results are properly objects of celebration and regret; only actions should be objects of moral praise and blame.*³²

Or this:

*Results are properly objects of celebration and regret, **but** only actions should be objects of moral praise and blame.*

However, if the second sentence starts with *but*, you should “use a period + *But* if what follows is important and you intend to go on discussing it,” and “use a comma + *but* if what follows only qualifies what preceded.”³³

Using the comma alone to conjoin the two longer sentences is generally regarded as a stylistic error called a “comma splice” or “comma fault.”³⁴ However, if there are other constituents in the two sentences to indicate that they are in parallel, it is possible to conjoin them with:

- **Just a comma:**³⁵ *One day you're a nurse, the next you're a patient.*³⁶
- **A semicolon:** *One day you're a working stiff; the next day, you're on the putting green.*³⁷
- **A comma and a CCONJ:** *One day you're a concert promoter, **and** the next day, there are no concerts.*³⁸
- **Just a CCONJ:** *One day you're a drummer-slash-trash-collector **and** the next you're drinking wine with Iggy Pop.*³⁹
- **A period, as two separate sentences:** *One day you're a peacock. The next day you're a feather duster.*⁴⁰

In these sentences, the idiomatic frame of *One day . . . the next* works as a correlative (like a CORRELCONJ), indicating to the reader that a second sentence or constituent will follow with a closely related meaning, and allowing the writer flexibility in the punctuation they choose to put between the two correlated sets of words. We have many such correlative structures in English, where the first word or phrase in the correlative leads the audience to expect the second; some examples are *first . . . second*; *if . . . then*; *from . . . to*; *no sooner . . . than*; *rather . . . than*; *such . . . that*; *hardly . . . when*; *the more . . . the more*; *as much/many . . . as*:

*From smoothies and Spam musubi to chili and chow mein, this kid-tested cookbook offers more than a hundred recipes.*⁴¹

*No sooner did Party City's bankruptcy filing go through than fellow specialty retailer Joann announced its second Chapter 11.*⁴²

*The more he learned, the more he was intrigued.*⁴³

Some sources include these correlative constructions in their lists of correlative conjunctions; I choose to limit the term “correlative conjunction” to referring to those correlative pairs that contain at least one coordinating conjunction, and to parse these latter correlatives as prepositions (see Chapter 3), subordinating conjunctions (see 10.2.3.1), and conjunctive adverbials (see 11.3.5). As with the question of whether to use the Oxford comma, here too, the choice of punctuation depends on questions of clarity, style, and effect on the audience.

9.2.2 An Aside about Semicolons

When you conjoin two sentences with a semicolon, the semicolon is only used without a CCONJ,⁴⁴ as in, *He hangs up and doesn't explain who was calling; he doesn't have to.*⁴⁵ By that “rule,” one should not, in theory, punctuate a sentence like this: *One vital guide to a court's view of material facts is its stated rules of law; but it is also true that its rule of law can best be understood in terms of the facts before it.*⁴⁶ However, “a semicolon often replaces a comma between two clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction if the sentence might otherwise be confusing”⁴⁷—a mushy “rule” that is clarified a bit by noting that “readers can be grateful for a semicolon if the two grammatical sentences are long and have their own internal commas,”⁴⁸ as in

*Emotional trauma, provided by irrefutable evidence contrary to a belief system, seems to erode one's certainty in adhering to a false construct; but results are uneven and take long periods of time to penetrate society.*⁴⁹

“Then again, readers would probably prefer a period even more.”⁵⁰ Afterall, a period conjoins and separates two sets of words that the writer wishes the reader to understand as sentences—whether or not the words between an initial capital letter and a period comprise a grammatical sentence. As better guidance, “use a semicolon instead of a period [between two sentences] only when the first sentence has fewer than fifteen or so words and the content of the second sentence is closely linked to the first,” as in

*In 1967 Congress passed civil rights laws that remedied problems of registration and voting; those laws had political consequences throughout the South.*⁵¹

In that pair of sentences, the NP *those laws* in the second sentence, which refers back to the entire NP:DO in the first sentence (*civil rights . . . voting*), provides that sort of “close link.”

With regard to whether to follow a semicolon with a CCONJ, a search in the *Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)* finds 1.1 million examples of the semicolon without a following CCONJ, but an additional 10.6 thousand examples of the semicolon with a following CCONJ, with both forms appearing in the same range of academic and popular periodicals and published fiction. However, the use of the semicolon with a following CCONJ has declined steadily since 1990. The semicolon without a following CCONJ remains the clearly preferred construction, but it may well be that particular style guides will differ, and fashions in punctuation change.

A semicolon (or period, but not a comma) should be used to conjoin clauses when the second clause begins with a conjunctive adverb such as *however*, *therefore*, or *consequently*⁵² (for more on conjunctive adverbs see 11.3.5); in all cases, a comma should follow the conjunctive adverb, so not this:

**The relative success of both processes cannot be denied, however, they failed to reach their ultimate goal of a long-term cease-fire.*

But either of the following is fine:

*The relative success of both processes cannot be denied; however, they failed to reach their ultimate goal of a long-term cease-fire.*⁵³

The relative success of both processes cannot be denied. However, they failed to reach their ultimate goal of a long-term cease-fire.

When conjoining two clauses, if there are commas within the clauses, then “a semicolon (rather than a comma) may be needed to separate [or conjoin] the independent clauses,” functioning as a sort of higher-order comma:⁵⁴

*Speedo might recall (dimly) that he had hidden a bone somewhere, five minutes ago; beyond that, his past was blank.*⁵⁵

Similarly, semicolons should be used between items in a series when those items already contain commas.⁵⁶ Here is an actual, published unclear example followed by a clarifying correction:

**John Major greeted me, my executive assistant, Colonel Dick Chilcoat, the British secretary of state for defense, Tom King, and my counterpart, British chief of defense staff, Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir David Craig, in a sitting room at 10 Downing Street.*⁵⁷

*John Major greeted me₁; my executive assistant, Colonel Dick Chilcoat₂; the British secretary of state for defense, Tom King₃; and my counterpart, the British chief of defense staff, Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir David Craig, in a sitting room at 10 Downing Street.*⁵⁸

A semicolon can be used in place of a period, or the combination of a comma and CCONJ, to conjoin two or more sentences,⁵⁹ as in *He came; he saw; he conquered*, which might also be written in any of the following ways:

He came, he saw, and he conquered.

He came and he saw and he conquered.

He came. He saw. He conquered.

Some authorities⁶⁰ would also accept *He came, he saw, he conquered*,⁶¹ “but only if the sentences are short and have no internal punctuation.”⁶² But others,⁶³ while they condone conjoining two short sentences with a comma alone, prefer other options for three or more short sentences. Similarly, the sentence *Money is not the root of all evil; the love of money is*,⁶⁴ could be written: *Money is not the root of all evil but the love of money is*, or with a comma before the word *but*. They conclude that, “the semicolon performs the linking function of a conjunction like *and* or *but*.”⁶⁵

Now, back to commas: As another comma rule, “Use commas to separate two or more adjectives preceding a noun.”⁶⁶ Use this test: if you can put the word *and* between each ADJP before a noun, then you should put a comma there.⁶⁷ By this rule, the commas are appropriately placed in the following sentence: *There were several large, blue, very furry monsters on Sesame Street*. But as we saw back in 4.1.1, regardless of the commas, the relationship among the ADJPs in this sentence could just as well be parsed in terms of a series of nested N-BAR (N') constructions, with each ADJP modifying all of the words in the NP that follow it. So, “A comma is not used between two adjectives when the first modifies the combination of the second plus the noun it modifies.”⁶⁸ That claim certainly works for a sentence like *We're one big happy family*,⁶⁹ where we could argue that we don't need a comma between *big* and *happy* because *happy* is an ADJP:MOD OF “family,” and *big* is an ADJP:MOD OF N' “happy family” (*one* is a DP:SPEC OF “big happy family”). Alternatively, when a series of adjectives precede a noun they are modifying, “the comma is often omitted when the adjectives are short.”⁷⁰ But how long must an adjective be before it is no longer “short”? Does it work to leave out the commas when there are two words in an ADJP in the series, as in *very furry* in the *Sesame Street* sentence above? You be the judge.

Commas can also set off—and conjoin—part of a sentence.⁷¹ In particular, commas are used to set off non-essential adjectival modifiers, whether they are clauses, phrases, or single words⁷² (see 10.2.1, 12.1.2, and 12.2.2 for more on the distinction between essential and non-essential modifiers). We have already seen two types of non-essential modifier: nominal (2.2) and adjectival (4.1) appositives:

Nominal Appositive

My aunt and uncle, the Giovannis, own a store, the Empire Shoe Shop on Main Street.

A good all-around athlete, Leighty qualified for the state track meet in the high jump.

Adjectival Appositive

The Buddha Shakyamuni, fat and happy with his centuries-old smile, receives everyone.

Arguably, the commas around these non-essential adjectival modifiers do more separating than conjoining; they mark that the non-essential modifiers express separate or expendable information. A brief one- or two-word appositive phrase may not need to be separated by commas: *My friend Sinuhe suggested the llamas* would be mechanically acceptable. However, “when the set-off matter comes amid a sentence, as in this very sentence, a pair of commas is needed.”⁷³ The commas can—and should—be dispensed with only when the phrase in question is an essential modifier, as in, *Longfellow’s poem Evangeline was a favorite of my grandmother’s*.⁷⁴ As Longfellow wrote many poems, the title *Evangeline* is essential information for identifying which poem the writer is referring to. When paired commas are required to separate the non-essential adjectival modifier, incautious writers often leave out the second comma of the pair, which is only appropriate when the set-off material is at the end of the sentence (see what I did there?).

We should “use commas after certain introductory elements”⁷⁵ such as ADVPs, conjunctive adverbials (see 11.3.5), adverb clauses (see 10.2.3), a succession of introductory PPs, or even a single PP alone (if there is potential ambiguity without the comma),⁷⁶ and introductory PARTPs and INFPs.⁷⁷ When these elements are used to interrupt a sentence, bracket them with commas.

*As a matter of fact, the quantum world is like a parallel universe.*⁷⁸
The quantum world, as a matter of fact, is like a parallel universe.
The quantum world is like a parallel universe, as a matter of fact.

Such interrupting elements, including PPs, PARTPs, and INFPs, are most often adverbial and are, as we shall see in 11.3 and Chapter 12, related to non-essential

adjectival modifiers. The most important consideration is guiding your reader, using “a comma if your reader might misunderstand the structure of the sentence, as in this one”:

When a lawyer concludes her argument has to be easily remembered by a jury.
*When a lawyer concludes, her argument has to be easily remembered by a jury.*⁷⁹

In punctuating sentence constituents that appear before the subject, the overarching principle is that “readers usually need no punctuation between a short introductory phrase and the **subject**” (as in *And once again we have a budget that will explode the deficit*);⁸⁰ and “readers usually need a comma between a long (four or five words or more) introductory phrase or clause and the **subject**” (as in *If the government doesn’t pay for the services that it accepted, that’s a breach of contract*).⁸¹

9.2.3 An Aside about Dashes and Parentheses

Dashes and parentheses are like commas: all can be used to set off—and conjoin—part of a sentence, as I just did with the dashes. Parentheses always come in pairs, while dashes, like commas, come in pairs unless the offset words are at the end of a sentence,⁸² or a single dash is being used to create balance between two related clauses: *Stonehenge is a wonder—only a genius could have conceived it*. The colon here perhaps feels more formal (*Stonehenge is a wonder: only a genius could have conceived it*), while using parentheses makes the second sentence seem like an afterthought: *Stonehenge is a wonder (only a genius could have conceived it)*.⁸³ What do you think?

Dashes may be used to “set off an explanation or expansion of the preceding thought”;⁸⁴ the initial dash means something like *namely, that is, or in other words*.⁸⁵ That is (hah!), the dash seems to have the force of a conjunctive adverbial (e.g. *however, therefore, moreover, in other words*; see 11.3.5). The dash also seems to have the force of an SCONJ (e.g. *because, although, since, as though*; see 10.2.3.1). “The dash and the colon are frequently interchangeable in this type of construction.”⁸⁶ We could write the same sentence several different ways: with

- **A dash:** *Anna has been more than steady for us—she’s been outstanding.*
- **A comma and CCONJ:** *Anna has been more than steady for us, and she’s been outstanding.*
- **A colon:** *Anna has been more than steady for us: she’s been outstanding.*⁸⁷
- **A semicolon, a conjunctive adverb, and a comma:** *Anna has been more than steady for us; indeed, she’s been outstanding.*
- **A comma and an SCONJ:** *Anna has been more than steady for us, because she’s been outstanding.*

Among these sentences, meaning varies mostly in terms of emphasis, so the choice is, once again, a matter of stylistic preference. But in each case, the words and/or punctuation placed between the two sentences have the force of a CONJ: marking the boundary between constituents but, at the same time, joining them together.

A dash can be used just as a comma can to separate and conjoin an introductory constituent of a clause, such as an introductory adverb clause. Clearly, parentheses would not be an option for an introductory constituent. In the following example, the comma might be a better choice than the dash:

*When you consider a recent national survey showing 21 percent of men say they're on the lookout for a better relationship while they're in a relationship—then it's all the more important that women know the signs of a guy who's looking for the exit before he's even in the room.*⁸⁸

Or a dash might be used after an introductory series to set off and conjoin a summary: *Rare, medium, or well done—these are such personal preferences.*⁸⁹ In this example, a colon could replace the dash and have much the same meaning and effect.

Dashes or parentheses can be used like commas to set off a constituent at the end of the sentence, especially an adverb clause or other adverbial constituent (such as a sentence modifier or, in the case of this parenthetical remark, a non-essential adjectival modifier of the word *constituent*). The original version of the following sentence reads, *A man who clams up during a fight or a discussion isn't necessarily just trying to make you mad (though some are).*⁹⁰ But it could just as well have been written with a dash or a comma before *though some are*, instead of the parentheses. This is purely a stylistic choice; the meaning is the same, though the effect is different in terms of pacing and emphasis. A dash can also be used to mark a concluding contrast or contradiction:⁹¹ *People wanted to laugh, and weep—and could do neither.*⁹² A comma could be used in place of the dash, but the dash directs the reader to pause longer and so gives more dramatic impact to the final phrase.

Dashes and parentheses can also be used to conjoin and set off matter in the middle of a sentence, for example, to mark “an abrupt change in thought,”⁹³ as in the sentence *The dog skidded on the floor—his nails acted like ice skates—and crashed into the kitchen table.* Arguably, “a concluding contrast or contradiction” and “an abrupt change of thought” are similar: another example of the mushy descriptive phrases that pass for “rules” of “proper” punctuation use.

We come full circle in our discussion of dashes with a final example where paired dashes are used to set off a list in the middle of a sentence, a list that “explains or expands the preceding thought,” which seems to be the main function of dashes when they are used for conjunctive purposes: *Tchaikovsky omitted the bass instruments—cellos, double basses, trombones, tuba—as well as the*

trumpets.⁹⁴ This use of dashes stands in for conjunctive adverbials like “*for example*, *namely*, and *that is*.”⁹⁵ Parentheses would also work for the same purpose.

This brings us to the subject of parentheses as conjoining punctuation. “Use parentheses to enclose matter which is added to a sentence but is not considered of major importance.”⁹⁶ The offset material should be “an explanatory or incidental word, phrase, notation, figure, or abbreviation,”⁹⁷ and the inserted material is not intended to be an essential part of the sentence.⁹⁸ The authorities state that commas and dashes may be used for the same purpose as parentheses, but they use impressionistic descriptions to distinguish among their effects, asserting that each sort of punctuation ascribes a different level of prominence to the inserted material, with dashes giving the greatest prominence, commas intermediate prominence, and parentheses drawing the least attention,⁹⁹ or they assert that, because of their shape(!), parentheses “often clarify a sentence’s structure better than commas or dashes”,¹⁰⁰ or that commas indicate “a slight pause,” dashes “a stronger break in the sentence,” and parentheses “a strong interruption,”¹⁰¹ with the following examples in support; I offer my own comments in parentheses after each sentence:

Comma: “a slight pause”:

We fished in the muddy stream, a brown torrent after the downpour.

(This sentence could also have used a colon or possibly a dash.)

Dash: “a stronger break in the sentence”:

We fished in the muddy stream—a waste of time!

(This sentence could also have used a comma, a semicolon, or a colon.)

Parentheses: “a strong interruption”:

*We fished (or should I say drowned worms?) in the muddy stream.*¹⁰²

(This sentence could also have used dashes or commas if it were rewritten as *We fished, or I should say drowned worms, in the muddy stream.*)

Given that each parenthetical comment could be punctuated in more than one way, I do not think that the authorities’ mushy generalizations about the relative differences in the effect of commas, dashes, and parentheses work. Rather, I think the effect of each depends on both the content of the comment (what is between the commas, dashes, or parentheses) and the larger context.

So what? There are few firm rules, little science, and much art to the effective use of conjoining punctuation.

9.2.4 A Further Aside on Hyphens

First, to clarify: the hyphen is the shorter line, the dash the longer one. Conventionally, a dash equals two hyphens; Microsoft Word, which I used to write this book, automatically turns two consecutive hyphens into a dash so long as there are no spaces between the hyphens and the preceding and following words. Style manuals disagree as to whether there should be spaces before and/or after a hyphen or dash.¹⁰³

Hyphens conjoin in two distinct ways. Before computer-based text editing programs, a hyphen was most commonly used to divide—and join together—a word across a line break, placing one or more syllables of the word on the next line. With word processing, proportional fonts (typefaces with different widths for the letters), and automatic text-wrapping (that is, when you get to the end of a line, the cursor just moves to a new line), word hyphenation across line breaks is, for most people, a thing of the past. A major exception remains in print publication, such as newspapers, magazines, and books, where cost constraints—the need to get as many words as possible into a column or on a page while maintaining readability—often force writers and editors to hyphenate words so as to make maximal use of minimal space. If you find yourself handwriting, typing on a typewriter, or constrained by space, and so must hyphenate word breaks, use a dictionary as a guide for where to break syllables across a line break. To check on whether or not to hyphenate a compound, consult more than one dictionary, since they will sometimes disagree (e.g. *coworker* versus *co-worker*; *vice-president* versus *vice president*).¹⁰⁴

There are several categories of hyphenation.

Compound adjectives: “Hyphenate a compound adjective when it precedes the noun it modifies. Do not use a hyphen if one of the modifiers is an adverb ending in *-ly*,” for example, *an after-school job* but *a heavily laden burro*.¹⁰⁵ A phrase that appears as a hyphenated adjective before a noun will not be hyphenated after the noun,¹⁰⁶ as in, *a well-planned campaign* (but: *The campaign was well planned*).¹⁰⁷

Established hyphenated compound adjectives: There are many, including “*cold-blooded*, *law-abiding*, *one-horse* (town), and *ten-gallon* (hat). Such expressions may have multiple hyphens: *out-and-out*, *dyed-in-the-wool*, *will-o'-the-wisp*.”¹⁰⁸ Add to this group another rule: a hyphen should be used with compound numbers from *twenty-one* to *ninety-nine* and with fractions used as determiners, as in *a two-thirds majority*.¹⁰⁹

Certain prefixes and suffixes: Certain prefixes and suffixes normally appear with hyphens, such as *ex-mayor*, *great-grandson*, *all-encompassing*, *post-Reformation*, *self-sustaining*, *president-elect*, *mother-in-law*, and *show-off*.¹¹⁰ One should also hyphenate between a prefix and a word when “the prefix ends with a vowel and the word it is attached to starts with the same

vowel,” as in *anti-incumbent* and *co-organizer*;¹¹¹ when a prefix is added to a word that is capitalized, as in *pre-Victorian* and *non-English-speaking*;¹¹² and “when prefixes are attached to numerals,” as in *pre-1995 models* and *non-19th-century architecture*.¹¹³

Certain potentially ambiguous words and phrases: We must hyphenate “*reform*,” meaning to form again, to distinguish it from *reform*, meaning to correct defects.”¹¹⁴ The same goes for *re-creation* and *recreation*, *co-op* and *coop*, *multiply* and *multiply*.¹¹⁵ Note also the difference between a *big business opportunity* (a chance to make a lot of money) and a *big-business opportunity* (a chance to work with large corporations).¹¹⁶ And there is the potential ambiguity of leaving the hyphen out of a phrase like *man-eating*, as in the newspaper headline: “Man eating piranha sold as pet fish,” which “prompted *The New Yorker* [magazine] to ask, ‘Did he *look* like a fish?’”¹¹⁷ As this last category in particular shows, hyphenation, like the use of commas, dashes, and parentheses for conjunctive purposes, is often more a matter of style, clarity, and avoiding ambiguity than it is a matter of simple rules.

So what? Hyphenation can get complicated: we commonly write *self-conscious* but *unselfconscious* (not **unself-conscious*). Also note the problem of *businessman* but *small-business men*. And consider the phrase, *Hence the large number of ex-public schoolboys in every Labor Cabinet*, where we have the prefix *ex-*crashing into the conflation of *public school* and *schoolboys*. Where should the hyphens go to keep everything clear?¹¹⁸

As this last category in particular shows, hyphenation, like the use of commas, dashes, and parentheses for conjunctive purposes, is often more a matter of style, clarity, and avoiding ambiguity than it is a matter of simple rules.

9.2.5 Hey: What about Colons?

Colons can also be understood as marking the boundary between a clause and non-essential (or at least less essential) information. There are two basic conjunction-related uses for the colon: first, to separate a complete clause from a list of specific items, as in, *Results pour in from primaries in four states: Colorado, Georgia, Connecticut, and Minnesota*.¹¹⁹ This structure is occasionally inverted, as in, *Baseball, soccer, skiing, track: he excelled in every sport he took up*.¹²⁰ Second, a colon is used to separate a complete clause from a long quote:

*Just keep in mind CS Lewis’s words: “Never make fun of someone unless he’s bigger or stronger than you—and then as you please.”*¹²¹

In each usage, the colon conjoins the complete clause to the accompanying list or quote, and the list or quote renames or elaborates information from the clause—*four states, every sport he took up*, and *CS Lewis's words*, respectively. As my last sentence illustrates, the dash can be used in much the same way. In most situations, the clause preceding (or following) the colon must be complete: it is generally regarded as improper to use a colon right after a verb to set off a list of NPs when those NPs are the direct objects of the verb:

Incorrect with a colon: *I'm excited for your next steps, which will almost certainly be full of: places where you can see an arthouse film without driving an hour each way, late-night eateries, heterogeneity, friends, nemeses, crushes and true loves.*

Correct without a colon: *I'm excited for your next steps, which will almost certainly be full of places where you can see an arthouse film without driving an hour each way, late-night eateries, heterogeneity, friends, nemeses, crushes and true loves.*¹²²

Correct with a colon: *I'm excited for your next steps, which will almost certainly be full of many opportunities: places where you can see an arthouse film without driving an hour each way, late-night eateries, heterogeneity, friends, nemeses, crushes and true loves.*

“Avoid a colon if it breaks a clause into two pieces, neither of which is a grammatically complete sentence.”¹²³

But other authorities disagree: “Although the colon usually follows a full independent clause, it also often interrupts a sentence before the clause is complete”.¹²⁴

The nine proposed program topics are: offshore supply, vessel traffic, ferry services, ship repair, . . .

Information on each participant includes: name, date of birth, mailing address, . . .

The association will:

- *Act with trust, integrity, and professionalism.*
- *Operate in an open and effective manner.*
- *Take the initiative in seeking diversity.*¹²⁵

This baldly contradicts the injunction to not use a colon to break a clause into two pieces, and I was taught to never do so. I can't explain the disagreement: perhaps this requires further study—or perhaps it's just one more instance of “correct punctuation” being a matter of taste.

Much like dashes, a colon can also mark that an elaboration or explanation is to follow.¹²⁶ Like the dash, the colon can have the same value as a conjunctive adverbial or a subordinating conjunction (see 9.2.3): when used this way,

the colon “substitutes for *e.g.*, *i.e.*, or *viz.*, or the equivalent *for example*, *that is*, or *namely*, respectively,” all of which are conjunctive adverbials.¹²⁷ Though a complete sentence must typically precede the colon, after the colon we may find either a complete sentence or a phrase.¹²⁸

*Here we have a dilemma: we must choose between pleasure at some sacrifice of comfort and more complete comfort at the sacrifice of pleasure.*¹²⁹
*In addition, our economy provides a much more powerful antidote to the rule of the rich: the economies of scale.*¹³⁰

All of the preceding uses of the colon are “optional”: one could always rearrange the preceding examples so as to punctuate them without the colon (try it).¹³¹

Other uses of the colon are “mechanical”¹³² or “conventional.”¹³³ In each, the colon at once both marks a boundary and conjoins:

- **Between hour and minute or between minute and second**, as in *8:45 p.m.*, or a race time of *3:45* (that is, *three minutes and forty-five seconds*).
- **After the salutation on a formal letter**, as in *Dear Sir*:
- **To separate the subtitle of a book or other work**, as in *The Fight for English: How Language Pundits Ate, Shot, and Left*.
- **In bibliographic publication data**: *Paleobiology* 3:121.¹³⁴
- **Between chapter and verse numbers in biblical references**, as in *Proverbs* 15:3.
- **In web addresses**, as in *https://www.yahoo.com*.
- **In ratios**: 3:5.¹³⁵

Of course, there are such “mechanical” or “conventional” uses for commas:

- **In dates**, as in *Wednesday, June 30, 1981*.
- **In addresses**, as in *1501 W. Bradley Ave., Peoria, IL 61625*.
- **After the salutation of a friendly letter**, as in “*Dear Delia*,”.
- **After the closing of any letter**, as in “*Sincerely yours*,”.
- **After a name followed by a title such as *Ph.D.*, *Jr.*, *Sr.*, etc.**: as in *Dr. Imelda Sanchez, Ph.D.* or *Marcus Welby, M.D.*¹³⁶
- **In numbers**, as in *\$4,356,281*.¹³⁷
- **With “corporate identifiers such as *Incorporated*, *Inc.*, *Ltd.*, *P.C.*, and *L.P.*,”** as in *LeFante Law Offices, P.C.* or *Adams Resources & Energy, Inc.*¹³⁸

9.2.6 One More Conjunctive Punctuation Mark You Don’t Think About: Virgules

Virgules (“slashes”) are used largely for fixed or “mechanical” purposes, such as in fractions (e.g. 13/16); in dates (e.g. 5/16/07); to replace *per* in terms like *miles/hour*; and to indicate line breaks when poetry is included in prose text.

However, the virgule is also used to mean *or* in the phrase *and/or*, as well as in computer programs in which an option may be given as “Move/Rename File,” meaning “move or rename.” In other computer program options, such as “Paper Size/Type,” the virgule seems to mean either *and* or *or*.¹³⁹ The virgule “can replace the word *and* in some compound terms,” in much the same way that a hyphen can, as in *the May/June issue* (or *the May-June issue*), *1996/97* (or *1996-97*), and *travel/study trip* (or *travel-study trip*).¹⁴⁰ And virgules (and colons, and occasionally semicolons) also appear in web addresses, as in <http://example.com/page.jsp;jsessionid=123>.

The virgule is emerging as a more widely used and flexible punctuation mark, though, as one authority puts it, “the substitution may be no improvement: take *secretary/treasurer* instead of *secretary-treasurer*.”¹⁴¹ Of course, the virgule can become ambiguous so that “Diners cannot be sure whether the virgule means *and* or *or* in a menu’s ‘steak/lobster plate.’” And what happens when a writer “dispenses with commas and conjunctions to describe someone as a ‘writer/painter/photographer’ and later writes, ‘She has this phobia/quirk/fatal flaw’”?¹⁴² Despite such complaints, the virgule is already working as a conjunctive punctuation mark and may well grow in use before its meaning and function become more formalized.

So what? While it always seems to us, especially as we are taught “the rules of punctuation” in school, that punctuation practice is fixed and unchanging, the preceding discussion should have made clear that it is not: contemporary authorities disagree, and practices change over time. For example, placing a comma between the subject and predicate was common in the eighteenth century: *The first thing to be studied here, is grammatical propriety*. “This comma is now universally frowned on.”¹⁴³ In matters of punctuation, as in writing in general, understand the options, and use them to best address your audience, message, and purpose.

9.2.7 Summary of Conjunctive Punctuation “Rules”

The following list should serve as a recap of the “rules” (both hard and mushy) of conjunctive punctuation detailed in this chapter. As the list simply repeats material already attributed in detail to Warriner, Lovinger, *MWG*, and Williams and Bizup throughout the chapter, for the sake of—well, not brevity; readability?—I will not repeat those citations here.

Commas

1. Use commas to separate three or more items in a series; however, if all items in a series are joined by *and* or *or/nor*, do not use commas to separate them.

2. Use commas to separate two or more adjectives preceding a noun. If you can put the word *and* between each adjective or adjective phrase, then you should put a comma there.
3. Use commas to set off non-essential modifiers, whether they are clauses, phrases, or single words (e.g. nominal and adjectival appositives; non-essential adjectival clauses with *which* or *who*).
4. Use commas after certain introductory elements and before certain concluding elements such as AdvPs, adverb clauses, a succession of introductory PPs (though not a single PP alone, unless there is potential ambiguity without the comma), and introductory participle and infinitive phrases. When these elements are used to interrupt a sentence, bracket them with commas.
5. Use commas typically to downplay the prominence of offset words.
6. Kinds of “elements” set off by commas, in terms of their meanings, may include:
 - a. Attributions (e.g. author of quoted or borrowed material).
 - b. Definitions (e.g. non-essential modifiers and parenthetical utterances).
 - c. Explanations and elaborations (e.g. non-essential modifiers and parenthetical utterances).
 - d. Identifications (e.g. non-essential modifiers and parenthetical utterances).
8. Use a comma followed by a coordinating conjunction to conjoin sentences unless the sentences are short, in which case they may be conjoined by
 - a. a coordinating conjunction alone, or
 - b. a comma alone if features of the wording connect the two sentences.
9. Conventional uses of the comma:
 - a. Use commas in dates: *Wednesday, June 30, 1981*.
 - b. Use commas in addresses: *1501 W. Bradley Ave., Peoria, IL 61625*.
 - c. Use commas after the salutation of a friendly letter: *Dear Delia,*
 - d. Use commas after the closing of any letter: *Sincerely yours,*
 - e. Use commas after a name followed by a title such as *Ph.D., Jr., Sr., etc.*: *Dr. Imelda Sanchez, Ph.D.* or *Marcus Welby, M.D.*
 - f. Use commas in numbers, as in *\$4,356,281*.
 - g. Use commas with corporate identifiers, as in *Adams Resources & Energy, Inc.*

Semicolons

1. You may use a semicolon to conjoin two sentences but preferably without a coordinating conjunction.
2. You may use a semicolon to conjoin clauses when the second clause begins with a conjunctive adverb such as *however, therefore, or consequently*.

3. As a “higher-order comma”: Use semicolons between items in a series when those items already contain commas; this includes conjoining sentences with commas in them.
4. You may sometimes use a semicolon in place of a conjunction like *and* or *but*.
5. Semicolons are also conventional in complex web addresses `http://example.com/page.jsp;jsessionid=123`.

Dashes

1. Use dashes to raise the prominence of offset words.
2. You may use dashes to set off an explanation or expansion of the preceding thought.
 - a. The initial dash may have the force of a **conjunctive adverbial**: words and phrases like *however*, *therefore*, *moreover*, *namely*, *that is*, *in other words*, etc. that connect clauses and paragraphs (see 11.3.5).
 - b. The initial dash may have the force of a **subordinating conjunction**: words and phrases like *because*, *although*, *since*, *as though*, etc. that mark the beginning of an adverb clause, joining it to its container clause (see 10.2.3.1).
3. You may use a dash, just as you may use a comma, to separate and conjoin an introductory constituent of a clause, such as an introductory adverb clause; or you might use a dash after an introductory series to set off and conjoin a summary.
4. You may use a dash, just as you may use a comma, to set off a constituent at the end of the sentence, especially an adverb clause or other adverbial constituent (such as a sentence modifier), or to mark a concluding contrast or contradiction.
5. You may use a pair of dashes or parentheses to conjoin and set off matter in the middle of a sentence, such as an abrupt change in thought, or a list in the middle of a sentence that explains or expands the preceding thought.

Parentheses

1. Use parentheses to enclose matter that is added to a sentence but is not considered of major importance. The offset material should be “an explanatory or incidental word, phrase, notation, figure, or abbreviation.”

Hyphens

1. Use a hyphen to divide—and join together—a word across a line break.
2. Use a hyphen in compound words, and with certain prefixes, especially when, without the hyphen, there might be some ambiguity or confusion.

- a. Hyphenate a compound adjective when it precedes the noun it modifies. Do not use a hyphen if one of the modifiers is an adverb ending in *-ly*.
 - b. Use hyphens with established hyphenated compound adjectives (e.g. *cold-blooded*, *law-abiding*).
 - c. Use a hyphen with compound numbers from *twenty-one* to *ninety-nine* and with fractions used as determiners.
 - d. Use a hyphen with certain prefixes and suffixes (e.g. *ex-mayor*, *great-grandson*, *all-encompassing*, *president-elect*, *mother-in-law*).
 - e. Use a hyphen with potentially ambiguous words and phrases (e.g. *re-form* vs. *reform*; *man-eating* vs. *man eating*).
3. Hyphens are also used conventionally in complex web addresses: *https://forward.com/life/faith/434245/ira-glass-hasidim-dialogue/*.

Colons

1. Use a colon to mark the boundary between a clause and non-essential (or at least less essential) information.
 - a. Use a colon to separate a complete clause from a list of specific items.
 - b. Use a colon to separate a complete clause from a long quote.
2. You may use a colon, like a dash, to mark that an elaboration or explanation is to follow.
3. You may use a colon, like a dash, with the same value as a conjunctive adverbial or a subordinating conjunction; the colon substitutes for *e.g.*, *i.e.*, or *viz.* or the equivalent *for example*, *that is*, or *namely*, respectively.
4. Conventional uses of the colon.
 - a. Use a colon between hour and minute or between minute and second, as in *8:45 p.m.*, or a race time of *3:45* (that is, *three minutes and forty-five seconds*).
 - b. Use a colon after the salutation on a formal letter, as in *Dear Sir:*
 - c. Use a colon to separate the subtitle of a book or other work, as in *The Fight for English: How Language Pundits Ate, Shot, and Left*.
 - d. Use a colon in bibliographic publication data, as in *Paleobiology* 3:121.
 - e. Use a colon between chapter and verse numbers in biblical references, as in *Proverbs* 15:3.
 - f. Use a colon in web addresses, as in *https://www.yahoo.com*.
 - g. Use a colon in ratios, as in 3:5.

Virgules

1. Use a virgule in a fraction (e.g. 13/16).
2. Use a virgule in a date (e.g. 5/16/07).

3. Use a virgule to replace *per* in terms like *miles/hour*.
4. Use a virgule to indicate line breaks when poetry is included in prose text.
5. Use a virgule to mean *or* in the phrase *and/or* and in computer programs in which an option may be given as “Move/Rename File.”
6. Use a virgule to mean either *and* or *or* in other computer program options, such as “Paper Size/Type.”
7. You may see a virgule in place of a hyphen in certain compounds such as *secretary/treasurer* instead of *secretary-treasurer*).
8. Virgules are also used conventionally in web addresses: *https://search.yahoo.com/search*.

9.3 A Brief Discussion of Interjections (INTERJ) and Phatic Expressions (PHATIC)

9.3.1 Interjections

Here at the end of our discussion of the parts of speech and their phrases, I would be remiss in not mentioning that traditional grammar generally includes one more minor part-of-speech category: interjections. “An interjection is a word that expresses emotion and has no grammatical relation to other words in the sentence.”¹⁴⁴ An interjection is often followed by an exclamation point to indicate the strength of the emotion expressed (e.g. *Oh dear! Ouch! Wow!*). That emotion—generally only discernible from context—is the meaning of the interjection, and that emotion may run the whole gamut of strong emotions, from pain to pleasure to surprise to anger. Interjections are unusual in writing, though common in conversation, and I know of no detailed treatment of the grammar of interjections. What I offer here is a sketch of three possible subcategories; these terms are mine:

Simple Interjections: Simple interjections appear as single words or brief phrases, often followed by an exclamation point.

*A \$1,000 initial investment in Lucid would be worth just \$62 today. Ouch.*¹⁴⁵

*Oh Wow! Woo! Yeah! Oh ho ho!*¹⁴⁶

*Aha! Hey! Get out!*¹⁴⁷

*Give me a second to cry, because just ugh on skinny jeans.*¹⁴⁸

*What does Cruella De Vil have left to live for?—Ugh!—Ohh!—Ohh! Good grief!*¹⁴⁹

*What the fudge—Oh, for Pete’s sake! [Groans] Jiminy Christmas! [Screams] Darn it!*¹⁵⁰

Note two types of utterances here: those that are conventionalized speech noises (*ouch, oh wow, woo, oh ho ho, aha, hey, ugh*), and altered or masked blasphemies

(for *Pete's sake*; *Jiminy Christmas*—for “for God’s sake” and “Jesus Christ,” respectively) and obscenities (*what the fudge*; *darn it*—for “what the fuck” and “damn it,” respectively). I have chosen not to include a list of obscene interjections; you can easily generate such a list yourself and think about how to categorize them.

Although simple interjections are usually fragments, they are always punctuated as though they were complete sentences, beginning with a capital letter and followed by an exclamation point. Interjections may also be used ironically, as in the first example sentence above that uses “Ouch” with a period. Think about the ways in which the change or lack of final punctuation changes the meaning of “ouch” or “wow,” or even “oh.”

Conjunctive Interjections: Some interjections are used at the beginning of a sentence and separated from the sentence by a comma:

KATHIE LEE GIFFORD: *Regis will be happy to sign a CD to Penny.* ANNA-CHLUMSKY: *Oh, she'll love that.*¹⁵¹
*Gosh, I'm so happy for that kid.*¹⁵²
*Man, it's a carnival attraction.*¹⁵³
*And, yes: *I* have personally seen this scenario played out like a Greek tragedy.*¹⁵⁴

I call these interjections “conjunctive” in that they indicate the speaker’s recognition of a preceding utterance or some larger context that is shared by the speaker and the hearer. Thus, the interjection in each of these sentences serves to conjoin the following sentence with the preceding context.

Elliptical Interjections: Some exclamations might be parsed as interjections or perhaps more properly as instances of ellipsis: sentences with parts deleted. Consider *Help!* which might be understood as a shortened version of the imperative sentence *Help me!* or even as a version of *Would you help me?* And a phrase like *Oh my God!* might be understood as an elliptical prayer, something like, *Oh my God, please protect me from whatever it is I'm exclaiming about.*

9.3.2 Phatic Expressions

Phatic expressions are the words, phrases, and even clauses like *hello*, *good-bye*, and *how are you* that we say or write to initiate, further, or conclude social interactions. Though often derived historically from expressions that carried more specific meanings (e.g. *goodbye* originates in the sixteenth century as *God be with ye*), those meanings have largely been lost, so that these everyday words and phrases merely serve as social ritual utterances to indicate that we

are starting or ending a conversation, phone call, or text exchange, or merely to acknowledge that we are listening to someone (e.g. *uh-huh, really, I hear what you're saying*), or that we have seen and recognized one another. Think how odd it is when, as you are passing by someone, you say, *Hey, how ya doin'?* and, rather than saying, *I'm good. You?* (after which you both keep walking in your separate directions), they reply by telling you about their troubles. By saying, *Hey, how ya doin'?* you were not really asking them to report on their health and well-being; you were just saying something like, "I see and acknowledge you; do you see and acknowledge me?" If you do not receive a response, you may simply assume that the other person was preoccupied and didn't see you, but you may feel ignored, or even dissed: this is how important and powerful these phatic expressions are. The list of such expressions is large, and new versions are constantly being created and discarded by social groups at all levels; you may have phatic expressions that you use only within your family or friend group. Conversational examples include *hello, goodbye, hi, hey, good morning, good day, good evening, good night, please, uh huh, of course, sure, yes, no,*¹⁵⁵ *thank you, you're welcome, I'm sorry, hey, how are you? How you doin'?* 'sup? etc. Examples from formal email and written correspondence include *Dear So-and-so, To whom it may concern, Sincerely yours, Yours truly, Best regards, Cheers,* etc.

9.4 Key Points

- Conjunctions are a closed class of function words.
- Conjunctions are divided into two categories: coordinating conjunctions (CCONJ) and subordinating conjunctions (SCONJ).
- CCONJs include *for, and, or, but, nor, yet, so* (*fanboys*) and are used to join together and separate phrases and clauses that have the same function within a sentence or clause.
- CCONJs also include the paired correlative conjunctions (CORRELCONJ) *either . . . or, neither . . . nor, not only . . . but also, both . . . and, and whether . . . or*.
- Several punctuation marks also often function as CCONJs, including commas, colons, semicolons, parentheses, dashes, hyphens, and virgules (slashes). These punctuation marks also have fixed mechanical usages.
- SCONJs are used to join an adverb clause (a.k.a. "subordinate clause") to its container clause. SCONJs will be examined in detail in 10.2.3.1.
- Interjections are words and phrases such as *wow, ouch, ugh,* and *gosh darnit* that express emotion and have no grammatical relation to other words in the sentence.
- Phatic expressions are words, phrases, and clauses like *hello, yes,* and *how ya doin'* that we say or write to initiate, further, or conclude social interactions.

9.5 Exercises: Conjunctions and Conjoining Punctuation

Find the Conjunctions: Made-up sentences

List the coordinating (CCONJ) and correlative conjunctions (CORRELCONJ) in the following paragraphs and, for each conjunction, identify the constituents it conjoins along with their forms and functions. By my count, there are nineteen (**remember**: correlative conjunctions are two words that count as one conjunction).

Example: *She saw both positive and negative reviews.*¹⁵⁶

both . . . *and*—CORRELCONJ; *positive*—ADJP:MOD OF “reviews”; *negative*—ADJP:MOD OF “reviews”

Once Peoria and Decatur were home to numerous theatrical companies. Decatur was the first town in Illinois to open a stage theater, but Peoria’s theatrical district soon became larger and more important. The theaters channeled tremendous revenue into these towns, but the golden days of small-city theater ended about the time of World War II. The members of these theatrical companies could not count on receiving regular wages or a paycheck. Both the management and the performers worked on a profit-sharing basis. All the company members received shares in the profits of a show, and the size of a share depended on the length of a member’s tenure with the company. Naturally the theater owner’s portion was the largest and was usually about one-tenth of a season’s total receipts.

In the days before modern buses, a touring season was not easy for either the company manager or the performers, for they traveled long hours on dusty roads to reach their performance venues. Maintaining order was no easy task on a long tour because the food and living conditions gave rise to discontent. Inevitably the actors and crew had time on their hands, for they didn’t perform or rehearse or travel all day, every day. To relieve the dullness and boredom on long tours, company members often would make visits to children’s homes and hospitals. Not only the actors but also the whole company looked forward to such visits. All enjoyed the chance to chat with and entertain those in need. The decline of theaters and of theatrical companies began with the rise of television. Our country no longer needed large numbers of stage theaters, for a cheaper medium of entertainment had replaced them.

Find the Conjoining Punctuation: A real text

Using the following essay, identify each colon, comma, dash, hyphen, pair of parentheses, semicolon, and virgule, and for each, identify its function. In identifying each function, use the numbers from the list above titled “Summary of Conjunctive Punctuation ‘Rules.’” **Note**: more than one rule may

apply. If you think this is the case, identify all of the rules that apply to an example.

(1) Fighting the Wrong War

(2) by Gloria Borger

(3) *U.S. News & World Report*, 11/5/2001, Vol. 131 Issue 19, p. 39

(4) Before September 11, we had a whole lot more patience. (5) If Republicans and Democrats were squabbling, we'd shrug and go on with our lives.

(6) No big deal—a week here, a week there. (7) In fact, most of us hardly paid any attention. (8) Nothing was a matter of life and death.

(9) Now everything is a matter of life and death.

(10) Tell that to Tom DeLay, the House Republican whip. (11) DeLay, it seems, has a big, important, serious problem with a crucial and timely airport-security measure. (12) His problem is so huge, in fact, that he kept the bill from reaching the House floor for weeks—despite the fact that it passed the Senate unanimously. (13) Does DeLay worry that it's not strong enough? (14) Does he want more money for federal air marshals and baggage X-ray machines? (15) Does he have stricter plans to reinforce cockpit doors? (16) Not a chance. (17) DeLay's concern—shared by some other House GOP leaders—is that the measure calls for federalizing airport-security workers. (18) How can we allow that to happen? he must be thinking. (19) It's not only big government; it's new union members. (20) Thousands of them!

(21) Such a prospect fills like-minded conservatives with fury. (22) "What the Democrats want is 30,000 new dues-paying contributors," grumped House Majority Leader Dick Armey. (23) So House GOP leaders went to work: First, they pounded Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta (a Democrat himself!) at a private meeting in early October, when he dared suggest that the White House might support the idea of federal screeners. (24) ("He got his ass kicked" is the way one Senate Republican describes it.) (25) Then the leaders took their grievance to the White House. (26) Fearing the wrath of conservatives, the administration caved: Make the supervisors federal employees, keep the worker bees private. (27) Armed with White House support, DeLay then began to do what he does best—pressure lobbyists, summoning a group from the airport-security industry for a chat. (28) Work with us, he said, or we're not going to be friends. (29) (It's hard to say why anyone would want to befriend this industry at this moment, considering that the Justice Department has accused it of hiring screeners with criminal records. (30) Think about it: felons confiscating tweezers at airports everywhere.)

(31) **On the cheap.** (32) For public consumption, conservatives prefer not to dwell on the political matter of unions, for obvious reasons. (33) Instead, they argue that Israel, with its good airport security, does not use the

federal model. (34) But Senate Commerce Committee sources say that is not always true: Baggage and passenger screeners at El Al airlines, for instance, are government employees. (35) Private companies provide the perimeter airport security. (36) House GOP leaders rightly argue that the security has been lax at airports because the cheap airlines were paying—and they got what they paid for: screeners who were also convicted forgers, bribe takers, and felons in possession of weapons. (37) Bunglers who last week allowed a man with a loaded handgun onto a flight out of New Orleans.

(38) But here's where DeLay & Co. misses the point: Why reward incompetent security firms? (39) "They're still going to be for-profit companies," says one Senate staffer. (40) "This is not the Salvation Army." (41) But this is a matter of law enforcement. (42) "Should we start to contract out the Border Patrol and DEA [Drug Enforcement Administration]?" asks Sen. John McCain, who wants to federalize these employees. (43) And for those who worry that a new batch of civil servants would be hard to fire, consider: The Senate bill gives the government the authority to hire and fire at will, as well as to forbid strikes.

(44) Happily, the president now believes this has gone on too long. (45) After a closed-door session with congressional leaders last week, Republicans grouched that Bush sounded like he was willing to sign the Democratic version. (46) They complained to the vice president, so the president came out calling for "flexibility," backing DeLay. (47) One top White House aide says Bush still hopes for a compromise—say, federalizing half of the airport workforce. (48) But would he veto a Democratic bill? (49) Don't bet on it.

(50) After all, 77 percent of Americans want to put the government in charge of airport security. (51) They're not complaining about big government anymore; they're worried about big airports. (52) And they also remember that the firefighters and police officers and postal workers were good citizens. (53) And union members, too.

Notes

- 1 However, the CCONJ *for*, as in, *At first, she had not noticed this plaque, for it was hidden beneath dark ivy and blood-red hibiscuses* (COCA. Accessed 14 Jul 2025. Mhani Alaoui. "Anna's House." *The Massachusetts Review*. Spring 2017. 103), has largely fallen out of use. These days we are more likely to read such a use of *for* as an SCONJ marking an adverb clause (see Chapter 10), and we are even more likely to use *because* instead of *for*: *At first, she had not noticed this plaque, because it was hidden. For* just sounds stuffy.
- 2 COCA. Accessed 14 Jul 2025. John Pasquin, dir. "Risky Behavior." *Last Man Standing*. S4.E8. 14 Nov 2014.
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- 4 Jim Montague. "AI and Algorithms Aid Automation and Autonomy." *Control*. 1 May 2025.
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- 6 COCA. Accessed 14 Jul 2025. Michael Hiltzik. "Fires Don't Pick Red or Blue States nor Should Aid." *Los Angeles Times*. 9 Mar 2025.
- 7 Amna Faryad. "Business Laptops: Buy or Lease?" *Under30CEO*. 26 Apr 2025.
- 8 Anonymous. "Please Help Me Eat Well in Peru!" *Fodor's Travel Talk Forums*. 27 Feb 2018.
- 9 Jeff Gilbert. "TinCaps Pitcher Wissman: Dayton 'Got Me Ready.'" *Dayton (Ohio) Daily News*. 12 Apr 2025.
- 10 Edgar Schuster. "A Fresh Look at Sentence Fragments." *English Journal*. 5 May 2006. 78.
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- 14 I owe that last sentiment to Joseph M. Williams & Joseph Bizup. *Style*. 13th ed. Hoboken, NJ: Pearson. 2021. 180.
- 15 Merriam-Webster's *Guide to Punctuation and Style*. 2nd ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster. 2001.
- 16 John E. Warriner. *English Grammar and Composition*. Fourth Course. Orlando: Harcourt. 1982 [1948]. 416; 420–424.
- 17 Paul M. Lovinger. *The Penguin Dictionary of American Usage and Style*. New York: Penguin. 2000. 321–348.
- 18 Joseph M. Williams & Joseph Bizup. *Style*. 13th ed. Hoboken, NJ: Pearson. 2021.
- 19 Paul M. Lovinger. *The Penguin Dictionary of American Usage and Style*. New York: Penguin. 2000. 326.
- 20 Paul M. Lovinger. *The Penguin Dictionary of American Usage and Style*. New York: Penguin. 2000. 326; John E. Warriner. *English Grammar and Composition*. Fourth Course. Orlando: Harcourt. 1982 [1948]. 416.
- 21 "Instructions for Authors: 05 House Style." *Oxford University Press*. 2019.
- 22 COCA. Accessed 14 Jul 2025. Ximena Conde. "Stopping the Spotted Lanternfly." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. 10 Jun 2023.
- 23 I did not make up this example. The earliest instance I have been able to find is a Facebook post on *Grammarly*, 3 Aug 2012.
- 24 June Casagrande. "A Word, Please: Would JFK and Stalin Have Agreed on Oxford Comma?" *Los Angeles Times*. 8 Mar 2013.
- 25 John E. Warriner. *English Grammar and Composition*. Fourth Course. Orlando: Harcourt. 1982 [1948]. 416.
- 26 John E. Warriner. *English Grammar and Composition*. Fourth Course. Orlando: Harcourt. 1982 [1948]. 416.
- 27 "Kelli & Gregg: Wedding at the Miraval Ballroom." *heatherchickphotography.com*. 23 Jun 2015.
- 28 Joseph M. Williams & Joseph Bizup. *Style*. 13th ed. Hoboken, NJ: Pearson. 2021. 183.
- 29 COCA. Accessed 14 Jul 2025. Eileen Falkenberg-Hull. "Mercedes-AMG Has a Bold, High-Powered Future." *Newsweek*. 2 May 2025.
- 30 Joseph M. Williams & Joseph Bizup. *Style*. 13th ed. Hoboken, NJ: Pearson. 2021. 184.

- 31 John E. Warriner. *English Grammar and Composition*. Fourth Course. Orlando: Harcourt. 1982 [1948]. 400; 420; Paul M. Lovinger. *The Penguin Dictionary of American Usage and Style*. New York: Penguin. 2000. 326–327.
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- 33 Joseph M. Williams & Joseph Bizup. *Style*. 13th ed. Hoboken, NJ: Pearson. 2021. 185.
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- 35 Merriam-Webster’s *Guide to Punctuation and Style*. 2nd ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster. 2001. 10.
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- 39 COCA. Accessed 14 Jul 2025. Alexander Pappademas & Donna Trope. “The Hardest Working Drummer in Hollywood.” *GQ*. Dec 2022/Jan 2023.
- 40 COCA. Accessed 14 Jul 2025. David Axelrod. “Biden’s Peacock Moment.” *CNN Wire*. 6 Nov 2021.
- 41 Erik Pedersen. “From Page to Plate.” *Richmond (Virginia) Times Dispatch*. 8 Dec 2024.
- 42 “Popular Retailer Could Fill Void Left by Bankrupt Competitor.” *TheStreet.com*. 24 Apr 2025.
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- 45 COCA. Accessed 14 Jul 2025. Alexander Pappademas & Donna Trope. “The Hardest Working Drummer in Hollywood.” *GQ*. Dec 2022/Jan 2023.
- 46 COCA. Accessed 14 Jul 2025. Kent Greenwalt. *Statutory and Common Law Interpretation*. New York: Oxford UP. 2012. 205–206.
- 47 Merriam-Webster’s *Guide to Punctuation and Style*. 2nd ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster. 2001. 49.
- 48 Joseph M. Williams & Joseph Bizup. *Style*. 13th ed. Hoboken, NJ: Pearson. 2021. 184.
- 49 COCA. Accessed 14 Jul 2025. Stephen Moore & Julian L. Simon. *It’s Getting Better All the Time*. Washington, DC: Cato Institute. 17 Oct 2000.
- 50 Joseph M. Williams & Joseph Bizup. *Style*. 13th ed. Hoboken, NJ: Pearson. 2021. 184.
- 51 Joseph M. Williams & Joseph Bizup. *Style*. 13th ed. Hoboken, NJ: Pearson. 2021. 183.
- 52 John E. Warriner. *English Grammar and Composition*. Fourth Course. Orlando: Harcourt. 1982 [1948]. 420; Joseph M. Williams & Joseph Bizup. *Style*. 13th ed. Hoboken, NJ: Pearson. 2021. 183–184.
- 53 COCA. Accessed 14 Jul 2025. Talha Köse. “Rise and Fall of the AK Party’s Kurdish Peace Initiatives.” *Insight Turkey*. Spring 2017. 157. Over the past thirty years, an increasing percentage of my students routinely use *however* not with a preceding

- semicolon, but with a preceding comma. A search on *COCA* finds a small percentage of sentences appearing with the comma rather than the semicolon, but mostly in informal comments on blog posts. I suspect that, over the next thirty years, the use of the semicolon will give way to the comma before *however*.
- 54 John E. Warriner. *English Grammar and Composition*. Fourth Course. Orlando: Harcourt. 1982 [1948]. 421; Merriam-Webster's *Guide to Punctuation and Style*. 2nd ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster. 2001. 49–50; Joseph M. Williams & Joseph Bizup. *Style*. 13th ed. Hoboken, NJ: Pearson. 2021. 183.
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 - 58 Paul M. Lovinger. *The Penguin Dictionary of American Usage and Style*. New York: Penguin. 2000. 346.
 - 59 Paul M. Lovinger. *The Penguin Dictionary of American Usage and Style*. New York: Penguin. 2000. 346; Merriam-Webster's *Guide to Punctuation and Style*. 2nd ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster. 2001. 10–11.
 - 60 Merriam-Webster's *Guide to Punctuation and Style*. 2nd ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster. 2001. 10–11; Joseph M. Williams & Joseph Bizup. *Style*. 13th ed. Hoboken, NJ: Pearson. 2021. 183.
 - 61 *COCA*. Accessed 14 Jul 2025. Jasmin K. Williams. “Julius Caesar: He Came, He Saw, He Conquered.” *nypost.com*. 15 Oct 2007.
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 - 66 John E. Warriner. *English Grammar and Composition*. Fourth Course. Orlando: Harcourt. 1982 [1948]. 416.
 - 67 Paul M. Lovinger. *The Penguin Dictionary of American Usage and Style*. New York: Penguin. 2000. 347.
 - 68 Merriam-Webster's *Guide to Punctuation and Style*. 2nd ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster. 2001. 18.
 - 69 *COCA*. Accessed 14 Jul 2025. “I Thought It Was a Choice.” *I Am Jazz*. S1.E4. TLC. 29 Jul 2015.
 - 70 Merriam-Webster's *Guide to Punctuation and Style*. 2nd ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster. 2001. 18.
 - 71 Paul M. Lovinger. *The Penguin Dictionary of American Usage and Style*. New York: Penguin. 2000. 326; John E. Warriner. *English Grammar and Composition*. Fourth Course. Orlando: Harcourt. 1982 [1948]. 416. Merriam-Webster's *Guide to Punctuation and Style*. 2nd ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster. 2001. 14.
 - 72 John E. Warriner. *English Grammar and Composition*. Fourth Course. Orlando: Harcourt. 1982 [1948]. 416.
 - 73 Paul M. Lovinger. *The Penguin Dictionary of American Usage and Style*. New York: Penguin. 2000. 326.

- 74 *Merriam-Webster's Guide to Punctuation and Style*. 2nd ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster. 2001. 14.
- 75 John E. Warriner. *English Grammar and Composition*. Fourth Course. Orlando: Harcourt. 1982 [1948]. 416; *Merriam-Webster's Guide to Punctuation and Style*. 2nd ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster. 2001. 14–15.
- 76 Traditional British and American usage differ here. The British tend to use more commas than do Americans (yes, I've actually studied this) and place a comma after a single PP at the beginning of a sentence, regardless of questions of clarity. British and American usage also differ as to the placement of commas in relation to the second of a pair of quotation marks. Americans put the comma inside the quotation mark; Brits put it outside.
- 77 John E. Warriner. *English Grammar and Composition*. Fourth Course. Orlando: Harcourt. 1982 [1948]. 416; Paul M. Lovinger. *The Penguin Dictionary of American Usage and Style*. New York: Penguin. 2000. 326. *Merriam-Webster's Guide to Punctuation and Style*. 2nd ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster. 2001. 13, which particularly points out the use of commas to set off an "an absolute phrase (a participle phrase with its own agent)," as in *Our business being concluded*, we adjourned for refreshments. We will address such PARTPs in Chapter 12.
- 78 COCA. Accessed 14 Jul 2025. *PBS NewsHour*. 5 Oct 2016.
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- 80 "Scott Slams Republican Budget Resolution." *Congressional Documents and Publications*. 9 Apr 2025.
- 81 Sean Michael Newhouse. "Agencies May Have to Pay More for Late Contractor Invoices." *Government Executive*. 2 Apr 2025; Joseph M. Williams & Joseph Bizup. *Style*. 13th ed. Hoboken, NJ: Pearson. 2021. 189.
- 82 Paul M. Lovinger. *The Penguin Dictionary of American Usage and Style*. New York: Penguin. 2000. 331. *Merriam-Webster's Guide to Punctuation and Style*. 2nd ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster. 2001. 24; 35.
- 83 Joseph M. Williams & Joseph Bizup. *Style*. 13th ed. Hoboken, NJ: Pearson. 2021. 186.
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- 155 In responding to a question, *no* may function as just a phatic response, or elliptically (e.g. *Did you eat the last cookie? No (I did not eat the last cookie)*), but remember that in other contexts, *no* functions as a determiner (e.g. *There are no cookies left*).
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Clauses

“Clause” is a term that covers a whole family of constituents. As a base definition, we will say that all clauses share the following features, though I will include notes with a couple of nuances:

- A clause always contains a finite verb that acts as the head of a VP:PRED.
- The verb in a clause always has a nominal functioning as the subject of the verb (NOMINAL:SUBJ).¹
- The NOMINAL:SUBJ and the verb agree in number and person.²
- To be formally complete, the VP:PRED must include all complements required by the verb.

In English, the unmarked or default order of the clause is typically Subject-Verb-Complement (SVC). We often rearrange clause constituent order in English (e.g. to form a question). To most easily analyze those rearranged clauses, we will first transform them back to their underlying SVC structure.

Clauses sound like sentences in that they include a NOMINAL:SUBJ and a VP:PRED. However, the reality is the other way around: sentences, also known as “independent clauses,” are only one variety of clause. There are also three kinds of dependent clauses:

- Adjective Clauses (ADJCL), a.k.a. Relative Clauses.
- Noun Clauses (NCL).
- Adverb Clauses (ADVCL), a.k.a. Subordinate Clauses.

What makes independent clauses different from dependent clauses is that independent clauses can stand by themselves as well-formed sentences, while dependent clauses cannot; a dependent clause is always a constituent within another clause, phrase, or fragment (see 10.3).

Independent Clause: *I want to buy that jacket.*³

ADJCL: *Here’s the jacket that I want to buy*_[ADJCL:MOD OF “jacket”].⁴

**That I want to buy.*

NCL: You know *that I want to buy that jacket*_[NCL:DO]*

**That I want to buy that jacket.*

ADVCL: I have to save my money *because I want to buy that jacket*_[ADVCL:SENTMOD]*

**Because I want to buy that jacket.*

Each dependent clause comprises an independent clause that has been altered. In the NCL and the ADVCL, an extra word—a complementizer or subordinator—has been added to the beginning of the clause, marking the clause as dependent. In the ADJCL, the order of the clause has been rearranged so that the dependent clause begins with a type of complementizer (called a relative pro-word) that refers back to the N' that the ADJCL modifies in the container clause.

In this chapter, we will start out by examining independent clauses and how they can be rearranged. We will then dig further into the details of the forms and functions of dependent clauses.

10.1 Independent Clauses—a.k.a. Sentences

Typically, an independent clause is organized so that the NOMINAL:SUBJ precedes the VP:PRED. This SVC order is called a “declarative” sentence because it is used to make a statement or declaration. However, there are several common ways in which that sentence order can be rearranged, including interrogative and imperative sentences, the use of expletive *there* and expletive *it*, passive voice sentences, and inversion. Most of these sentence rearrangements are further marked by the presence (or absence, in the case of the imperative mood) of particular constituents, marking those constructions as different from the default SVC construction. We commonly use these rearrangements of clause order to place familiar or topical information in the sentence initial position, and unfamiliar/new or emphasized information at the end of the sentence—the positions in which we generally expect those sorts of information to appear in clauses—and to create greater cohesion among sentences in paragraphs.⁵

10.1.1 Interrogative Sentences

Although sentences in SVC order are typically used to make a statement or declaration, in speaking we can use the declarative-order sentence to ask a question, simply by raising our vocal pitch at the end of the sentence. Think of the difference in how you would say and use these two sentences: *He isn't going to win. He isn't going to win?*

An interrogative sentence rearranges the SVC declarative order, and, as its name implies, it is used to ask a question. In an interrogative sentence, the NP:SUBJ + VP:PRED order of a declarative sentence is usually distorted according to one of four patterns.

Pattern 1: We may reverse the order of the subject and the first AUX of the complete verb; remember, this is one of the defining features of an auxiliary (see 6.1). If the verb in the declarative sentence has one or more AUX verbs preceding the MV, to change the declarative sentence into an interrogative sentence, simply swap the positions of the NP:SUBJ and the first AUX:

Declarative sentence: *They*_[NP:SUBJ] *are*_[AUX] *kicking*_[MV] *the can*_[NP:DO]⁶
Interrogative sentence: *Are*_[AUX] *they*_[NP:SUBJ] *kicking*_[MV] *the can*_[NP:DO]?⁷

This pattern holds when the MV is copular *be* with one or more auxiliaries:

Declarative sentence: *He*_[NP:SUBJ] *is*_[AUX] *being*_[MV] *a mentor to them*_[NP:DO]⁸
Interrogative sentence: *Is*_[AUX] *he*_[NP:SUBJ] *being*_[MV] *a mentor to them*_[NP:DO]?⁹

Notice that if there is more than one AUX in the verb, only the **first AUX** moves:

*They have been trained up to it.*⁹ **Have** *they been trained up to it?*
*100,000 PRIME-compliant smart meters will have been being installed.*¹⁰ **Will**
100,000 PRIME-compliant smart meters have been being installed?

If the complete verb has no AUX, we simply add an AUX *do* at the beginning of the sentence as a dummy AUX; this is called “do support”:

1. *They kick the can.*¹¹ *They **do** kick the can. **Do** they kick the can?*
2. *She kicks the can.*¹² *She **does** kick the can. **Does** she kick the can?*
3. *He kicked the can.*¹³ *He **did** kick the can. **Did** he kick the can?*

However, the *do* AUX is not just a dummy term: notice that, like the first AUX in any verb, *do* marks the tense of the verb in the interrogative sentence: in sentence 1, *kick* and *do* are both in the present tense, while in sentence 3, *kicked* and *did* are in the past tense. Also, in WME, the *do* AUX must agree with the NP:SUBJ in person and number: in sentence 2, *does* is the third-person singular form so that it agrees with *she*. Also, the *do* AUX changes the form of the following main verb to the base form (*kicked* → *did kick*).

Notice that the sentence in the interrogative order can also be used to make a statement, as when one exclaims, *Have they been kicking the can!*¹⁴ The labels “declarative” and “interrogative” refer primarily to the organization of the

sentence and only secondarily to the speech act (making a statement; asking a question) that we perform using that sentence.

Pattern 2: With copular *be* as the MV and no AUX, we may reverse the order of the subject and the verb, without *do* support:

Declarative sentence: *Miller*_[NP:SUBJ] *is*_[COPULAR BE: MV] *a star*_[NP:SC].¹⁵
Interrogative sentence: *Is*_[MV] *Miller*_[NP:SUBJ] *a star*_[NP:SC]?

Copular *be* is the only verb in American English for which it is currently conventional to form an interrogative sentence by inverting the subject and verb.

Patterns 3 and 4 both involve the use of interrogative pro-words. As with pronouns and the other varieties of pro-words that we have discussed so far, interrogative pro-words stand in for or replace words, phrases, or clauses. In the declarative-order clause, the interrogative pro-words usually stand in for the answer to the question. Here is a complete list of interrogative pro-words in English:

Interrogative Pro-Words

- Pronoun unmarked for case (PRON): *what, whatever, which, whichever.*
- Nominative case pronoun: *who, whoever.*
- Objective case pronoun: *whom, whomever.*
- Pro-adjective (PROADJ): *how, which.*
- Pro-determiner (PROD): *what, which.*
- Possessive pro-determiner: *whose.*
- Pro-adverb (PROADV): *how, how long, how many, how much, however, when, whenever, where, wherever, why, whyever.*

Pattern 3: We may precede sentences of patterns 1 or 2 with an interrogative PROADV. In transforming the declarative clause order to the interrogative clause order, the positions of the first AUX and SUBJ, or copular *be* and SUBJ, are swapped (as in Patterns 1 and 2), and the PROADV is simply moved from its position in the declarative order to the front of the interrogative sentence:

Declarative with AUX + MV: *He is being a mentor to them.*

Interrogative with AUX + MV: *Is he being a mentor to them?*

Declarative with answer: *He is being a mentor to them because he wants to.*

Declarative with PROADV: *He is being a mentor to them why.*

Interrogative with PROADV: *Why is he being a mentor to them?*

Declarative with *do* support: *They did kick the can.*

Interrogative with *do* support: *Did they kick the can?*

Declarative with answer: *They did kick the can into the woods.*

Declarative with PROADV: *They did kick the can where.*

Interrogative with PROADV: *Where did they kick the can?*

Declarative with copular *be*: *Miller is a star.*

Interrogative with copular *be*: *Is Miller a star?*

Declarative with answer: *Miller is a star because he practices constantly.*

Declarative with PROADV: *Miller is a star why.*

Interrogative with PROADV: *Why is Miller a star?*

Pattern 4: We may replace a phrase in the declarative sentence with an interrogative pro-word of the same form and move the interrogative pro-word to the front of the interrogative sentence. Sometimes, other changes must be made to the sentence as well.

A nominative interrogative pronoun can only function as a subject. It simply replaces the subject of the declarative sentence to change the declaration to a question:

Declarative: *They kicked the can. They could be kicking the can.*¹⁶

Interrogative: *Who kicked the can?*¹⁷ *Who/Whoever could be kicking the can?*

An objective case interrogative pronoun can function as a DO, IO, or PCOMP. However, the change from a declarative to an interrogative sentence will, in this case, require that the subject and the first AUX switch places. In the absence of an AUX, this construction will require *do* support:

Declarative: *You saw Phil today.*¹⁸

Interrogative with PRON:DO:

You saw whom today? → *Whom did you see today?*

Declarative: *He passed Trish the can.*¹⁹

Interrogative with PRON:IO:

He passed whom the can? → *Whom did he pass the can?*

He passed the can to whom? → *To whom did he pass the can?*

Whom did he pass the can to?

Declarative: *You bought a buggy for Donna and Stu?*²⁰

Interrogative with PRON:PCOMP:

You bought a buggy for whomever?

→ *For whomever did you buy a buggy? Whomever did you buy a buggy for?*

When an interrogative PRON functions as a PCOMP, we may just move the PRON to the front of the sentence, or we may move the whole PP. But note that moving the whole PP to the front (as in *To whom did he pass the can*) makes the sentence feel much more formal than ending with the PREP, as in *Whom did he pass the can to*, or the more commonly heard *Who did he pass the can to*? Traditionalists would flag this last, common option as egregiously wrong, since it uses the nominative form *who* in place of the objective form *whom*.

An interrogative PROD is attached to the noun it specifies. Therefore, the whole NP of which the interrogative PROD is a constituent must move to the front of the interrogative sentence:

Declarative: *These mountains were formed roughly 425 million years ago.*²¹

Interrogative PROD: SPEC OF N_[SUB]: *Which mountains were formed roughly 425 million years ago?*

Declarative: *She wants the yellow paint.*²²

Interrogative PROD: SPEC OF N_[DO]: *She wants which paint? → Which paint does she want?*

Declarative: *Denny gave me his program director title.*²³

Interrogative PROD: SPEC OF N_[DO]: *Denny gave me whose program director title? → Whose program director title did Denny give me?*

Declarative: *I gave my love a cherry.*²⁴

Interrogative PROD: SPEC OF N_[IO]: *She gave whose love a cherry? → Whose love did she give a cherry? To whose love did she give a cherry? Whose love did she give a cherry to?*

In the transition from *She wants the yellow paint*, to *Which paint does she want?* strictly speaking, the interrogative pro-word *which* does not just substitute for the determiner *the* but for the D + ADJ, *the yellow*. “The yellow” is neither a DP nor an ADJP. I don’t have a good term for labeling *which* in this context. PRO-(D + ADJ)? Pro-prenominal? This use of *which* is in the hazy turf between determiners and adjectives.

However, the problem of interrogative *which* having *the yellow* as its antecedent points up an interesting issue: *which* can be an interrogative PROADJ, but only when its antecedent ADJP modifies a plural count noun or a singular mass noun because these nouns can be used without a determiner:

With a Plural Count Noun

Declarative: *You do not like green eggs.*²⁵

Interrogative PROADJ: MOD OF N: *You do not like which eggs? → Which eggs do you not like?*

With a Singular Mass Noun

Declarative: *Unbleached flour is the best choice for baking paska bread.*²⁶

Interrogative PROADJ: MOD OF N: *Which flour is the best choice for baking paska bread?*

How can also be an interrogative PROADJ when it replaces an ADJP:SC:

Declarative: *The soup is delicious.*²⁷

Interrogative PROADJ: SC: *The soup is how? → How is the soup?*

To parse an interrogative sentence, start by rearranging it into declarative order. This is easy to do when the interrogative sentence has no interrogative pro-word: just reverse the order of the NP:SUBJ and the first AUX or copular *be*. In sentences with interrogative pro-words, identify the pro-word's function by identifying the complete verb, its subject and complements, and finally the slot where the pro-word would logically fit in the sentence.

Interrogative sentence: *Where were they kicking the can?*

Declarative sentence order: *They were kicking the can where.*

Declarative sentence: *They were kicking the can down the road.*²⁸

Although the second “sentence,” *They were kicking the can where*, is not grammatically well formed, the interrogative PROADV *where* serves to mark the place where the question-answering constituent would go. This approach works for parsing sentences with each of the interrogative pro-words.

Non-WME interrogatives: interrogatives without inversion: BL speakers may form interrogatives “without inversion of the subject and auxiliary verb, usually with rising intonation, as in ‘Why *I can't* play?’ for [WME] ‘Why can't I play?’ and ‘*They didn't* take it?’ for [WME] ‘Didn't they take it?’”²⁹ While the former example is not a feature of WME varieties, the latter, with declarative order and rising inflection, is quite common across American English varieties.

Interrogatives with Aux-deletion: Also, as we saw earlier, in the section on absent *be* (6.1.8), in American informal varieties, both copular *be* and progressive AUX *be* can be deleted from the beginning of interrogative sentences, as can the perfect AUX *have* and AUX *do*:

Informal Deletion of

Copular *be*: *(Are) you in there?*³⁰

Progressive AUX *be*: *(Are) you kidding me?*³¹

Perfect AUX *have*: *(Have) you seen the paper?*³²

AUX *do*: *(Does) he know how to play basketball?*³³

In the brief discussion of sentence fragments in 10.3, we will see that this sort of deletion of clause-initial material also occurs in declarative sentences.

Non-WME quotatives: When the QUOT is an embedded question in the form of a noun clause, as in the WME sentence, *I asked him if he could go with me*,³⁴ BL speakers may instead use inversion of the SUBJ with the AUX to form the embedded question: *I asked him could he go with me*,³⁵ spoken with a declarative intonation. Saying, “I asked him” marks that what follows will be a question, so it makes sense to state the question as a question. In WME and formal written English, we find the same word order with a pause before

the QUOT and a rising inflection on the question: *I asked him, “Could he go with me?”* (see the related verb complementation pattern with DO + QUOT in 7.1.3.6).

EFL-related interrogatives: Like English, other languages often “express questions by using only intonation.”³⁶ However, some languages, such as Arabic, use “intonation plus a special question particle placed at the beginning of a sentence.”³⁷ As a result, speakers of Arabic treat English *do* as if it were a question particle, and “tend to start [English] *yes/no* questions with a form of *do* that usually agrees with the tense of the main verb. The word order remains the same and the verb maintains its tense inflection instead of taking on its [base] form.”³⁸ This leads to questions with the following forms:

- **Does he wants to be a merchant?*
- **Did the girl knew many languages?*
- **Does her mother could have made a mistake?*³⁹

In 6.1 we discussed tag questions in connection with auxiliary verbs. In some languages, such as Farsi, Arabic, and Turkish, “the closest equivalent to a tag question in English” is created by “attaching a negative expression to a positive declarative sentence.”⁴⁰ In forming tag questions, native speakers of Farsi “often follow the pattern of their native language by attaching *isn’t it* to a declarative sentence:

- **You said you are going to Shiraz, isn’t it?*
- **They live in New York, isn’t it?*⁴¹

Returning to questions marked with an interrogative pro-word, Romance languages and Farsi form *wh*-questions by placing a *wh*-pro-word at the beginning of a declarative sentence and inverting the subject and verb, leading speakers of those languages to produce sentences like the following:

- **Why you said that?*
- **Who he gave a book to?*
- **Why that happened so many times in a short period?*⁴²

10.1.2 Imperative Mood Sentences

As we saw in 6.1.4, the imperative mood is used to deliver directives, such as commands, instructions, invitations, and wishes. In imperative sentences, the usual subject-predicate structure is altered in that the subject—and agent!—seem simply to be deleted: *Write it down.*⁴³ *Come on in.*⁴⁴ Traditional grammar says that the subject/agent is “understood” to be the second-person personal PRON *you*. But this notion is counterintuitive: though we could create appropriate contexts for the following sentences, we do not generally say them and mean the

same thing as the two imperative voice sentences above: ?*You write it down.* ?*You come on in.* While *Write it down* would be understood as an order to do something, *You write it down* is an instruction or direction that would appear in a series of such instructions. Another analysis has it that the imperative sentence is more like, [*I am telling you to*] *write it down.* [*I am telling you to*] *come on in.* In this analysis, the verb of the imperative is an infinitive functioning as part of a verb complement, where the portion of the sentence in the brackets is conventionally deleted. Yet another analysis treats the verb of the imperative as modal, but with the modal AUX and subject deleted, as in, [*You should*] *write it down.* [*You should*] *come on in.* This makes sense in that the action named in the command has not occurred yet and is therefore unreal, and thus modal; hence the traditional label of imperative mood.

So what? An imperative sentence, by deleting the subject, moves the verb forward in the sentence and makes the topic of the sentence the action, rather than the agent.

10.1.3 Expletive there

Four types of sentences are commonly analyzed as declarative sentences that have been rearranged to present information for purposes of cohesion between sentences; for emphasis; or for some other rhetorical effect. These four types are sentences beginning with an expletive *there* or an expletive *it*, sentences in the passive voice, and inverted sentences.

The expletive-*there* construction can be used to rearrange sentences in which the VP:PRED comprises a copular *be* followed by an adverbial **subject complement (SC)**:

Declarative: *A package is on our porch.*⁴⁵

Expletive there: *There is a package on our porch.*⁴⁶

Declarative: *Forces of change are at work in the world.*⁴⁷

Expletive there: *There are forces of change at work in the world.*⁴⁸

In the second sentence of each pair, the word *there* is a pseudo-subject: a kind of expletive or placeholder for the agent. Note that *there* is not functioning adverbially: it is not telling us *where* something is. In the expletive-*there* sentence, the agent is the nominal that follows the copular *be* (e.g. *a package*; *forces of change*). These sentences with the expletive *there* in the subject position are

sometimes called “existential-*there* sentences” since they assert the existence of some person, thing, or state of affairs.

The existential-*there* construction is also useful because it allows us simply to assert the existence of some person, thing, or state of affairs. In order to introduce as a topic the idea that some particular house exists, it would sound odd to say, *A house is in New Orleans*. Instead, the existential-*there* sentence expresses the same idea: *There is a house in New Orleans*.⁴⁹ The existential-*there* construction also shifts the stress in the sentence from *A house is in New Orleans* to *There is a house in New Orleans*, thus emphasizing the fact of the existence of the house.

Non-WME existential-*there* constructions: According to traditional ideas of style, in an existential-*there* sentence, the form of *be* must agree in number with the agent: thus, *There is_[SG] a package_[SG] on our porch*, but *There are_[PL] forces of change_[PL] at work in the world*. However, in “virtually all vernacular varieties” of American English, this “rule” doesn’t apply, and with varying degrees of frequency, we find leveling to the singular form in sentences like *There was_[SG] five people_[PL] there* and *There s_[SG] two women_[PL] in the lobby*. “In fact, [WME] dialects are moving towards this pattern” as well.⁵⁰

Another non-WME version of the existential-*there* construction occurs in vernacular varieties of English that use *it* or *they* instead of *there*:

It’s a dog in the yard. [c.f. WME *There’s a dog in the yard.*]

They’s a good show on TV. [c.f. WME *There’s a good show on TV.*]

These constructions are a notable feature of BL,⁵¹ and “*they* for *there* seems to be found only in Southern-based vernaculars; *it* [for *there*] is more general in vernacular varieties.”⁵²

So what? I neither approve nor disapprove of these non-WME forms: people do, in fact, use them. If you wish to fit in as a member of a community, then you will speak in some passable version of how the locals speak or deal with the social consequences of being perceived as ill-spoken, different, or uppity. This holds for all communities: just as much for speakers of WME varieties trying to fit into non-WME speech communities as for speakers of non-WME varieties trying to fit into WME speech communities.

EFL-related existential-*there* constructions: In existential-*there* sentences, Chinese speakers may omit relative pronouns from an embedded adjective clause, leading them to produce a sentence like **There are many varieties of cancer exist* instead of *There are many varieties of cancer that exist*, and **There are*

many people in Hong Kong want to emigrate instead of There are many people in Hong Kong who want to emigrate. Chinese speakers produce these sentences by putting English words into the grammatical structure of the equivalent Chinese sentence.⁵³

10.1.4 Expletive it

Another “existential construction” involves using an expletive *it* as a pseudo-subject. We can use expletive *it* in a sentence construction called “*it* extraposition” to rearrange a declarative sentence, taking the independent clause, turning it into a noun clause (NCL) beginning with the subordinator or complementizer *that*, and placing the NCL after *it* and a copular verb + ADJP. The NCL remains the agent of the new sentence but functions as an SC.

The fiction writer has a revolting attachment to the poor.

*It seems that the fiction writer has a revolting attachment to the poor.*⁵⁴

Education has given way to media.

*It is obvious that education has given way to media.*⁵⁵

As with *there* in the existential construction just discussed, the word *it* in these sentences is also an expletive: *it* has no antecedent or postcedent nominal to which it refers; it’s just a placeholder. The sentence *It seems that the fiction writer has a revolting attachment to the poor* implies something like “That the fiction writer has a revolting attachment to the poor seems to be the case.” *It* extraposition allows us to say the latter thought in fewer words. In general, readers of English prefer to see a clause constructed so that a short subject is followed by a longer predicate. We often use *it* extraposition to rearrange a sentence in order to move a long subject into the predicate position. In the following example, the subject of the first sentence is an NCL:

That the galaxy is teeming with intelligent beings that voluntarily confine themselves to their home planets seems unlikely.

*It seems unlikely that the galaxy is teeming with intelligent beings that voluntarily confine themselves to their home planets.*⁵⁶

While both sentences are grammatically well formed, the second sounds (to my ears) clearer.⁵⁷

Tough-movement: In *tough*-movement sentences, copular *be* is followed by an ADJP and an infinitive phrase, as in *It is [tough]_[ADJP] [for consumers to keep track of what’s new and what’s not]_[InfP]*.⁵⁸ The expletive *it* in the subject position fills in for the infinitive phrase, as the sentence can be rearranged as follows, with the identical meaning: *To keep track of what’s new and what’s not is tough for*

consumers. This structure is called “*tough-movement*” because “*tough*” is one of many adjectives that permit these two alternative arrangements; c.f. *The concept is easy to understand*,⁵⁹ and *It is easy to understand the concept*.⁶⁰ Think about other adjectives that fit into this pattern.

EFL-related *tough-movement* constructions: *Tough-movement*, like all of the constructions with expletive *it* and *there*, is used to control the flow of information among sentences and to help the audience keep identifying the speaker or writer’s topic. Some languages use other constructions for identifying the topic of a sentence. For example, Chinese moves an NP to the beginning of a sentence to identify the topic of the sentence. We can do this in English when we take a sentence like *I don’t like asparagus, but I like broccoli*, and, for emphasis, invert the clauses by moving the DO of each verb to the front of the clause: *Asparagus I don’t like, but broccoli I do*. For Chinese L1 speakers, this difference leads to them producing sentences like, **I am difficult to learn English*, instead of *It is difficult for me to learn English*, or, *English is difficult for me to learn*. Taking the structure from their L1, the Chinese speaker takes the agent of the infinitive (*me*) and moves it to the front of the sentence; they take “I” to be the topic, as it is “I” who is having “difficulty,” and “I” is “learning English.”⁶¹

Korean also has no existential-*it* construction; instead, Korean adds a topic marker to a noun. This leads to Korean L1 speakers producing sentences like **Many Koreans are difficult to learn English because of pronunciation*, instead of *It is difficult for many Koreans to learn English*.⁶²

Simple existentials: Existential *it* is commonly used in sentences like, *It’s hot in here*⁶³ to make statements about topics like the weather and environment (*It’s quiet out here*),⁶⁴ time (*It’s 8:00 in the morning*;⁶⁵ *It’s Memorial Day*;⁶⁶ *It’s been two weeks since you got back*),⁶⁷ and distance (*It’s ten miles out in the desert*).⁶⁸ Note that in these simple existential sentences, we cannot put the SC in place of the expletive *it*: **Very hot today is*; **8 AM is*.

EFL-related simple existential constructions: L1 speakers of languages as varied as Chinese, Spanish, and Italian may have problems with simple existentials, because these languages have no equivalent of existential *it* to fill the subject position. Chinese speakers, for example, “might translate directly from their L1 and end up producing **Today very hot* in an attempt to express the meaning of *It’s very hot today*.”⁶⁹ Similarly, Spanish or Italian speakers might render the same sentence as **Is very hot today*.

10.1.5 Passive Voice

As we have seen in the earlier discussions of passive voice, the passive construction takes a sentence with a transitive verb and rearranges the order of its constituents, moving the DO (which names the patient) from the original declarative

sentence order into the subject position, changing the verb by adding a passive AUX *be* followed by the past participle of a verb, and moving the original subject nominal (which names the agent) into an optional *by/with* PP at the end of the sentence:

Active

*They*_[SUBJ/AGENT] *kicked the can*_[DO/PATIENT].

Passive

*The can*_[SUBJ/PATIENT] *was kicked* [*by them*_[AGENT]]_[PP:AGENTIVE]
*The can*_[SUBJ/PATIENT] *was kicked.*

In the passive voice version of the sentence, the agent is now named by the nominal in the optional *by/with* PP. We label that PP with the function of “agentive” because it contains the nominal naming the agent. As we’ve seen (7.1.3.1), we can also create a passive voice sentence by moving an IO (sometimes called the “beneficiary,” as distinct from the “patient” since the person or object named in the IO receives the benefit of the action) to the subject position:

Active

*I*_[SUBJ/AGENT] *gave my love*_[IO/BENEFICIARY] *a cherry*_[DO/PATIENT].

DO Passive

*A cherry*_[SUBJ/PATIENT] *was given to my love*_[IO/BENEFICIARY] (*by me*_[AGENT]).

IO Passive

*My love*_[SUBJ/BENEFICIARY] *was given a cherry*_[DO/PATIENT] (*by me*_[AGENT]).⁷⁰

Passive voice allows us to rearrange the order of information in a sentence; we may choose the passive voice in order to make the patient (or the beneficiary), rather than the agent, the subject, and thereby the topic of the sentence. We may do this for purposes of emphasis, or because the patient is the topic of the current paragraph, or because the patient is familiar information and the agent is new information. Typically, audiences expect familiar or old information—information that is common knowledge, or that has already been mentioned—to appear at the beginning of a sentence, in the subject; audiences then expect new or unfamiliar information to appear after the verb, in the predicate.

So what? Passive voice and inversion (the next type of sentence reordering) both give writers and speakers a way of reshaping sentences so they conform to the audience's expectations about information flow.⁷¹

10.1.6 Inversion

A common rhetorical and poetic device is sentence inversion. Arguably, the first sentence of this paragraph is itself inverted: since this section is about “sentence inversion,” the topic of the sentence (*sentence inversion*) ought to come first, in the subject position, followed by the elaborating information (*a common rhetorical and poetic device*). A great many forms of inversion are commonly used in English speech and writing, including, as we have already seen, most types of interrogative sentences and *there*- and *it*-extraposition. Here are some more.

The **SUBJ** can be inverted with the **MV**:

Negative Introduction

I have no ready verbal paraphrase with which to replace it, nor _[NEG] *have* _[V] *I* _[SUBJ]
*a ready answer.*⁷² (c.f. *I have no ready answer.*)

Introductory Adverbial

First comes _[V] *love* _[SUBJ], *then comes* _[V] *marriage* _[SUBJ]. (c.f. *First love comes, then marriage comes.*)

After A comes _[V] *B* _[SUBJ], *then comes* _[V] *C* _[SUBJ], *next comes* _[V] *D* _[SUBJ]. (c.f. *After A B comes, then C comes, next D comes.*)

Down came _[V] *the rain* _[SUBJ] and washed the spider out. (c.f. *The rain came down and washed the spider out.*)

AdvCL with as

Analytical rigor is important to learn, as is the ability to defend an unorthodox view _[SUBJ]⁷³ (c.f. *Analytical rigor is important to learn, as the ability to defend an unorthodox view is.*)

Sometimes an **AUX** is inverted with the **SUBJ** or the **MV**:

Negative Introduction

Not until I heard the sound of my son's old pickup rounding the corner could _[AUX] *I* _[SUBJ]
drift off _[MV] *to sleep.*⁷⁴ (c.f. *I* _[SUBJ] *could* _[AUX] *not* _[NEG] *drift off* _[MV] *to sleep until . . .*)

Introductory Participle

Forgotten_[MV] *in the discussion* **was**_[AUX] *the fact that President George W. Bush said virtually the same thing in Mexico two years ago*_[SUBJ].⁷⁵ (c.f. *The fact that President George W. Bush said virtually the same thing in Mexico two years ago*_[SUBJ] **was**_[AUX] *forgotten*_[MV] *in the discussion*. [passive voice verb])

Coming_[MV] *in last* **was**_[AUX] *North Las Vegas*_[SUBJ].⁷⁶ (c.f. *North Las Vegas*_[SUBJ] **was**_[AUX] *coming*_[MV] *in last*. [progressive aspect verb])

So Adv AUX SUBJ MV ...

So rarely_[Adv] **does**_[AUX] *a game*_[SUBJ] **make**_[MV] *you feel the weight of the awful things that you do*.⁷⁷ (c.f. *A game*_[SUBJ] **does**_[AUX] **make**_[MV] *you feel . . .*)

So ... That ...

So rarely **does**_[AUX] *a comet*_[SUBJ] **appear**_[MV] *visible to the naked eye* **that** *when one does, it is considered a major event*. (c.f. *A comet*_[SUBJ] **does**_[AUX] **appear**_[MV] *visible to the naked eye so rarely that when one does . . .*)

Had-for-if Clauses

I gladly would have reported it **had**_[AUX] *I*_[SUBJ] **remembered**_[MV] *it*.⁷⁸ (c.f. *I gladly would have reported it* **if** *I*_[SUBJ] **had**_[AUX] **remembered**_[MV] *it*.)

The verb complement may also be inverted with other clause constituents:

Introductory DO: *This*_[PRON:DO] **I**_[SUBJ] *already knew*_[MV].⁷⁹ (c.f. **I**_[SUBJ] *already knew*_[MV] *this*_[DO].)

Introductory SC: *Whose woods*_[SC] **these**_[SUBJ] **are**_[MV] *I think I know*.⁸⁰ (c.f. **These**_[SUBJ] **are**_[MV] *whose woods*_[SC] . . .)

Once again, we associate such strong inversions with poetry—so much so that SUBJ-V and complement inversions are sometimes called “poetic inversion.”

EFL-related inversion use: Unlike English, in Portuguese, when a sentence begins with a negative adverbial, there is no inversion of the SUBJ and the AUX, so that Portuguese L1 speakers who are learning English may produce sentences like, **Only with a bank loan* *we can* *buy the car*, instead of, *Only with a bank loan* *can we* *buy the car*.⁸¹

10.2 Dependent Clauses

Dependent clauses occur as constituents within independent clauses, dependent clauses, and phrases:

*If you want more detail on [how we got here], you should head over to our Perfect Bracket Tracker; where we show in real time [how we got from tens of millions of brackets to one].*⁸²

If you want more detail on how we got here is an adverb clause (ADVCL) functioning as a sentence modifier (ADVCL:SENTMOD). It contains a PP, *on how we got here*, which contains a noun clause (NCL), *how we got here*, which is functioning as the complement of the preposition *on* (NCL:PCOMP). *Where we show in real time how we got from tens of millions of brackets to one* is an adjective clause (ADJCL) functioning as a post-modifier of *Perfect Bracket Tracker* (ADJCL:MOD OF “Perfect Bracket Tracker”), and this clause contains yet another NCL, *how we got from tens of millions of brackets to one*, which is functioning as the DO of the verb *show* (NCL:DO).

To keep all of these relationships clear, we will refer to a dependent clause as being a constituent within a container clause or phrase. Thus, the dependent clause *where we show . . . one* is a container clause for the dependent clause *how we got from . . . to one*. The prepositional phrase *on how we got here* is the container for the dependent clause *how we got here*. The NP, *our Perfect . . . one* is the container for the ADJCL *where we . . . to one*. And the sentence—the independent clause—is the container for the ADVCL *If you want . . . got here*.

As the names of each type imply, dependent clauses function within their container constituents in many of the ways that other adjectivals, nominals, and adverbials function in clauses and phrases (for a focused discussion of adjectivals, nominals, and adverbials, see Chapter 11).

10.2.1 Adjective Clauses (AdjCL; a.k.a. Relative Clauses)

All dependent clauses are marked as different from independent, declarative clauses. Adjective clauses may be marked in three ways:

1. An ADJCL is most commonly a constituent within an NP, functioning as a post-modifier of the head noun and appearing after the noun it modifies, either immediately or very shortly.
2. An ADJCL is usually marked by the presence of a relative pronoun (RELPRON) (although, as we’ll see below, that RELPRON may be deleted when it functions as the DO, IO, or PCOMP within the ADJCL) or some other relative pro-word (relative pro-determiner [RELPROD]; relative pro-adverb [RELPROAdv]); the antecedent of the relative pro-word is always an N’ comprising all of the other constituents of the NP that precede the ADJCL.
3. An ADJCL is often marked by the distortion of the order of the clause: whatever the grammatical function of the relative pro-word (RELPRON, RELPROD, or RELPROAdv) within the ADJCL, the relative pro-word will be moved to the beginning of the ADJCL (except when a RELPRON functions as a PCOMP; then

the whole PP may move to the beginning of the ADJCL). In these respects, relative pro-words work very much like interrogative pro-words.

Adjective clauses most commonly function as post-modifiers of nouns within NPs. The only exception is when an ADJCL functions as a non-essential modifier of a preceding clause; we will discuss this usage below. When an ADJCL modifies a noun, it functions as an adjectival constituent of the NP, much like ADJPs and PPs. We can see this clearly when we apply the pronoun replacement test for determining which sentence constituents are part of a particular NP. In the sentence *Another woman whom I met at the New Castle Farmers Market attracted my attention*,⁸³ the verb in the container clause is *attracted*. We might be inclined to say that the subject of *attracted* is *another woman*. We can double-check whether we have identified the complete NP:SUBJ by using the pronoun replacement test:

[*Another woman*] *whom I met at the New Castle Farmers Market attracted my attention.*

?*She whom I met at the New Castle Farmers Market attracted my attention.*

Substituting *she* for the apparent NP *another woman* sounds odd in the context of the rest of the sentence because we have not identified the complete NP:SUBJ.

The ADJCL *whom I met at the New Castle Farmers Market* functions as a post-modifier of the noun *woman* and is a constituent of the NP:SUBJ:

[*Another woman whom I met at the New Castle Farmers Market*] *attracted my attention.*

She attracted my attention.

In everyday language, ADJCLs do not, typically, modify personal pronouns. However, we find this construction in formal ritual language, as in:

*Four suns since was the word brought to me from “She-who-must-be-obeyed.”*⁸⁴

*This was the holy place, the place of He Who Walks Behind the Rows.*⁸⁵

*He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches.*⁸⁶

*Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.*⁸⁷

Demonstrative and indefinite pronouns may take ADJCLs as modifiers in ordinary language:

*Those who attended research institutions were least likely to be K-12 teachers.*⁸⁸

*Anyone who attended college through the mid-1960s will recall the in loco parentis regulations.*⁸⁹

As a post-modifier of a noun, an ADJCL will commonly appear directly after the noun it modifies, as in the sentence *Another woman whom I met at the New Castle Farmers Market attracted my attention*. However, just as we can have more than one ADJP as pre-modifiers of a noun, we can have more than one post-modifying adjectival:

A woman	[in a red jacket]	[whom I saw at a cafe]	caught my attention.
PP:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF		AdjCL:MOD OF "woman"	
		"woman"	

For purposes of clarity, though, we prefer to keep the ADJCL close to the noun that is the head of the NP so that the reference of the RELPRON remains clear. In the following sentence, it is not clear what the ADJCL modifies:

The woman	[with the tall man]	[whom I saw at a cafe]	caught my attention.
PP:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF		?AdjCL:MOD OF "woman"	
		"woman"	
		?AdjCL:MOD OF "man"	

As a speaker or writer, we might intend *whom I saw at a cafe* to modify the noun *woman*; but because the ADJCL immediately follows the noun *man*, a reader or listener will assume that the ADJCL modifies the noun it is closer to.

Although I have said that the ADJCL modifies a noun, it seems more reasonable to argue that the ADJCL does not just modify the head noun of the NP but that it modifies the entire N' that precedes it. That N' is the antecedent of the RELPRON. In the sentence *Another woman whom I met at the New Castle Farmers Market attracted my attention*, the antecedent of the RELPRON *whom* is not just the noun *woman* but the whole N' *another woman*:

- I met whom at the New Castle Farmers Market.*
**I met woman at the New Castle Farmers Market.*
I met another woman at the New Castle Farmers Market.

The same is true for the sentence *The woman in the red jacket whom I saw at a cafe attracted my attention*, in which the antecedent of *whom* is not just the noun *woman* but the whole N', *the woman in the red jacket*:

- I saw whom at a cafe.*
I saw a woman in a red jacket at a cafe.

ADJCL functioning as a modifier of a clause: There is one context in which an ADJCL does not function as a post-modifier of a noun: when it functions as a non-essential modifier of an entire preceding clause.

*The problem is the plant is difficult to propagate, which put a damper on efforts to try to breed new varieties.*⁹⁰

*Thousands of East Germans drove their Trabants over the border when the Wall fell, which made it a kind of automotive liberator.*⁹¹

In each of these sentences, we know that the ADJCL is modifying the entire preceding clause—as if that clause were an N’—because the antecedent of the relative pro-word *which* is that entire clause. *Which* functions as the subject in both adjective clauses, so its antecedent is, in the first sentence, whatever *put a damper . . .*, that is, the NCL [*that*] *the plant is difficult to propagate*: “That the plant is difficult to propagate put a damper . . .”; in the second sentence, the antecedent of *which* is whatever *made it a kind . . .*, which is [*that*] *thousands of East Germans drove their Trabants over the border when the Wall fell*. At the same time, the ADJCL tells something about *what kind of* event is named in the modified clause. Notice that these ADJCLs are not sentence modifiers: they do not provide adverbial information, and we cannot move them. Nonetheless, because they are outside the SUBJ-PRED structure of the clauses they modify, we will consider them further when we get to ADVCLs below. Finally, we know that these ADJCLs are non-essential modifiers because the reader does not need the information in them in order to know which events are being described in the sentences they modify.

10.2.1.1 Relative Pro-Words

Relative pro-words—pronouns (RELPRON), pro-determiners (RELPROD), pro-adverbs (RELPROADV), and pro-clauses (RELPROCL)—perform two jobs: first, relative pro-words refer back to an antecedent that, except in the case of a RELPROCL, is an N’ comprising all of the constituents within the NP that precede the ADJCL. Second, the relative pro-word has a function within the ADJCL itself. Because the ADJCL is a clause, it has an interior constituent structure like a sentence, and the relative pro-word fulfills some role within the clause structure. When we turn the default SVC declarative structure of a sentence into an ADJCL, we rearrange the order of clause constituents. Specifically, we displace the relative pro-word from whatever slot it fills in the declarative SVC clause order and move the relative pro-word to the front of the ADJCL. To most easily analyze the function of the relative pro-word and the structure of the ADJCL, we must first rearrange the ADJCL into its declarative SVC clause order.

The sentence *The woman in a red jacket whom I saw at a cafe attracted my attention* contains the ADJCL, *whom I saw at a cafe*, in which *whom* refers back to *the woman in the red jacket*.

whom I saw at a cafe → *the woman in a red jacket I saw at a cafe*

To parse the ADJCL, we must determine where to put *the woman in a red jacket* so as to restore the clause to SVC order. Within the clause, the verb is *saw*, and its subject is *I*. *I saw whom or what?* The answer, *the woman in a red jacket*, will be the DO. Thus, in the adjective clause, *whom* is a relative pronoun that functions as the DO of *saw* (RELPRON:DO OF “saw”).

the woman in a red jacket I saw at a cafe
 → *I saw [the woman in a red jacket] at a cafe.*
*I saw whom*_[RELPRON:DO OF “saw”] *at a cafe.*

Relative pro-words have a variety of forms and can fill a variety of functions. Although the relative pro-word must agree with its antecedent as to whether the pro-word is animate or inanimate, the form of the pro-word is dictated by its function within the ADJCL. Traditionally, members of this class of words are called “relative pronouns,” but we will more properly speak of relative pro-words since several of them do not function as nominals within the ADJCL:

Relative Pro-Words

- **Relative pronoun** (unmarked for case): *that, which*.
- **Relative nominative case pronoun**: *who*.
- **Relative objective case pronoun**: *whom*.
- **Relative possessive pro-determiner**: *whose*.
- **Relative pro-adverbs**: *why, when, where, that*.
- **Relative pro-clause**: *which*.

There is nothing that distinguishes or marks the case of *that* and *which*, and both can function in nominative roles (SUBJ, SC) or objective roles (DO, IO, PCOMP). And *that*, the amazing all-purpose word, can sometimes take on an adverbial function. In *The reason that he's on the list is pretty easy to describe*,⁹² *that* fills the same slot as could be filled by the RELPROADV *why* in *the reason why he's on the list*.⁹³ In both cases, the relative pro-word *that/why* fills in for the N' *the reason*, which itself is a placeholder for a clause modifier, such as *because he deserves to be*. By this convoluted logic, in these examples *that* and *why* are each functioning as a RELPROADV:ADJCLMOD.

So what? How to use whom: The form label we put on a relative pro-word is dictated by its function within the ADJCL. This is most significant when the relative pro-word refers to a person and functions in a role that demands the objective case (DO, IO, PCOMP), as in the sentence, *Another woman whom I met at the New Castle Farmers Market attracted my attention*. In formal English, the RELPRON in this sentence must be the objective case form *whom* because that PRON refers to a living person (*the woman*) and functions as the DO of “met.”

Here are examples of the whole range of functions that relative pro-words may perform within an ADJCL. We start with **nominal functions**:

- **Subject:** *The reporter who wrote the article has since been fired.*⁹⁴
Who_[RELPRON:SUBJ] wrote the article.
*This is the book that made me love books.*⁹⁵
*Let's delve into the book which made us question everything.*⁹⁶
The problem is the plant is difficult to propagate, which put a damper on efforts to try to breed new varieties.

In the last sentence above, *which* functions as the subject of the ADJCL, so it would be reasonable to label it as a RELPRON. At the same time, because its antecedent is a clause, *which* can also be understood as a relative pro-clause (RELPROCL).

An aside about *that* versus *which* as a RELPRON: While either *that* or *which* may be used with an ADJCL when it is an **essential** modifier, only *which* can be used when the ADJCL is a **non-essential** modifier. So this,

*I am currently re-reading the book, **which** I often use in teaching.*⁹⁷

but not this,

I am currently re-reading the book, **that I often use in teaching.*

The use of the comma and *which* to mark the ADJCL tells the reader that the information presented in the clause is non-essential: the reader does not need the information in order to identify the particular book being referred to in the sentence. By contrast, in the sentence *This is the book that made me love books*, the ADJCL *that made me love books* is essential information: without it, we do not know which *book* is being referred to. But note that the same ADJCL could just as well be marked by *which*: *This is the book which made me love books*. Conventionally, it is preferable to use *that* (rather than *which*) with an ADJCL that is functioning as an essential modifier; some style guides claim as a rule that one must use *that* with an ADJCL functioning as an essential modifier, and that one may use *which* only if several instances of the word *that* appear in close proximity.⁹⁸ In either case, with an ADJCL functioning as an essential modifier, the pro-word should not be preceded by a comma: there should be no break between the essential modifier and its head. By contrast, one must use *which*, preceded by a comma, with an ADJCL that is functioning as a non-essential modifier, as in, *I forced myself to finish the book, **which** was just torture.*⁹⁹ Any adjectival constituent can be used as a non-essential modifier; we have already discussed nominal and adjectival appositive phrases (2.2 and 4.1.1, respectively) and ADJCLs, and we will discuss the essential/

non-essential distinction in greater detail with particular reference to adjectival PARTPs (12.1.2) and INFPs (12.2.2).

- **DO:** Another woman whom I met at the New Castle Farmers Market attracted my attention.
I met whom_[RELPRON:DO] at the New Castle Farmers Market.
*Certain people don't like the book that I wrote.*¹⁰⁰

A RELPRON may also function as an IO; however, the prepositions *to* or *for* must typically be included in the ADJCL (remember the *to/for* test for the IO in 7.1.3.1?):

- **IO:** The spoiled boy that/whom I gave a future (to) is Hoop.
*Hoop is the spoiled boy to whom I gave a future.*¹⁰¹
I gave whom_[RELPRON:IO] a future.
A client that/whom I made a website for would like me to manage her social media.
*A client for whom I made a website would like me to manage her social media.*¹⁰²
I made whom_[RELPRON:IO] a website.

However, it is possible in informal language to delete the preposition *to*, though I have not found an example of deleting the preposition *for*:

*It reminds me of the woman whom I gave a drink and some money **||** the other day.*¹⁰³

As we just saw with the *to/for* IO, a RELPRON may function as a PCOMP:

- **PCOMP:**
*I did learn to listen and better understand the teachers with whom I worked.*¹⁰⁴
*I began to focus on the people whom I worked with.*¹⁰⁵
*I'm proud of the people that I worked with.*¹⁰⁶
I worked with whom/that_[RELPRON:PCOMP].
*It had taken the boat on which she sailed a very long time to cross the ocean.*¹⁰⁷
*Below is an image that describes the boat that she sailed on.*¹⁰⁸
She sailed on which/that_[RELPRON:PCOMP].

These last sentences show us one of the two situations in which an ADJCL will not begin with a relative pro-word. When a RELPRON functions as a PCOMP, we can move the whole PP to the beginning of the ADJCL. But we also often just move the RELPRON and leave the preposition at the end of the ADJCL.

A major warning: when the RELPRON functions as the DO, IO or PCOMP, it can be, and often is deleted, creating the other situation in which an adjective clause doesn't begin with a relative pro-word:

- **DO:** *The book that/which I wrote under the name Jeffrey Hudson was A Case of Need.*
The book I wrote under the name Jeffrey Hudson was A Case of Need.
- **IO:** *The spoiled boy that/whom I gave a future (to) is Hoop.*
The spoiled boy I gave a future (to) is Hoop.
- **PCOMP:** *Below is an image that describes the boat on which she sailed.*
Below is an image that describes the boat that/which she sailed on.
Below is an image that describes the boat she sailed on.

When you are parsing sentences and, immediately after a noun, you encounter an NP or other nominal, you must consider the possibility that what you have found after the noun is an ADJCL with the relative pro-word deleted. It's easy to test: just try to put the word *that* between the preceding noun and the following nominal:

This is the ball_[N] I_[PRON] won that trophy with.
This is the ball_[N] that I_[PRON] won that trophy with.¹⁰⁹

The pronoun replacement test will also work to identify, as a constituent of an NP, the ADJCL with the relative pro-word deleted:

This is [the ball I won that trophy with].
This is it.

Whose is a **relative pro-determiner** (RELPROD):

The guy whose car this is could be the guy that built the rocket.¹¹⁰
This is whose_[RELPROD:SPEC OF "car"] car.
He refers in this extract to four of the men of whose writings he has made use.¹¹¹
He made use of whose_[RELPROD:SPEC OF "writings"] writings.

Why, when, where (and *that*) are **relative pro-adverbs** (RELPROADV), which can sometimes be deleted; in the following sentences, I indicate the possibility of deleting the RELPROADV with the number "Ø":

- **ADJCLMOD:** *But that, I don't think, is the reason why/that/Ø it is at risk.¹¹²*
It is at risk why_[RELPROADV:ADJCLMOD]
He remembers the time when/that/Ø he and a friend carried asphalt into the street to create their own bike ramps.¹¹³
We returned to the place where/that/Ø we had seen it.¹¹⁴

- **SC:** *In my native Illinois and other places where/that/O I have been, all four ferns have always been associated with crevices in limestone outcroppings.*¹¹⁵
*I have been where*_[RELPROADV:SC]•
- **LC:** *I don't even know the name of the place where/that/O we went.*¹¹⁶
*We went where/that*_[RELPROADV:LC]•
- **TC:** *Ideally, call before the time when/that/O you are supposed to arrive.*¹¹⁷
*You are supposed to arrive when/that*_[RELPROADV:TC]•
- **OC:** *Go to the table where you put the bulletins.*¹¹⁸
*Please come back to the house where you found me last night.*¹¹⁹
*You found me where*_[RELPROADV:OC]•

Although it is not uncommon to find non-native English speakers using *how* as a RELPROADV, it cannot function that way in WME or most other varieties of English:

**Here is the way how you can turn one idea into 3 different products.*¹²⁰
Here is the way that you can turn one idea into 3 different products.

However, we will see below that *how* can function as a PROADV marking an NCL:

*I know [how you feel]*_[NCL:DO]•¹²¹

Non-WME relative pronouns: Several non-WME constructions involve RELPRONs, such as using *what* in place of *that*, *who*, or *whom*:¹²²

*Rosie should marry one of her own kind—a man what's got a business already.*¹²³
*I don't remember him scolding me or forcing me to do anything what I don't like to do.*¹²⁴

It is becoming more common to use “the relative pronoun *which* as a coordinating conjunction (c.f. *and*), as in *They gave me this cigar, **which** they know I don't smoke cigars*” and that this usage is “spreading into informal varieties of general American English.”¹²⁵

We have seen that a RELPRON:DO, IO, or PCOMP can be deleted from the ADJCL. Generally, when a RELPRON functions as the subject of the ADJCL, it cannot be deleted, as in *That's the dog that bit me*. However, in Southern vernaculars, and particularly in BL varieties, it is possible to delete RELPRONs functioning as subjects, as in *That's the dog ____ bit me* or *The man ____ come in here was my father*.¹²⁶ Some other examples:

He the man ____ got all the old records.
*Wally the teacher ____ wanna retire next year.*¹²⁷
*I have a son-in-law ____ has served 7 years . . .*¹²⁸

“The absence of the relative pronoun is more common in existential constructions such as *There’s a dog _____ bit me* than in other constructions.”¹²⁹ “Many varieties of English allow for the omission of object relative pronouns, e.g. ‘That’s the man (whom) I saw,’ but the omission of subject relatives is rarer, and more unique [*sic*] to [BL].”¹³⁰ Another example: *That’s the chick I keep tellin’ you about got all that money*, where the object relative pronoun of the first ADJCL ([*whom*] *I keep tellin’ you about*) may be deleted in WME, but where the subject relative pronoun of the second ADJCL ([*who’s*] *got all that money*) is obligatory in WME.¹³¹

EFL-related adjective clause use: Rather than using a relative pro-word to mark the beginning of an adjective clause, some languages, such as Farsi, Arabic, and Turkish, use a subordinator: a small word that marks that the embedded clause that follows is an adjective clause functioning as a modifier of the preceding noun. For speakers whose L1 uses such a subordinator, it may be hard to learn that in English, the relative pro-word has both the function of a subordinator (marking the beginning of the adjective clause) and a function within the adjective clause. This confusion may lead these speakers to produce sentences like, **I’ve learned that I shouldn’t do things that they hurt them*, instead of the WME *things that hurt them*.¹³²

10.2.2 Noun Clauses (NCL)

Like ADJCLs, NCLs are marked as different from independent, declarative clauses. NCLs are commonly classified by the two ways in which they are marked: as *that*-clauses and *wh*-clauses.

***That*-clauses** are most commonly marked at their beginning by the expletive *that*, but may also be marked by an expletive *whether* or an expletive *if* (when *if* is used to mean “whether”). Both traditional grammar and more recent work commonly regard the expletive (*that*, *whether*, or *if*) that marks the NCL as having no meaning or grammatical role in the NCL or the container clause or phrase, but as only marking the beginning of the NCL. I must beg to differ here: unlike relative pro-words, the expletive has no grammatical function within the NCL. However, *that* can indicate that the clause states a presumed fact (e.g. *That she is not eligible is the point*).¹³³ And often, *that*, like *if* and *whether*, indicates the conditional quality of the action named in the clause. Recall that after a number of verbs, an NCL may require a verb in the subjunctive mood (see 6.1.5), but the conditional meaning is, in part, marked by the expletive. Also, *if* and *whether* clearly mark a relationship between the container constituent and the NCL, much like a subordinating conjunction (SCONJ; see 10.2.3.1). Indeed, both *if* and *whether* can mark an NCL and can function as SCONJs, marking the beginning of an ADVCL. However, the pronoun replacement test will always identify whether a clause marked with *if* or *whether* is nominal or adverbial.

Here are some examples of *that*-type NCLs:

That she is not eligible is the point.

*It is obvious that you have your work cut out for you.*¹³⁴

*You will know if you are susceptible to infections.*¹³⁵

*You will know whether the ANC has the 2/3 majority.*¹³⁶

*You will know that you are really cutting spending.*¹³⁷

An NCL marked by an expletive *if* can usually only be used as a DO, not in other nominal functions (such as SUBJ, IO, or PCOMP).

As with RELPRONS, the expletive *that* marking the NCL can often be deleted when the NCL functions as a DO within the container clause (NCL:DO):

*I know that I want to be a doctor.*¹³⁸

I know I want to be a doctor.

However, deleting *if* or *whether* will distinctly change the meaning of the sentence, since knowing *that you are susceptible to infections* is different from knowing *whether you are susceptible*. And, following some verbs, the expletive cannot be deleted:

*I love that you want to spend time with me.*¹³⁹ **I love you want to spend time with me.*

*I don't care whether I'm real or fictional.*¹⁴⁰ **I don't care I'm real or fictional.*

*I can't help that Prada makes me weak in the knees.*¹⁴¹ ?*I can't help Prada makes me weak in the knees.*

Finally, the order of a *that*-clause is not distorted from the declarative sentence order. A *that*-clause is just a declarative sentence with an expletive (*that*, *whether*, or *if*) stuck on the front.

An alternate analysis: As we have just seen, a *that*-clause can function as the complement of a verb, specifically as a DO. Current syntactic theory treats *that*-clauses as *complement clauses* and refers to *that*, *whether*, and *if* (used to mean *whether*) as complementizers. According to this analysis, not only verbs but nouns, adjectives, and adverbs can also take complement clauses as—well—complements:

V + COMPLEMENT CLAUSE (NCL:QUOT): *Only 30% of participants reported_[V] that their website had been tested for usability.*¹⁴²

N + COMPLEMENT CLAUSE (NCL:APPOSITIVE:MOD OF N): *Schempp called to break the news_[N] that their collective dream for a family business was kaput.*¹⁴³

ADJ + COMPLEMENT CLAUSE (NCL:ADVERBIAL:MODIFIER OF ADJ): *I was sure_[ADJ] that their kids would be okay.*¹⁴⁴

ADV + COMPLEMENT CLAUSE (NCL:ADVERBIAL:MODIFIER OF ADV): *Now_[ADV] that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers became fearful.*¹⁴⁵

Traditional grammar would analyze the complement clause following the noun as a nominal appositive: in form, the clause looks like an NCL, but it is functioning like an adjectival, telling *which* or *what kind of news*. For traditional grammar, the complement clause following the adjective causes more trouble: in form, it looks like an NCL; but if it is modifying an adjective, it seems to be telling *how* or *in what manner* *their kids would be okay*—that is, it is providing adverbial information. Likewise, the *that*-clause following the adverb *now* seems to be telling *how* or *in what manner* *now*. The notion of the complement clause is, on the one hand, an elegant formal work around in that, rather than treating these clauses as modifiers, it treats them as complements: constituents that complete the meaning of the head constituent of their phrase. At the same time, I have chosen to define modifiers as optional constituents and complements as required. Following the noun, adjective, and adverb, the *that*-clause is not required: if you delete the *that*-clause in each case, the sentence is still well formed. Although I will mention this notion of the complement clause again in discussing adverb clauses below, I will otherwise stick with the distinction I have already established between modifiers and complements and only refer to these *that*-clauses as complements when they follow verbs.

That-type NCL functions: *That*-type NCLs can fulfill most of the same functions as NPs, including SUBJ, AGENT, DO, or PCOMP (with a limited list of prepositions); as an IO, a *that*-type NCL is unusual, and an NCL:IO seems to occur only when the NCL appears as the complement of the preposition *to*. And as far as I can tell, a *that*-type NCL cannot function as an SC or OC:

SUBJ: *That professional writers use fragments as frequently as they do casts some doubt on whether there is a "rule" against writing fragments.*¹⁴⁶

AGENT: *It is obvious that you have your work cut out for you.*

DO: *I know that I want to be a doctor.*

IO: *I never gave thought [to whether it was a man or woman asking for help]_[PP:IO].*¹⁴⁷

PCOMP: *It all comes down to whether you can tolerate Leon Barlow.*¹⁴⁸

*The members of the committee shall serve without compensation for their services, excepting that they may receive travel expenses.*¹⁴⁹

Non-WME *that*-clause: In BL, it is common to find sentences of the form *I don't know can he go*. Sometimes mistakenly identified as an indirect quotation of a question, this construction is better analyzed as equivalent to the WME *I don't know whether/if that he can go*. The inversion of the AUX *can* and the subject *he* has the same function as the WME complementizer.¹⁵⁰

Wh-noun clauses have a *wh*-word that marks the beginning of the NCL, and, in a *wh*-clause, the *wh*-word has a grammatical function within the NCL, like the function of a relative pro-word within an ADJCL or an interrogative pro-word in

an interrogative sentence. Likewise, the *wh*-noun clause is marked by its distortion of the default SVC clause order. To parse a *wh*-clause, and to determine the function of the *wh*-word within the NCL, we must first restore the NCL to declarative order. For example, in the sentence *What we don't know is an ocean*,¹⁵¹ *what we don't know* is an NCL functioning as the subject of the container clause. To parse the NCL, we first identify the verb (*do know*) and its subject (*we*). *Not* is an ADVP modifying *do know*. *We don't know* typically implies the question, "We don't know what?"; the verb *do know* usually takes a NOMINAL:DO. In this case, we have a possible answer in the word *what*, which appears to be a PRON functioning as the DO of *do know*. This parsing of *what* is verified by the NP *an ocean*, which appears to be the postcedent of the PRON *what*. That is, in the NCL, *what* seems to be replacing the NP *an ocean* since, in the context of this sentence, the answer to the question, "What do we not know?" is "an ocean." *What* is the PRON:DO of "do know." Therefore, in terms of its use of a *wh*-word, the *wh*-clause seems to be behaving like an ADJCL.

However, unlike a RELPRON, the *wh*-word in an NCL may or may not refer to another word in the container clause. In the example above, *what* refers to *an ocean*; in the following example, *whoever* refers to nothing in the container clause: *Whoever finds the vaccine must share it*.¹⁵² In an ADJCL, the relative pro-word always has an antecedent in the container clause. By contrast, the antecedent or reference of the *wh*-word in an NCL may be in the container clause, in the surrounding text, in the immediate physical context of the discourse, part of common knowledge, or something that the speaker or writer presumes is familiar to the audience.

Also, although the expletive in a *that*-clause may be deleted, the *wh*-word in a *wh*-clause cannot ever be deleted (even if it functions as the DO within the NCL) without changing the meaning of the NCL: *I know what you are thinking*. **I know you are thinking*. We normally take the starred example to mean the same thing as a *that*-clause, but, of course, *that you are thinking* does not mean the same thing as *what you are thinking*.

Finally, *wh*-NCLs are different from ADJCLs in that, when an ADJCL functions as a modifier of a noun, the RELPRON at the beginning of the ADJCL always renames a preceding N' in the container constituent. But the only time an NCL follows directly after a noun, such that the *wh*-word at the beginning of the NCL names the same thing as the noun that precedes the clause, is when the NCL functions as an OC, as in, *Tom Hanks says community college made him*_[NP:DO] *who he is today*_[NCL:OC].¹⁵³

***Wh*-NCL functions:** *Wh*-type NCLs can perform all of the same grammatical functions as NPs except that they cannot function as the agent of an expletive-*it* or expletive-*there* sentence:

SUBJ: *Whoever finds the vaccine must share it.*

DO: *I want to know what they're doing and who's involved.*¹⁵⁴

IO: *We will give whoever books this weekend \$50 off!!*¹⁵⁵

SC: *You are what you eat.*

OC: *Community college made him who he is today.*

PCOMP: *You may eat when you wish **with** whomever you want.*¹⁵⁶

*Then go ahead and pay **by** whatever means you choose to use.*¹⁵⁷

As with the RELPRON in an ADJCL, in a *wh*-NCL, the *wh*-word is taken out of the slot it fills in conventional declarative clause order and moved to the front of the NCL. The list of forms and functions of *wh*-words as they are used in NCLs is very similar to the list of interrogative pro-words:¹⁵⁸

Wh-Words

- **PRON** (unmarked for case): *what, whatever, which, whichever.*
- **Nominative case PRON**: *who, whoever, whosoever.*
- **Objective case PRON**: *whom, whomever, whomsoever.*
- **PROADJ**: *how, what, whatever, which, whichever.*
- **PROD**: *what, whatever, which, whichever.*
- **Possessive PROD**: *whose, whosoever, whoever's.*
- **PROADV**: *how, how long, how much, however, when, whenever, where, wherever, why.*

Some notes about this list: *How* can be either a pro-adjective or a pro-adverb, depending on the context. We can see this in the following sentences:

*That's how fast the world is changing.*¹⁵⁹

*You know how I feel about Twitter.*¹⁶⁰

In the first sentence, *how* takes the place of a degree ADV, such as *very*, that modifies *fast*. In the second sentence, putting the NCL in SVC order, we get *I feel how about Twitter*; most commonly, we would read *how* as filling in for an ADJ such as *unhappy* or *angry*.

What, whatever, which, and whichever can be pronouns, but they can also be pro-adjectives, pro-determiners, or, as we saw with interrogative pro-words, a PRO-(D + ADJ) or a “pro-prenominal”:

I don't know what action we can take.

We can take what action.

→ **PRODET**: *We can take this action.*¹⁶¹

→ **PROADJ**: *We can take immediate action.*¹⁶²

→ **PRO-(D + ADJ)**: *We can take the right action.*¹⁶³

*I know which games I want to buy.*¹⁶⁴

I want to buy which games.

→ **PRODET**: *I want to buy these games.*¹⁶⁵

→ **PROADJ**: *I want to buy new games.*¹⁶⁶

→ **PRO-(D + ADJ)**: *I want to buy the newest games.*¹⁶⁷

You can readily make up similar examples for *whatever* and *whichever*.

Whoever's: According to the *Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)*, though it can appear as a possessive PROD, *whoever's* is used much more frequently as a contraction of *whoever is*, and sometimes *whoever has*:

Possessive PROD: *Whoever's DNA this was would be the killer.*¹⁶⁸

Contraction of "whoever is": *Whoever's patrolling the hall can see into every room.*¹⁶⁹

Contraction of "whoever has": *If I was able to track the shuttle's position, whoever's been using it will as well.*¹⁷⁰ (c.f. *whoever has been using it*)

Whosever is a non-WME informal conversational variant of *whoever's* that, according to *COCA*, is most frequently used as a possessive PROD but that may also be used as a contraction of *whoever is* or *who has ever*:

Possessive PROD: *Whosever fingerprints they are, they aren't hers.*¹⁷¹

Contraction of "who is ever": *Whosever the closest will get there first and secure the scene.*¹⁷² (c.f. *Whoever is the closest*)

Contraction of "who has ever": *There is no one that fit that type of description that would have been there that night or whosever been there with that type of hair.*¹⁷³ (c.f. *who has ever been there*, or *who ever has been there*)

In an NCL, the *wh*-word functions to mark the beginning of the NCL except, as in an interrogative sentence or an ADJCL, when the *wh*-PRON functions as a PCOMP or when a *wh*-PROD functions within an NP:PCOMP. In those cases, we can move the entire PP to the front of the NCL, and the NCL can start with a preposition immediately followed by the *wh*-word. And, as in an ADJCL, the form of the *wh*-word is dictated by its function within the NCL:

SUBJ: *They need to know **what** makes him tick. What_[PRON:SUBJ] makes him tick.*¹⁷⁴

AGENT: *The researcher examined by **whom** the safety references were made.*¹⁷⁵

*The researcher examined **whom** the safety references were made by.*

The safety references were made by whom_[PRON:AGENT].

DO: *You need to figure out **whom** you want to include in your plans.*¹⁷⁶

You want to include whom_[PRON:DO].

*You're allowed to take **whatever/whomever/what/whichever** you want.*¹⁷⁷

You want whatever_[PRON:DO].

IO: *You know whom I sold the vehicle.*¹⁷⁸

*I sold **whom**_[PRON:IO] the vehicle. I sold the vehicle **to whom**_[PP:IO].*

PCOMP: *I know for whom the bell tolls.*¹⁷⁹ *I know whom the bell tolls for.*
*The bell tolls for whom*_[PRO_N:PCOMP].

Possessive D: *I think I know whose woods these are.*¹⁸⁰
*These are whose*_[POSSPRO_D:SPEC OF "woods"] *woods.*

D: *I wake up here and wonder what century I'm in.*¹⁸¹
I wake up here and wonder in what century I am.
*I am in what*_[PRO_D:SPEC OF "century"] *century.*

*Whatever approach you choose, avoid jargon.*¹⁸²
*You choose whatever*_[PRO_D:SPEC OF "approach"] *approach.*

*Whichever approach you choose, ensure you apply rigor.*¹⁸³
*You choose whichever*_[PRO_D:SPEC OF "approach"] *approach.*

These next sentences are similar to the examples of ADJCLs that used the same PROADVs:

NCLMOD: *That's why he's on the list. He's on the list why*_[PRO_{Adv}:NCLMOD]. (c.f.
*That's the reason why he's on the list*_[ADJCL:MOD OF "reason"].)

He remembers when he and a friend carried asphalt into the street.
*He and a friend carried asphalt into the street when*_[PRO_{Adv}:NCLMOD]. (c.f. *He remembers the time when . . .*)

*However you do it is fine with me.*¹⁸⁴ *You do it however*_[PRO_{Adv}:NCLMOD].

LC: *They leave a detailed digital trail of where we went.*¹⁸⁵
*We went where*_[PRO_{Adv}:LC].

TC: *I remember when we left that year.*¹⁸⁶ *That year, we left when*_[PRO_{Adv}:TC].

MC: *Here's how it works.*¹⁸⁷ *It works how*_[PRO_{Adv}:MC].

OC: *If the hose won't stay where you put it, use short stakes to hold it in place.*¹⁸⁸
*You put it where*_[PRO_{Adv}:OC].

*Do you recall how you made the baby saucer?*¹⁸⁹ *You made the baby saucer how*_[PRO_{Adv}:OC].

Because of the apparent similarity between *wh*-NCLs and ADJCLs, it may seem like it would be difficult to identify NCLs or, at least, *wh*-NCLs. But an NCL functions in the same way as a complete NP or other nominal. We can use the pronoun replacement test to identify a complete NCL:

[Whoever finds the vaccine] must share it
She must share it.

You know [how I feel about Twitter].
You know it.

I know [that I want to be a doctor].
I know this.

The pronoun replacement test works even if the expletive is deleted from the *that*-clause:

You know [I want to be a doctor].
You know this.

10.2.3 Adverb Clauses (AdvCL; a.k.a. Subordinate Clauses)

Like both ADJCLs and NCLs, ADVCLs are marked as different from independent, declarative clauses. An ADVCL always begins with a subordinating conjunction (SCONJ). SCONJs come in two types: those that do not play any role in the ADVCL and those that do. With the great majority of SCONJs, an ADVCL consists of the SCONJ followed by a string of words that, without the SCONJ, would be a well-formed independent clause. In the sentence *We've all been taught since we were kids that strangers equal danger*,¹⁹⁰ *since* is the SCONJ; the string of words that follow, *we were kids*, is, by itself, an independent clause. The word *since* has no role in the ADVCL. Rather, like the expletives *if* and *whether* in NCLs, the SCONJ establishes a relationship between the ADVCL and its container clause. In the case of *since*, that relationship involves time and duration: the event described in the ADVCL (*we were kids*) is an anchor in the past, and in the ensuing period up to the present, the event described in the container clause (*We've all been taught that strangers equal danger*) has been constant or frequent.

So what? SCONJs always help establish this kind of rhetorical connection and relationship between and among clauses within paragraphs and even between paragraphs.

There is also a small set of *wh*-pro-words that function as SCONJs and play a role within the ADVCL, just as a *wh*-pro-word does in an interrogative sentence, ADJCL, or NCL. For example, in the sentence, *Wherever you go, you will top all the rest*,¹⁹¹ *wherever* is the SCONJ, marking the beginning of the ADVCL. But *wherever* also functions within the ADVCL as an LC of the verb *go* (*You go wherever*_[PROAdv:LC]).

AdvCLs function in many of the roles in which other adverbials function:

- Modifier of ADJ (only as post-modifiers).
- Modifier of Adv (only as post-modifiers).
- Complement of verb (SC; OC).
- Modifier of verb.
- Sentence and clause modifier.

Modifier of ADJ: We find AdvCLs modifying adjectives in a limited set of idiomatic patterns:

*I was happy*_[ADJ] that I made the right decision.¹⁹²
*We couldn't be happier*_[ADJ] that Billy Crystal is emcee.¹⁹³
*I'm happier*_[ADJ] than I've ever been.¹⁹⁴
*It's much more difficult*_[ADJ] than I thought it would be.¹⁹⁵
*I was as happy*_[ADJ] as I have ever been.¹⁹⁶

As we saw in the discussion of NCLs, contemporary syntactic theory would describe each of the *that*-clauses as a complement clause, functioning as a complement of the ADJ. However, in each of these examples, we might also parse the *that*-clause as an adverbial modifier of the preceding ADJ, telling *why I was happy/we couldn't be happier*. I will therefore persist in calling these AdvCLs. Note that the adjectives in the comparative degree (*happier*; *more difficult*) require the following clause to be marked by the SCONJ *than*, and that each of the AdvCLs is elliptical, ending with copular *be*. *I'm happier than I've ever been* implies *than I've ever been happy*. And the idiomatic frame *as* + ADJ + *as* + CLAUSE is so fixed that it is really a phrasal SCONJ, marking the following clause as adverbial and establishing its relationship with the container clause, a relationship that generally involves a comparison.

Modifier of Adv: As with adjectives, AdvCLs can only modify adverbs within a limited set of idiomatic patterns:

*He spoke so slowly*_[ADV] that I was able to write down every word he said.¹⁹⁷
*The spacecraft appeared to be moving more slowly*_[ADV] than engineers had planned.¹⁹⁸
*Selena Gomez disappears through the crowd as quickly*_[ADV] as she appeared.¹⁹⁹

These are not the only patterns for AdvCLs modifying adverbs, but they are representative. Notice that we only find AdvCLs modifying ADVs in these fixed idiomatic frames (e.g. *so* + ADV + *that*; *less* + ADV + *than*; *as* + ADV + *as*, each followed by a clause) that, again, may be best analyzed as phrasal (or just multi-word) SCONJs, marking the following clause as adverbial and establishing its relationship with the container constituent, a relationship that generally involves a comparison, as in the last two examples.

As the **complement of a verb**, an ADVCL can only function as an SC or OC:

SC: That was before he discovered hands.²⁰⁰

OC: Let's put the blame where it belongs.²⁰¹

It is sometimes hard to distinguish whether an ADVCL is limited to modifying a verb or if it is movable and so may be considered a sentence or clause modifier: In the sentence *Jason nodded as if he were seriously considering this point*,²⁰² *nodded* is an intransitive verb: we could just say *Jason nodded*. Therefore, if we can't move the ADVCL, then it is a modifier of the verb; if we can move it, it is a SENTMOD. To my ear, ?*As if he were seriously considering the point, Jason nodded*, sounds like a possible sentence in WME (though it feels inverted to me) but it does not appear that people conventionally put the ADVCL first. So, I would judge *as if he were seriously considering the point* to be functioning as a modifier of *nodded* or possibly as a manner complement (MC).

By contrast, in the sentence:

Dean Smith stopped recruiting me because he knew I was going to the pros.²⁰³

Because he knew I was going to the pros, *Dean Smith stopped recruiting me*.

the ADVCL *because he knew I was going to the pros* can be moved and so should be regarded as a SENTMOD of the independent clause *Dean Smith stopped recruiting me*.

We have to exercise the same judgment in determining whether an ADVCL that has a dependent clause as its container clause is functioning as a modifier of the verb in the container clause or as a modifier of the whole container clause (an ADJCLMOD, NCLMOD, or ADVCLMOD). I have included examples of both situations below:

- **ADVCL:MODIFIER OF THE V IN AN ADJCL:**

*Anyone who talks as if Chinese freedom hasn't grown since China went capitalist*_[ADVCL:MOD OF "talks"] *is evincing a hazy historical memory*.²⁰⁴

- **ADVCL:ADJCLMOD:**

*Australian actress Sarah Snook stars as a woman who, after her fiancé dies*_[ADVCL:ADJCLMOD OF "who moves . . . mansion"], *moves into her father's decaying Louisiana mansion*.²⁰⁵

*. . . who moves into her father's decaying Louisiana mansion after her fiancé dies*_[ADVCL:ADJCLMOD OF "who moves . . . mansion"]

- **AdvCL:MODIFIER OF A V IN AN NCL:**

*They saw that he nodded as if he was falling asleep*_[AdvCL:MOD OF “nodded”]²⁰⁶

- **AdvCL:NCLMOD:**

*Courage doesn’t mean that you’re not afraid. It just means that you act even though you are*_[AdvCL:AdjCLMOD OF “that you act”]²⁰⁷
*It just means that, even though you are*_[AdvCL:AdjCLMOD OF “that you act”], *you act.*

- **AdvCL:MODIFIER OF V IN AN AdvCL:**

*Have you ever wondered how people smile as if they genuinely enjoy living*_[AdvCL:MOD OF “smile”]²⁰⁸

- **AdvCL:AdvCLMOD:**

*When you smile even though you are anything but happy*_[AdvCL:MOD OF “When you smile”]²⁰⁹ *your brain releases tiny molecules called neuropeptides.*
*When, even though you are anything but happy*_[AdvCL:MOD OF “When you smile”] *you smile . . .*

10.2.3.1 Subordinating Conjunctions (SConj)

“Subordinating conjunctions” are so called because they mark the beginning of a subordinate clause (the traditional name for AdvCLs). SCONJs also join (“conjoin”) AdvCLs to their container clause by marking the rhetorical relationship between the concepts named by the two clauses. We will examine and classify some of those rhetorical relationships when we examine SENTMODS in 11.3.6.

SCONJs are of two varieties: (1) those that play no role in the AdvCL and (2) the *wh*-words that do. However, (1) SCONJs that play no role in the AdvCL are more common. And (2) *wh*-SCONJs, unlike RELPRO-words and *wh*-words in NCLs, are still always the first word in the AdvCL.

- (1) **In AdvCLs in which the SCONJ plays no role in the AdvCL**, the SCONJ is followed by a clause that, without the SCONJ, would be a sentence. This type of AdvCL thus resembles a *that*-NCL. In the following examples, *because* and *if* are the SCONJs.

He nodded because he knew I was right.
*If he knew I was here, he’d be livid.*²¹⁰

In each example, if we remove the SCONJ from the AdvCL, then what is left is an independent clause.

Here is a list of common SCONJs that have no function within the ADVCL:²¹¹

after	although	as	as if
as long as	as much as	as often as	as soon as
as though	because	before	despite that
ere	even if	even though	except (that)
for fear (that)	for the reason that	given (that)	granted/ing (that)
if	if only	inasmuch as	in case
in (order) that	in spite of the fact that	in that	in the event (that)
lest	like	not that	notwithstanding that
now that	on condition that	once	on the ground(s) that
provided (that)	rather than	since	so
so long as	so that	supposing	than
that	the minute that	though	till (or 'til)
unless	until	whereas	whether
while/whilst			

A couple of notes on the preceding list:

- *Ere* is an archaic form of *before*, though it still turns up occasionally: *Ere we get too far ahead of ourselves, however, we should bear in mind a trio of details.*²¹²
- *The minute that* is a SCONJ, as in, *They knew the minute that they laid their eyes on each other.*²¹³ Other units of time fit in this frame, though clauses marked with this SCONJ, as well the other SCONJs that end in *that*, may also function as NCLs, as in, *I remember the minute that I met with the coaches.*²¹⁴ This overlap between adverbials and nominals is parallel to what we saw back in Chapter 1, with *yesterday* functioning as an ADVERBIAL:SENTMOD (*Yesterday, Ed Carried the groceries*) and as a NOMINAL:SUBJ (*Yesterday was a good day*).

Some SCONJs can also function as prepositions. That list includes *after*, *as*, *before*, *like*, *since*, *than*, and *until*. If they are followed by—taking as a complement—just an NP, together with which they comprise a single constituent, then they are prepositions; if they are followed by a clause, together with which they comprise a single constituent, then they are SCONJs:

SCONJ: *After the party ends, we load our children into the car.*²¹⁵

*So the dancers whirled on until the sun rose.*²¹⁶

P: *After the party, Hollender began a nationwide speaking tour.*²¹⁷

*The partying continued until sunrise.*²¹⁸

Current syntactic theory chooses to analyze these SCONJs/prepositions the other way: by arguing that these words can take either an NP or a clause as their complement.

So what? Either analysis works, and either analysis makes some things simpler and some more complicated. I leave it to you to reflect on which analysis might be better and why.

Note that in WME, *because* is only an SCONJ; *because of* is a preposition:

SCONJ: *Because he loves me, I will deliver him.*²¹⁹

P: *Because of you, I laugh, smile and I dare to dream again.*²²⁰

However, since about 2010, there has emerged a new use of *because* as a preposition, as in

*Gotta go through with it because_[P] reasons_[NP:PCOMP]*²²¹
*This mysterious superhuman slayer has managed to kill an immortal, which sounds like a paradoxical statement, but isn't because_[P] comics_[NP:PCOMP]*²²²

This new use of *because* has a force or meaning that might be paraphrased in the former example as *because there are/I have reasons [for doing so]*; the latter example might be paraphrased by *because that's how comics work*. This new use of *because* may in part stem from a different use of *because* as a SUBCONJ followed by an ADJP:

*The translators in conclusion pronounce the dialogue unsatisfactory, because_[SUBCONJ] unfinished_[ADJP:OC]*²²³
*Shari objects to "engaged Buddhism" as misleading because_[SUBCONJ] redundant_[ADJP:OC]*²²⁴

In these sentences, *because* is a SUBCONJ marking an elliptical AdvCL in which the subject and verb—*it is*—has been elided. We really have an elided coordinating structure, something like

The translators in conclusion pronounce that the dialogue is unsatisfactory because it is redundant.
Shari objects to "engaged Buddhism" as it is misleading because it is redundant.

This construction is fairly common in formal writing and speech, and it may play a role in *because* taking on a prepositional function, especially as we also now find prepositional *because* complemented by an ADJP:

*I verb all sorts of things that aren't verbs, use words as incorrect parts of speech because_[PREP] funny_[ADJP:PCOMP]*²²⁵

Note also that, just as prepositions can sometimes take **adverbial modifiers**, so too can **SCONJs**:

*In March 1933, **just after** he was inaugurated, FDR looked for a way to avoid a financial panic.*²²⁶

***No matter where** I go, I always have my camera with me.*²²⁷

*I believe in you **almost as much as** I believe in myself.*²²⁸

SCONJs are related not only to prepositions but also to CCONJs and conjunctive adverbs (see 11.3.5). SCONJs, CONJs, and conjunctive adverbs all guide the reader or listener in how to understand the relationships between clauses—and so the relationships between the concepts expressed in those clauses.

So what? When your teachers have marked on your writing, “Transition?” they have likely meant that you need an SCONJ, CONJ, or conjunctive adverb.

(2) **In AdvCLs in which the SCONJ is a *wh*-word and has a function within the AdvCL**, the subordinating conjunctions are PROAdvS, PRONs, or PRODs:

PROAdvS: *however, when, whenever, where, wherever.*

PRONs: *whatever, whichever, whoever, whomever.*

PRODs: *whichever, whatever.*

All of these SCONJs behave just like the *wh*-words in a *wh*-type NCL in that they mark the beginning of the AdvCL, they have a function within the AdvCL, and they are often displaced from their slot in a normal declarative sentence order.

SCONJ:PROAdv Functioning as a Verb Complement

*You can watch FOX weather **wherever you go**.*²²⁹

*You go **wherever*** [SCONJPROAdv:LC of “go”]

*You go **to the store**.* (LC—where you go)

***No matter where** I go, I always have my camera with me.*²³⁰

*I go **no matter where*** [SCONJPROAdv:LC of “go”]

*I go **somewhere**.*

SCONJ:PROAdv:AdvCLMod

***When** he stands up in front of the room, everybody listens to him.*²³¹

*He stands up **when*** [SCONJPROAdv:AdvCLMod]

*He stands up **during a meeting**.*

***During a meeting** he stands up.*

SCONJ:PRON:SUBJ

Whatever happens to us, we're taking you down.²³²

*Whatever*_[SCONJ:PRON:SUBJ] happens to us.

SCONJ:PRON:DO

Whatever you say, never mention the name Ilse Zhalina to Lord Kosenmark.²³³

You say *whatever*_[SCONJ:PRON:DO of "say"].

SCONJ:PRON:PCOMP

Whoever you're living with, make it a time for saving money.²³⁴

You're living with *whoever*_[SCONJ:PRON:PCOMP].

To tell the difference between an ADVCL that starts with a *wh*-word and a *wh*-NCL, use the pronoun replacement test:

- **NCL:** *If you're truly cool, [whatever you go] is the cool place to be.*²³⁵
[It] is the cool place to be.
- **ADVCL:** *We'll find you [whatever you go].*²³⁶
**We'll find you [it].*

To identify an ADVCL: There are two solid methods. Most ADVCLs are SENTMODS; the movability test for SENTMODS is good to have in mind. The other test—a more impressionistic one, but one that you should practice—is the adverb question test. ADVCLs should answer one of the adverb questions, providing information about *how*, *how long*, *how much*, *when*, *where*, or *why*.

Another note on clauses: Like any constituent of a clause, independent clauses may be conjoined with independent clauses, and dependent clauses may be conjoined with other dependent clauses or phrases that fulfill the same function within the sentence:

Independent Clauses

*You're in the middle of a conversation. You want to go. You don't want to be rude. You're in the middle of a conversation **and** you want to go **and** you don't want to be rude.*²³⁷

ADVCL:SENTMODS

*In Richard Jefferies's After London, the novel has gone extinct **not only** because the technological apparatus necessary to produce long books no longer*

*exists*_[AdvCl:SentMod] **or even** *because most of the population is illiterate*_[AdvCl:SentMod]
but because the modes of thinking and subjectivity cultivated by the novel are
*no longer relevant*_[AdvCl:SentMod]²³⁸

PP:ADVERBIAL:SENTMOD and AdvCl:SentMod

*I sparkle in the daylight, but only when my code runs without errors.*²³⁹

In traditional grammar, two or more conjoined independent clauses are referred to as a “compound sentence.” A sentence that consists of a container clause with one or more dependent clauses is called a “complex sentence.” Two or more conjoined independent clauses that, among them, contain one or more dependent clauses are called a “compound-complex sentence.”

10.3 Fragments

This chapter has so far focused on clauses, and indeed, the bias of this book, and of the study and teaching of grammar and writing as a whole, is to assume that the formal WME clause—and more specifically, the independent clause—the formal WME sentence—is the base and norm against which all other parts of the grammar, and all grammatical variations in English, are measured, and to which all other parts of the grammar are subservient. But for speakers of all varieties of English, much of our everyday spoken and written language is *not* composed in grammatically complete sentences; rather, it is fragmentary and elliptical.

The kinds of grammatical relations among words and phrases we have described in this book are present in even the most informal conversation. But, “Sometimes an utterance corresponds to a sentence; sometimes it doesn’t.”²⁴⁰ Utterances often reflect “breath units” (all the words one can utter before having to pause for breath) and include intonation curves (e.g. to mark statements and questions, as well as emotional attitudes like surprise and doubt), pauses, and routine interruptions, whether we interrupt ourselves or are interrupted by our interlocutors (the other people in the conversation). Written sentences and their punctuation are an attempt to formally represent these features of speech in writing. Grammar and style curmudgeons, and probably some of the teachers, friends, and family members you have ever spoken with or shown your writing to, condemn fragments, elliptical statements, and clipped or reduced pronunciations, despite the fact that the “best” speakers and writers use them routinely.

We are used to seeing the fragmentary character of conversational speech presented in fiction; in the following passage, I have highlighted each of the fragments:

“**Sounds as if you’ve got it handled,**” Kit replied in a fake-cheerful voice.
 “**I do,**” she said right back.

“Besides, my blog and the radio segment focus on only old, unsolved cases.”

“**Right.** That leaves me out.”

“There’s something else, though,” Richard said. “Over the last couple of years, at least one other girl has gone missing from the apartment complex where Sarah lives.”

“**How many?**” Kit asked.

“I’m not sure, but you can find out, Kit. Farley can help.” Richard opened the vegan cheese container again. “**So can that ex-cop who’s working with you now.**”²⁴¹

In the first line, we have an example of initial material deletion, a type of fragment that we saw in 10.1.1 with interrogatives with AUX deletion. In informal conversation we frequently delete clause-initial material, as in *Wish Tom were here* and *Good thing you decided to come along*.²⁴² In the fictional dialogue above, with *I do*, *How many*, and *So can . . . now*, we have examples of elliptical utterances, in which it appears that sentence elements have been left out or “elided”: for example, *I do* seems to imply *I do have it handled* or *I have got it handled*. I expect you can figure out what is elided for the other two fragments. *Right* could be understood as phatic, or as a fragment meaning something like, *You are right*.

But such fictional dialogue makes conversation look very neat. The reality is that ordinary conversation is often even messier, filled with interruptions, repetitions, and stammering, as in this infamous conversation between President Richard Nixon and his advisor, Charles Colson:

Nixon: *You mean, uh, the me-, yo-, been saying uh, the, the, with regard to the defendants? Of course, that was all . . .*

Colson: *Yeah, that, that’s, that’s that area I mean, that general area.*

Nixon: *Yeah. Of course, that was . . .*

Colson: *I don’t want to burden you with any . . .*

Nixon: *. . . that had to be done. (Laughs)*

Colson: *Hell, yeah. No, I’m not—no second thoughts. That’s not the point.*

Nixon: *Yeah.*²⁴³

Especially in conversations between and among friends, when people are excited or angry or nervous, conversational speech becomes even more fragmented and elliptical, punctuated with interruptions and repeated use of phatic terms (as part of “back channeling”: showing the audience is listening and supports what the speaker is saying), repetition of words or parts of words, and sounds like *um* and *er* that indicate the speaker is trying to hold the floor while searching for a word.

We now commonly imitate the highly fragmentary and elliptical style of everyday conversation in our informal writing, the kinds of messaging we do many

times a day via messaging apps and social media platforms. I just had the following text exchange with my wife:

- Me: *Any clue on timing?*
 Her: *Still here for another forty minutes.*
 Me: *All going OK?*
 Her: *Yes!*

“Talking exclusively in complete sentences sounds stilted in all but the most formal of prepared speeches.”²⁴⁴ And based on his close study of the 2001 and 2003 *Best American Essays* collections, Schuster shows that the “best writers” routinely use sentence fragments in their formal essay prose, on average four per page, achieving powerful stylistic effects.²⁴⁵ Linguists disagree about how best to analyze fragmentary and elliptical utterances in speech and writing: while some treat them as reduced sentences—sentences with pieces removed—others take a phonological approach, pointing out that in fragments and ellipses, sounds are often deleted or simplified without any loss of meaning—as when one says, *Jeet yet?*, meaning *Did you eat yet?* It seems pretty clear to me that both kinds of processes are at work in our everyday speech and our informal writing, especially as, when we text or post on social media, we may use spellings that reflect our elliptical grammar and reduced pronunciation.

Although there have been a number of academic studies of fragmentary and elliptical utterances in spoken and written English, there is as yet no comprehensive study of their grammar, nor a comprehensive approach to how we should fit fragments into the larger formal grammar of English. It might be best to organize the study of English grammar by treating “sentence” as a radial category, with the formal WME sentence as defined at the beginning of this chapter as the central exemplar, and other sentence-like forms understood as varying from that exemplar to gradually greater degrees. Each of the following examples has essentially the same meaning, but at each step is less sentence-like:

- Sentence: *The woman is wearing the white dress.*
NP with PARTP: *the woman wearing the white dress.*²⁴⁶
NP with PP: *the woman in the white dress.*

In the example with the PARTP, *the woman* is the AGENT of the participle—the one who is doing the *wearing*. In the example with the PP, because *the woman* is described as being *in the white dress*, it is to be assumed that she is *wearing* it. Some versions of English grammar treat participle phrases and infinitive phrases with explicit agents as “minor sentences” or “participle/infinitive clauses.” I have chosen not to go that way, as we will see in Chapter 12.

So what? That all said, the variety of fragmentary and elliptical utterances used by all speakers and writers in everyday informal English—and even in formal English!—is huge. Our teachers, parents, and peers condemn fragments (even as they themselves use them!) because they were taught to condemn fragments. Used judiciously, fragments and elliptical utterances can be very powerful in the most formal writing and speech. I urge you to read and listen with an eye and ear for when and how the writers and speakers you like are using fragments, and then to experiment with them yourself.

10.4 Key Points

- In WME a clause contains a finite verb that acts as the head of a VP:PRED and a nominal functioning as the subject of the verb (NOMINAL:SUBJ), such that the NOMINAL:SUBJ and the verb agree in number and person. In addition, to be formally complete, the VP:PRED in a clause must include all complements required by the verb.
- Clauses may be independent (a.k.a. a sentence) or dependent.
- There are three kinds of dependent clauses: adjective clauses (ADJCL), a.k.a. relative clauses; noun clauses (NCL); and adverb clauses (ADVCL), a.k.a. subordinate clauses.
- Each type of dependent clause is marked by the use of special words, including *wh*-pro-words; expletives (*that*, *whether*, *if*); and subordinating conjunctions (SCONJs).
- In English, the default order of the clause is Subject-Verb-Complement (SVC).
- We routinely rearrange the clause constituent order of both independent and dependent clauses to create questions or otherwise rearrange information flow (as with passive voice) and to mark that a clause is dependent.
- This rearrangement often involves the movement of a *wh*-pro-word from its slot in the SVC clause to the front of the clause.

10.5 Exercises: Clauses

Independent Clause Forms 1: Made-up sentences

For each of the following independent clauses, identify the form as one of the following: declarative, interrogative, imperative, expletive *there*, expletive *it*, passive, inverted. **Warning:** a sentence may have more than one form.

- For interrogative sentences with a pro-word, identify the interrogative pro-word and its form: pro-adverb, pro-adjective, pro-determiner, possessive pro-determiner, pronoun (nominative, objective, possessive).
- For expletive-*there*, expletive-*it*, and passive sentences identify the agent.

- For inverted sentences, identify the complete subject and the complete verb.
 - A. When did you buy your new car?
 - B. I was driven to drink.
 - C. There is a house in New Orleans.
 - D. Down the hole he fell.
 - E. It seems that the neighbors are having a party.
 - F. Cry me a river.
 - G. Perform random acts of kindness.
 - H. The light is particularly beautiful today.
 - I. Whose woods are these?
 - J. It is clear that we will win.
 - K. There is little question in my mind.
 - L. Were you followed?
 - M. It appears that you have been swindled.
 - N. Eat, drink, and be merry.
 - O. The sun is up.
 - P. Had I been there, I'd have stopped her.
 - Q. There's a party going on right here.
 - R. How do you do?
 - S. That ain't no way to treat no friend of yourn.
 - T. When 900 years old you reach, look as good you will not.²⁴⁷

Independent Clause Forms 2

For sentences A–J above, try to compose versions that are (1) declarative, (2) interrogative, (3) imperative, (4) expletive *there*, (5) expletive *it*, (6) passive, and (7) inverted in some way. Not all will work: for example, a sentence can only be made passive if it has a transitive verb.

Dependent Clause Forms and Functions: Made-up sentences

For each sentence:

- Identify each complete dependent clause (there may be more than one).
- Identify whether the dependent clause is an adjective clause, a noun clause, or an adverb clause.
- Identify the dependent clause's function in the container clause.

And finally,

- If the dependent clause is an **adjective clause**:
 - Identify the noun that the clause modifies.
 - Identify the relative pro-word in the adjective clause, and, for each RELPRO-word:
 - Identify its form (e.g. RELPRON, RELPROD; RELPROADV).
 - Identify its function within the adjective clause (e.g. SUBJ, DO, SENTMOD).

- If the dependent clause is a **noun clause**:
 - Identify its type (*that*-clause or *wh*-clause).
 - If it is a *wh*-clause, for each *wh*-pro-word:
 - Identify its form (e.g. pronoun, pro-determiner, pro-adverb).
 - Identify its function within the NCL.
 - If the dependent clause is an **adverb clause**:
 - Identify the subordinating conjunction.
 - If the subordinating conjunction has a function in the adverb clause, identify that function.
- A. When the city was new, travelers often had difficulty finding interesting entertainment.
 - B. The city soon had distinct ethnic neighborhoods in which immigrants opened restaurants and clubs where visitors could partake of exotic and foreign foods and amusements.
 - C. Adventurous visitors could choose whichever one they wanted.
 - D. There were many reasons why the ethnic neighborhoods developed where they did.
 - E. Experienced travelers, who realized they would frequently have to amuse themselves, brought musical instruments on their journeys.
 - F. After the subway system was opened, theaters were built in one district of town.
 - G. However theatergoers wanted to get to the show was, of course, fine with the locals.
 - H. These early theaters were what we would call a combination restaurant, dancehall, and theater.
 - I. Spending the evening in a downtown theater was an irritating experience for those who were used to more high-toned surroundings.
 - J. When the actors were performing, the audience would chatter noisily.
 - K. Another complaint about the theaters was that the food was poor in quality.
 - L. The presence of fleas, mice, and other vermin was another discomfort that annoyed the early theater goers.
 - M. Because the construction of some early theaters used cheap wood and fabric, fire was a great danger.
 - N. The construction of some early theaters, which used cheap wood and fabric, led to fire being a great danger.
 - O. That the construction of some early theaters used cheap wood and fabric made fire a great danger.
 - P. On the ground floors of many theaters were found dance palaces that resounded with noisy revelry.

- Q. The dance palaces that were found on the ground floors of many theaters resounded with noisy revelry.
- R. Because dance palaces were often located on the ground floors of theaters, at night the buildings resounded when the revelry grew noisy.
- S. As soon as the show ended, most of the audience would come down to the dance hall.
- T. Visitors to the city often tried to act as though they had always lived there.



Figure 10.1

Notes

- 1 Except in an imperative mood sentence, where the subject is implied as the audience to whom the sentence is directed; see 10.1.2.
- 2 This is true in WME, where the verb form changes in the present-tense third-person singular. In varieties that level the verb forms to eliminate the oddity of the PRES 3RD SG, there is no notion of SUBJ-V agreement; see 6.1.1.
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- 5 See Joseph M. Williams & Joseph Bizup. Chapter 4, "Cohesion and Coherence" and Chapter 5, "Emphasis." *Style*. 13th ed. Hoboken, NJ: Longman. 2021.
- 6 Bill Robinson. "Letters: Kicking the Can down the Road." *Colorado Springs Gazette*. 21 Sep 2020.
- 7 Anonymous. "Miami Beach Community." *Facebook*. Apr 2025.
- 8 Anna Grace Hale. "Emerging Leader: Doyle Steps Up His Game." *The Lariat* (Baylor University). 30 Aug 2022.
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- 12 Jason Sheftell. "The Heights." *nydailynews.com*. 9 Apr 2018.
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Nominals, Adjectivals, and Adverbials

It is now time to elaborate on some broader functional categories. We have mentioned these categories already when we discussed not just NPs or NCLs, but nominals in general; when we discussed not just ADJPs, adjectival PPs, or ADJCLs, but adjectivals; and when we discussed not just AdvPs, adverbial PPs, or ADVCLs, but adverbials. We thus have several forms that can function in roles generally occupied by NPs, ADJPs, and AdvPs. From here on, we will mostly talk about these categories of functions and the constituents that fill them using the terms “nominal,” “adjectival,” and “adverbial.” Each of these terms labels a category of forms that convey a particular kind of information—answer particular kinds of questions—and fill a limited set of functional roles.

11.1 Nominals

A “nominal,” as the name implies, is a constituent (phrase or clause) that provides noun-like information and that is functioning in a role or slot that could be filled by an NP. We defined noun-like information or noun meaning back in the discussion of nouns and NPs: an NP names a person, place, thing, quality, or idea; NPs generally tell *what* or *who*. Nominals may take several forms, including NP, NCL, PRON and PRONP, PARTP, and INFP (see Chapter 12) and occasionally even ADJP or PP. The functions of nominals include SUBJ, AGENT, PCOMP, and several verb complement roles, including DO, SC, IO, and OC.

To be a nominal, a constituent must have both noun meaning and be functioning in a role that can be filled by an NP. For example, in the NP *the soccer ball*, the word *soccer* appears to be a noun in form and to name a thing. However, it is functioning as an ADJ—as a modifier of a noun—and it is not providing noun-like information: it is telling *what kind of ball*. Adjectives provide information about *what kind of* thing is being named by a noun. So, in this context, the word *soccer* is functioning not as a nominal but as an adjectival.

When a phrase or clause is performing a nominal function, the complete nominal can be identified by the pronoun replacement test (see 2.3).

11.2 Adjectivals

An “adjectival” is a constituent (phrase or clause) that provides ADJ-like information and that is functioning in a role or slot that could be filled by an ADJP. We defined ADJ-like information and ADJ meaning back in Chapter 4: an ADJP generally tells *which* or *what kind of*. Adjectivals may take several forms, including ADJP, PP, ADJCL, appositive NP, noun within a compound noun, and PROADJ in an interrogative or dependent clause, as well as PARTP and INFP (see Chapter 12). Adjectivals only function as modifier of a noun; SC and OC; and sentence or clause modifier. Not all adjectival forms can fulfill all adjectival functions; here is a list of the possible combinations:

Form:Functions

- **ADJP**:MOD OF N; SC; OC.
- **PP**:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF N.
- **ADJCL**:MOD OF N; non-essential MOD OF CLAUSE (when the relative pronoun refers back to the entire clause, as in *The problem is the plant is difficult to propagate, which put a damper on efforts to try to breed new varieties*).¹
- **PARTP**:MOD OF N; SC.
- **INFP**:Post-modifier of N.
- **NP**:MOD OF N (e.g. in a compound noun); **APPOSITIVE NP**:MOD OF N; **NOMINATIVE ABSOLUTE**:MOD OF CLAUSE (e.g. *The US intends to leave, a prospect which alarms many Iraqis*).²

11.3 Adverbials

An adverbial is a constituent (phrase or clause) that provides adverb-like information and that is functioning in a role or slot that could be filled by an AdvP. We defined adverb-like information or adverb meaning back in the discussion of adverbs and AdvPs (Chapter 8): an AdvP generally tells *when*, *where*, *why*, *how*, *how much*, *how often*, *how long*, and other versions of those sorts of information. Adverbials may take several forms, including AdvP, PP, ADVCL, NP (especially NPs that name times [e.g. *yesterday*] or places [e.g. *home*]), and PROADV in dependent clauses and interrogatives, as well as PARTP and INFP (see Chapter 12). Adverbials have a number of functions: they can modify verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and clauses, and they can complement a verb as an SC, LC, MC, TC, or OC.

We have so far avoided two problems with adverbials: first, there are times when it is not clear whether an adverbial following a verb functions as a modifier or a complement of that verb. Second, we have used the term “sentence modifier” or “clause modifier” loosely to identify any adverbial that falls outside the subject-predicate structure of the clause and that can be moved to the beginning or end of the clause or to the slot between subject and verb; but there are, as we

shall see, a variety of clause-modifying adverbials with distinctly different characteristics. To more adequately organize and identify the adverbials we have so far studied, we need to develop some new concepts and some new terminology. These new ideas should complement and enrich our understanding of adverbials and augment our ability to identify them.

11.3.1 Scope³

Until now, we have described adverbials as either complements of verbs or as modifying verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, and clauses. We have defined a “modifier” as an optional constituent in a clause that can be removed without altering the grammatical well-formedness of the clause. In those terms, all the constituents that we have so far labeled as sentence modifiers or clause modifiers are, by definition, modifiers: if we delete them, the sentences or clauses are still well formed.

But we have also talked about a modifier as being effectively subordinate to the term it modifies. Thus, in an NP, a noun functions as the head, while ADJPs, DPs, and adjectival post-modifiers are dependents of the head and so secondary or subordinate to it. From the start, though, we have seen that what we call “sentence modifiers” are not really subordinate or secondary to the clause. Rather, they stand on a pretty equal footing with the clause: they fall outside the clause structure, not functioning as part of the subject or predicate. And rather than “modifying” the clause, in terms of being secondary, it would be more apt to say that the sentence modifiers we have looked at contextualize the clause, providing information about the context within which the actor named in the subject performed the action named in the predicate. In the sentence *On Tuesday we went to see Cymbeline at Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre*,⁴ the PP *on Tuesday* is “oriented toward” or “related to” or “provides information about” the whole clause. Linguists often use the term “scope” to describe the relationship between what we commonly call a modifier and the constituent it modifies.

To say that an adverb has a certain word or words in its scope is to say that it colors our understanding of those words. The idea of adverbial scope is effective because, unlike modification, it suggests that the adverb can be directed at words and word groups of various kinds and sizes, and that though the adverb is in a relationship to them, the relationship is not necessarily one of subordination.⁵

In the example above, the scope of the adverbial PP *on Tuesday* is the entire clause, since the PP frames the time in which the whole event named in the clause took place, telling not only when *seeing Cymbeline at Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre* occurred, but when *we went*.

The concept of scope allows us to distinguish several categories of adverbials, among them SENTMODS. We can use these categories as an addition to the language we already have for talking about adverbials and their function and

placement within sentences. These categories include subjunct adverbials, adjunct adverbials, disjunct adverbials, conjunctive adverbials, and sentence modifiers, all of which have different kinds of scope and different constraints on movability.

11.3.2 Subjunct Adverbials

“Subjunct” literally means “joined below.” Subjuncts are words or phrases that are “less important than the subject, verb, or [verb] complement. They amplify or intensify or diminish another sentence element, and they carry less weight than it does.”⁶ In short, subjuncts conform to our usual idea of an AdvP as a constituent that modifies another; subjuncts commonly indicate degree:

1. *Terry, you are so cute.*⁷
2. *I just started practicing.*⁸
3. *If not for gravity, we’d scarcely know up from down.*⁹
4. *London is not going to go the way of Constantinople.*¹⁰

The scope of a subjunct is very narrow: the subjuncts in these examples only relate to an immediately neighboring constituent: *so* only relates to *cute*; *just* relates to the verb *started practicing*; *scarcely* relates to *know*; *not* relates to the verb *is going to go*.

The subjuncts give adverbial information: *so* tells *how cute*; *just* tells *how recently practicing started*; *scarcely* tells *how much* or *the degree of knowing*, as does *not*, which indicates *a zero-degree of going to go*. We can thus identify subjuncts by asking adverbial questions, but, typically, a subjunct will not stand as an acceptable or complete answer to such a question:

- 1.a. *Terry, how cute are you? *So.*
- 2.a. *When did you start practicing? *Just.*
- 3.a. *How would we know up from down? *Scarcely.*
- 4.a. *How is London going to go the way of Constantinople? *Not.*

And subjuncts cannot be moved from their location in the sentence without altering the meaning of the sentence or creating a grammatically ill-formed sentence:

*You are so cute. *So you are cute. *You so are cute. *You are cute so.*

So what? Adverbials commonly stay close to the constituents that are in their scope. Otherwise, their reference becomes vague, ambiguous, or shifts to a different constituent. The scope of a subjunct is so small that, typically, it cannot be moved at all.

11.3.3 Adjunct Adverbials

“Adjunct” literally means “joined to.” An adjunct is not subordinate or secondary to other major clause elements but roughly equal in the weight of its meaning. As we shall see, adjuncts may be what we have previously called either complements or modifiers. As a simple guide, all adverbial complements of verbs (SC, LC, TC, MC, OC) are adjuncts, but we would consider some adjuncts modifiers.

5. *She put the fish in the refrigerator.*¹¹

6. *I slept well.*¹²

7. *I slept in the bathtub.*¹³

Until now, we have said that the PP *in the refrigerator* is functioning as an ADVERBIAL:OC OF “put.” We can see that the PP has a weight nearly equal to the subject and the verb, since the sentence is incomplete without it, and the meaning of the PP is essential to the meaning of the whole. At the same time, using our new concept of “scope,” we can see that the scope of reference of the PP *in the refrigerator* is not the entire clause but just the NP:DO *the fish* and the verb *put*, in that *in the refrigerator* tells where *the fish* is and where the action of *putting* took place. The PP *in the refrigerator* does not tell where *she* was. We also don’t ordinarily move the PP to create a sentence like:

5.a. *In the refrigerator she put the fish.*

Moving *in the refrigerator* to the front of the sentence is an inversion: we have taken one of the verb complements out of its typical position at the end of the sentence and moved it to the beginning.

To sum up, in sentence 5, the PP *in the refrigerator* is not a SENTMOD because:

- Its scope is much of, but not all of the sentence.
- Moving it to the front of the sentence feels odd: it is an inversion (when we move a SENTMOD there should be no sense of creating an inversion).
- When we move it, we will likely change the scope of its reference: we might read *In the refrigerator she put the fish* as implying that *she was in the refrigerator* when she performed the action.

By contrast, in the sentences *I slept well* and *I slept in the bathtub*, the verb, *slept*, is intransitive: it requires no complement. In our earlier discussions, we would have said that, in these sentences, the AdvP *well* and PP:ADVERBIAL *in the bathtub* were both functioning as modifiers of *slept*: we can drop them and still have a well-formed sentence (*I slept*), and we cannot move them.

6.a. *?Well I slept.*

is a poetic inversion, or simply non-WME; and

7.a. ?*In the bathtub I slept.*

is also an inversion. In neither 6.a nor 7.a is the adverbial a SENTMOD. Furthermore, we find that the scope of each adverbial is the whole clause: *well* describes my state and the quality of the sleeping; *in the bathtub* tells both where I was and where the sleeping occurred.

Sentence 8 offers a subtler example:

8. *She lived in Chicago.*¹⁴

We could say that *in Chicago* is a PP:ADVERBIAL:LC. We might also argue that we can hear an intransitive reading of the verb *lived*: that *She lived* is, by itself, a well-formed sentence and that *in Chicago* is a PP:ADVERBIAL:MOD OF “lived.” We could also argue that *in Chicago* is nearly as essential to the clause as the subject and verb: after all, her living *in Chicago* is distinctly different from the mere fact of her living.

The scope of *in Chicago* includes both the subject and the verb: *in Chicago* doesn’t just tell where *she* was or where some act of *living* went on. Rather, it tells where *she lived*—it answers the test question, *Where did she live?* By this reading, *in Chicago* is more like a SENTMOD than a verb complement in that it provides context for the subject and verb. If we move it to the beginning of the clause, we have the same sort of inversion that we saw in 5.a, 6.a, and 7.a:

8.a. ?*In Chicago she lived.*

The inversion also seems to suggest a change in how we construe the meaning of “lived”: in the original sentence 8, “lived” is likely to mean “resided”; while in the inverted sentence 8.a, “lived” means something like “throve” (c.f. *In Chicago she really lived*). But the inversion is less common than the uninverted sentence.

We now have a new class of adverbial constituent, one that stands nearly equal with subject and verb but which is not movable and so is not a SENTMOD. It may have the whole clause in its scope, as in sentence 8, but it may have only some of the major constituents of the clause in its scope, as in sentence 5. It may be, to use our earlier terminology, an adverbial complement of the verb, as in sentence 5; or it may be in the hazy zone between complement and modifier, as in sentence 8, or it may be an adverbial modifier, as in

9. *She kissed her mother on the cheek.*¹⁵

In sentence 9, the PP *on the cheek* is a modifier: we can drop it and still have a well-formed sentence. The PP *on the cheek* provides information about the kissing and the mother:¹⁶ it does not tell us where the subject, *she*, was (*she* was not, after all on her mother's cheek) and so only includes the predicate in its scope. By contrast, consider:

10. *She kissed her mother on the plane.*¹⁷

In sentence 10, *on the plane* tells where the whole event took place; the PP includes the whole clause in its scope—it tells where *she* was while kissing her mother. And while the PP can be moved in 10, it cannot be moved in 9:

9.a. **On the cheek she kissed her mother.*

10.a. *On the plane she kissed her mother.*

In sentence 9, *on the cheek* is an adjunct adverbial. As we shall see below, in sentence 10, *on the plane* is a true SENTMOD.

In a passive voice sentence, the PP:AGENTIVE that is marked by *by/with* is also an adjunct:

11. *He was killed by a terrorist.*¹⁸

Like a modifier, the PP *by a terrorist* can be dropped from the sentence. However, the PP has the same weight as both the subject and the verb because the PP contains the NP:PCOMP that names the agent of the sentence. The scope of the PP is just the verb: *how was the killing done? By a terrorist*. In sentence 11, moving *by a terrorist* clearly creates an inversion—and an odd one at that. The sentence

11.a. ?*By a terrorist he was killed.*

sounds distinctly like Yoda.

And so we have three characteristics of adjunct adverbials: first, they are generally not movable (unlike SENTMODS, which are always movable). Second, while all adverbial complements are adjuncts, sometimes adjuncts can be deleted, like modifiers, leaving behind a well-formed clause:

9.b. *She kissed her mother.*¹⁹

11.b. *He was killed.*²⁰

Third, an adjunct typically has only part of a clause in its scope—although a larger part than a subjunct usually does—or it may have the whole clause in its

scope—as do SENTMODs. And finally, an adjunct can usually be a well-formed answer to a question

11.3.4 Disjunct Adverbials

As the name implies, disjuncts are adverbial constituents that are less closely joined to the sentence or clause. Their scope is the entire clause: they stand outside the clause structure and refer to the whole clause, providing a context for it. Typically, that context is the speaker's opinion or observation about the content of the clause.

Disjuncts can be thought of as a type of SENTMOD: like SENTMODs, they can typically (though not always) be moved; but unlike full-fledged SENTMODs, one cannot make a disjunct the focus of a question.²¹

12. *In fact, confidentially, nothin' like this never happened to me before.*²²
13. *For knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world, stimulating progress, giving birth to evolution. It is, strictly speaking, a real factor in scientific research.*²³
14. *Obviously, we butchered it.*²⁴
15. *Whatever she says, don't argue.*²⁵

In all of these examples, the disjunct adverbial can be moved to the beginning or end of the sentence. But just try making the disjunct the focus of a question:

- 14.a. How did we butcher it? **Obviously*.

By contrast, a SENTMOD can always be the focus of a question formed from the clause it modifies:

16. SENTMOD:

*The nation's political leaders vacated their homes in the city because of the epidemic.*²⁶

Why did the nation's political leaders vacate their homes in the city? Because of the epidemic.

While one cannot frame a question around a disjunct, when the disjunct is not itself a clause, one can frame a clause around the disjunct, a clause in which the actual sentence is included as a dependent clause.²⁷

- 12.a. *In fact, I tell you in confidence that nothin' like this never happened to me before.*

- 13.a. *I am speaking in a strict manner when I tell you that it is a real factor in scientific research.*
14.b. *It is obvious to us that we butchered it.*

The disjunct typically offers the speaker’s opinion about what the clause says. We see this in 12.a, 13.a, and 14.b in that it is the speaker who is “speaking confidentially,” “speaking strictly,” and to whom “it is obvious.” We find the same characteristics in 15, where it is the speaker who is saying, “I tell you in spite of whatever she says, . . .”

The word *hopefully*, that famous bugaboo, is an example of “a typical disjunct”;²⁸ it can easily be paraphrased by framing it in a clause that includes the actual sentence as a dependent clause:

17. *Hopefully, that doesn’t ever happen again.*²⁹
17.a. *I am hopeful that that doesn’t ever happen again.*

A disjunct typically has a whole clause in its scope; it can usually be moved around the clause; and it cannot be the grammatically well-formed answer to a question.

11.3.5 **Conjunctive Adverbials**

“Conjunctive adverbs” are a well-established category in traditional grammar. Unlike the three categories of adverbials that we have already examined, conjunctive adverbials do not have part or all of a clause in their scope. “Instead, they establish a relationship between that clause and the previous clause”³⁰ and sometimes a third, following clause as well. Here are some of the most common conjunctive adverbial words and phrases:

Single-Word Conjunctive Adverbials

accordingly	additionally	again	also
alternatively	anyhow	anyway	before
besides	briefly	certainly	consequently
contrarily	conversely	elsewhere	equally
eventually	finally	first, second, etc.	first . . . next/then . . .
further/furthermore	hence/henceforth	however	incidentally
indeed	instead	lately	likewise
meanwhile	moreover	namely	nevertheless
next	nonetheless	notably	notwithstanding
now	otherwise	rather	regardless
similarly	so	specifically	still
subsequently	then	thereafter	therefore
thus	typically	undoubtedly	

Multi-Word Conjunctive Adverbials

after all	after a while	all in all	as a result
at last	at that time	at the same time	despite that
equally important	even so	for all that	for example
for instance	in addition	in brief	in comparison
in conclusion	in contrast	in fact	in other words
in particular	in short	in simpler terms	in summary
in the first place	in the same way	just as . . . so . . .	of course
on the contrary	on the one/other hand	on the whole	so far
that is	to conclude	to put it differently	to summarize
until now			

Conjunctive adverbials are so named because they relate clauses to each other much as CCONJs can; the conjunctive adverb *however* is even often mistaken by students for a CCONJ because its meaning is very similar to that of the CCONJ *but*. However, unlike *but*, when a conjunctive adverbial is placed at the beginning of a clause, it must always be separated from the clause by a comma; a clause-initial *but* is typically not followed by a comma. And while *but*, preceded by a comma, may be used to conjoin two clauses, *however* can never be used to conjoin two clauses with only a comma preceding: *however* must always be preceded by a semicolon or a period (see 9.2.2).

Conjunctive adverbials also provide additional, adverbial information about the clauses they relate; in this way, they are akin to SCONJs. But unlike other adverbials, conjunctive adverbials do not hold a relationship with just one clause, but direct or express a relationship between two or, sometimes, more clauses (or even paragraphs) as in the case of a set like *first . . . second . . . third . . .* or *first . . . next . . . finally*. Typically, conjunctive adverbials are movable within a clause, and, usually, we can't frame a question around the container clause in such a way that the conjunctive adverbial will be its answer.

We might see conjunctive adverbials as one end of an adverbial continuum, with their scope extending beyond the clause; the other end of the continuum could be seen as subjunct adverbials, with their extremely narrow scope.³¹

So what? Although conjunctive adverbials are movable, it is best to keep them at or very near the beginning of a clause: since they mark how the reader is supposed to relate the clause that follows to the clause that precedes, if the conjunctive adverbial appears later in the second clause, the reader may have to backtrack to reconstruct the relationship between the clauses. Anything that forces the reader to backtrack disrupts the flow of reading and therefore should typically be avoided in formal essay writing and even in personal, informal writing.

In general, we can't frame a question around a conjunctive adverbial:

18. *However, the debt level cannot go much higher.*³²

*?When/how/why can't the debt level go much higher? *However.*

A partial exception can be found in those conjunctive adverbials that include ordinal numbers:

19. *First, I learned how to be present in the moment. Second, I learned how to keep an open mind and not be stuck in one frame of thinking. Last, I learned how not to judge a book by its cover.*³³

When did you learn how to be present in the moment? First.

When did you learn how to keep an open mind? Second.

When did you learn how not to judge a book by its cover? Last.

11.3.6 Sentence Modifiers and Clause Modifiers

As we have already seen, “sentence modifiers” (SENTMOD) or “clause modifiers” (e.g. NCLMOD) are adverbial constituents that can always be moved to the beginning or end of the clause to which they are related and may often be moved to the slot between the subject and verb. One can always make a SENTMOD the focus of a question, and, because the scope of a SENTMOD is the entire clause, the question will need to include the entire clause.

20. *Because of the epidemic, the nation's leaders vacated their homes.*

- 20.a. *The nation's leaders vacated their homes because of the epidemic.*

- 20.b. *The nation's leaders, because of the epidemic, vacated their homes.*

Why did the nation's leaders vacate their homes? Because of the epidemic.

SENTMODS are movable because they fall outside the subject-predicate structure of the clause and, unlike adjuncts, they always have the whole clause within their scope; however, like adjuncts, they have a weight roughly equivalent to the rest of the clause. In general, a SENTMOD provides contextualizing information relevant to the entire clause, such as concurrent action, preceding or causative events, or following or resultative action:

Concurrent Action

21. *While we were waiting, they would carry me up and down the platform.*³⁴

Preceding or Causative Events

22. *When she heard about the job, she called the recruiters regularly for six months until they finally hired her.*³⁵

Following or Resulting Action

23. *When she heard about the job, she called the recruiters regularly for six months until they finally hired her.*

Because the sentence-modifying adverbials provide a context that seems to surround the main clause, my spring 2005 students proposed that they should be called “circumjuncts” since they are “joined around” their container clause. The same sort of clause-modifying adverbials can also modify dependent clauses. Like a SENTMOD, the clause modifier can appear at the beginning or end of the dependent clause and often between its SUBJ and PRED; but a clause modifier of a dependent clause must appear after the subordinator or complementizer, within the boundaries of the dependent clause that contains it:

Adjective Clause Modifier (AdjCLMod)

24. *Narcissus is the handsome fellow in Greek mythology who_[RELPRON], because of his indifference and disdain toward others_[PP:AdjCLMod] was punished by the gods by falling in love with his own image.*³⁶

Noun Clause Modifier (NCLMod)

25. *We know that_[SUBORDINATOR] because of the irreversible loss of large parts of the ecosystem_[PP:AdjCLMod] ecological restoration is possible in only the 50 percent that's left.*³⁷

Adverb Clause Modifier (AdvCLMod)

26. *When_[SCONJ], because of the necessity for speed_[PP:AdvCLMod] the car was lowered and elongated, it became beautiful.*³⁸

But the relationship of a clause modifier to a dependent clause—its scope, its movability, the question that can be framed around its container clause with the clause modifier as an answer—is the same as the relationship of a SENTMOD to a sentence.

SENTMODS and clause modifiers come in a great range of forms. In fact, any form of adverbial—ADVP, PP:ADVERBIAL, ADVCL, NP:ADVERBIAL, PROADV, PARTP:ADVERBIAL, INFP:ADVERBIAL—can function as a sentence- or clause-modifying adverbial.

The following table sums up the identifying qualities of all five different kinds of adverbials:

Adverbial Type	Movable?	Frame a question around it?	Scope
Subjunct adverbial	No	Rarely	One or two words; the complete verb
Adjunct adverbial	Not easily	Usually	Part of or whole clause
Disjunct adverbial	Yes, typically	No	Whole clause
Conjunctive adverbial	Yes	Rarely	Multiple clauses
Sentence/clause modifier (Circumjunct adverbial)	Yes	Yes	Whole clause

It is worth pausing here a moment to examine *every day* versus *everyday*. As two separate words—an open compound—it is conventionally an NP:ADVERBIAL, telling *when* or *how frequently*, commonly used as a SENTMOD or CLAUSEMOD:

*Every day, people thank me, for what I've done for them.*³⁹
People thank me every day for what I've done for them.
People, every day, thank me, for what I've done for them.

As one word, *everyday* is an ADJ, a synonym for *ordinary*:

*He seems comfortable with everyday people.*⁴⁰

I make note of this difference because my sense is that, in my students' writing, the distinction between the two is breaking down, and spelling practice is moving toward writing them both as one word for both meanings. Usage guides still distinguish between the two spellings, and you can readily do so yourself by substituting *each* for *every*:

Each day, people thank me, for what I've done for them.
**He seems comfortable with each day people.*

So what? The spelling shift or confusion is reasonable, since the spelling of compounds with *any/every/some* and words like *body, day, thing, time, and where* is a hodgepodge. I encourage you to think through these compounds, the differences in meaning between the open and closed versions (where there is a difference), and to consult more than one usage authority before deciding which one to use, especially if your audience is likely to be judgmental.

Teaching students that the adverb is subservient to the verb is misleading; subjuncts are the least common type of adverbial.⁴¹ More accurately, “adverbs may be described as the principal ways in which the language user characterizes the conditions and circumstances[,] the hows and wherefores of actions and events.”⁴²

Such a definition replaces the traditional statement about syntax [that adverbs only modify other parts of speech] with a pragmatic and rhetorical characterization. It describes the role that adverbs play in communication by describing the kind of information they convey. . . . It avoids exaggeration of the adverb’s relation to the verb; instead, by referring to “actions and events,” it connects the adverb to the whole clause without eliminating the verb as a focal point.⁴³

In Chapter 12, this characterization of adverbs, and adverbials more generally, will help in discussing the roles they play in relation to non-finite verb phrases.

11.4 Key Points

- **Nominals** are phrases and clauses that (1) perform nominal functions (SUBJ, AGENT, PCOMP, DO, SC, IO, OC) and (2) provide noun-like information (telling *who* or *what*). When it is performing a nominal function, a complete nominal can be identified by the pronoun replacement test.
- **Adjectivals** are phrases and clauses that (1) perform adjectival functions (MOD OF N, SC, OC, ADJCL:MOD OF CLAUSE, NOMINATIVE ABSOLUTE:MOD OF CLAUSE) and (2) provide adjective-like information (telling *which* or *what kind of*). Not all “adjectival forms” can perform all adjectival functions.
- **Adverbials** are phrases and clauses that (1) perform adverbial functions (thus far identified as modifier of V, ADJ, ADV, and SENT/CLAUSE; and verb complement, including SC, LC, MC, TC, OC) and (2) provide adverb-like information (telling *when*, *where*, *why*, *how*, *how much*, *how often*, *how long*, and other versions of those sorts of information).
- Adverbials can also be categorized in terms of their scope, movability, and whether they can serve as the focus of or answer to a question. Based on those criteria, adverbials can be categorized as subjuncts, adjuncts, disjuncts, conjunctive adverbials, and sentence modifiers (circumjuncts).

11.5 Exercises: Nominals, Adjectivals, and Adverbials

Identify the Nominals 1: Real-world sentences

Use the passage on page 28, “Jimmy’s Sales Tip: Sam’s, Costco.” For each sentence, identify each complete nominal and, for each nominal, identify its form (NP, PRON, RELPRON, NCL and, if you can, PARTP:NOMINAL, INF:NOMINAL) and its function (e.g. SUBJ, PCOMP, DO, etc.).

Example: *Kossar's Bagels and Bialys in New York sells a circular pletzel.*⁴⁴

Kossar's Bagels and Bialys in New York—NP:SUBJ of “sells”

New York—NP:PCOMP of “in”

A circular pletzel—NP:DO of “sells”

Identify the Nominals 2: More real-world sentences

Use the following passage⁴⁵ and use the same instructions as in “Identify the Nominals 1.”

(A) It may not be the most welcome news for other woodland creatures, but the gray wolves of the northern Rocky Mountains are back. (B) After being driven to near extinction in the continental United States more than 50 years ago, the wolves are being removed from the endangered species list this month. (C) To many, this is a proud moment in preservation. (D) Since being reintroduced into Yellowstone National Park in the 1990s, the wolves have grown from a population of only 66 to about 1,500 today. (E) Those who want to protect them, though, say defeat is being snatched from the jaws of victory: The three states the wolves live in—Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho—will allow them to be hunted again starting this fall. (F) U.S. News spoke with Ed Bangs, the gray wolf recovery coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. (G) Excerpts:

(H) How did wolves become endangered in the first place?

(I) We deliberately got rid of them. (J) At the turn of the last century, our society had no value for wildlife. (K) We got rid of all the deer, the elk, the bison, the moose. (L) One of the first tasks given in the 1910s to my agency was to kill the last wolves in the western United States.

Identify the Adjectivals 1: Real-world sentences

Use the passage on page 28, “Jimmy’s Sales Tip: Sam’s, Costco.” For each sentence, identify each complete adjectival, and for each adjectival, identify its form (ADJP, PP:ADJECTIVAL, ADJCL, and, if you can, PARTP:ADJECTIVAL, INFP:ADJECTIVAL) and its function (e.g. MOD OF ___, SC, etc.).

Example: *Kossar's Bagels and Bialys in New York sells a circular pletzel.*

in New York—PP:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF “Kossar’s Bagels and Bialys”

circular—ADJP:MOD OF “pletzel”

Identify the Adjectivals 2: More real-world sentences

Use the passage on wolves from “Identify the Nominals 2” above, and use the same instructions as in “Identify the Adjectivals 1.”

Identify the Adverbials 1: Made-up sentences

Use the passage beginning with, “Today my brother Jim and I shopped for dictionaries,” from 8.5, “Find the Adverb Phrases 1” on page 217. For each sentence, identify each complete adverbial, and for each adverbial, identify its form (AdvP, PP:ADVERBIAL, AdvCL, NP:ADVERBIAL, ProAdv, and, if you can, PARTP:ADVERBIAL, INFP:ADVERBIAL) and its function (subjunct, adjunct, disjunct, conjunctive adverb, sentence modifier, or clause modifier).

Example: *Unlike bagels, the pletzel never captured the American palette.*⁴⁶

Unlike bagels—PP:ADVERBIAL:SENTMOD

never—AdvP:SUBJUNCT

Identify the Adverbials 2: Real-world sentences

Use the passage from page 28, “Jimmy’s Sales Tip: Sam’s, Costco,” and use the same instructions as in “Identify the Adverbials 1.”

Identify the Adverbials 3: More real-world sentences

Use the passage on wolves from “Identify the Nominals 2” above, and use the same instructions as in “Identify the Adverbials 1.”

Notes

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Non-Finite Verb Phrases

It is time now to turn our attention to a part of English grammar that most textbooks shortchange: non-finite verb phrases. The finite forms of verbs are the two tensed forms, the present and past, which may each stand alone as the MV of a clause. The three other forms are called “non-finite” because they are not tensed and so cannot stand alone as the MV of a clause:

Finite		Non-Finite		
Present	Past	Present (-ing) Participle	Past (-ed) Participle	Infinitive
drive(s)	drove	driving	driven	to drive
walk(s)	walked	walking	walked	to walk

Until now, we have only dealt with the non-finite forms of verbs in the context of their use in multi-word finite verbs (see Chapter 6). But non-finite verbs can function in other roles within clauses: like dependent clauses, both participle and infinitive phrases can function as nominals, adjectivals, and adverbials. And just as an NP can consist of a noun by itself, so a participle phrase (PARTP) or an infinitive phrase (INFP) can consist of a participle or infinitive alone.

- Embarrassed*, I felt like the neo-pro I was.¹
- Cue the *laughing* trombones.²
- To err* is human.³

In the first sentence, *embarrassed* is a participle functioning adverbially as a disjunct (PARTP:ADVERBIAL:DISJUNCT). In the second sentence, *laughing* is a participle functioning adjectivally as a modifier of *trombones* (PARTP:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF “trombones”). And in the third sentence, *to err* is an infinitive functioning nominally as the subject (INFP:NOMINAL:SUBJ).

Like dependent clauses, non-finite verb phrases have their own internal constituent structures. Non-finite verbs often act as the heads of phrases that comprise a participle or infinitive plus modifiers and/or complements:

*The actor playing the professor stroked his goatee.*⁴

*To prepare for the role, Redmayne read many of Hawking's writings.*⁵

In the first sentence, the PARTP, *playing the professor*, functions adjectivally as a modifier of the noun *actor* (PARTP:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF “actor”): it is a constituent of the NP, *The actor playing the professor*. At the same time, the PARTP has an interior constituent structure of its own: the verb *playing* is followed by the NP *the professor*, which functions as a DO.

In the second sentence, the INFP *to prepare for the role* functions as an adverbial modifying the sentence *Redmayne read many of Hawking's writings* (INFP:ADVERBIAL:SENTMOD). Within the INFP, the phrasal verb *to prepare for* is followed by the NP *the role*, which is functioning as a DO.

Non-finite verb phrases have agents. Even though a verb is non-finite, in use, it will still have an agent, which may be stated or implied. In the last two examples, the explicit agent of *playing is the actor*, since it is *the actor* who is doing the *playing*; and the explicit agent of *to prepare* is *Redmayne*, since it is *Redmayne* who is doing the *preparing*. In *To err is human*, the implicit agent of the infinitive *to err* is a generic person, sometimes stated as *one*.

So what? It is important to be able to identify the agent of a non-finite verb: writers who fail to do so can make the reference of the non-finite verb phrase unclear. The result of that lack of clarity is what is sometimes called a “dangling modifier.”

Furthermore, like finite verbs in dependent clauses, non-finite verbs can take semi-modal and imperfect aspectual verbs, and perfect, progressive, and passive auxiliaries. We will look at examples below. As I mentioned in the section on fragments (10.3), because of their similarity to clauses, non-finite verb phrases are sometimes called “participle clauses” and “infinitive clauses.” But because they do not have finite verbs and cannot have subjects that agree with the participle or infinitive in number and person, we will continue to refer to them as phrases.

Non-finite verb phrases are an important stylistic device in writing. Although they are the parts of English grammar that are typically given the least coverage in textbooks, non-finite verb phrases are important and relevant to teaching and thinking about writing. Along with dependent clauses and such sentence-rearranging devices as passive voice and *it* extraposition, non-finite verb

phrases allow us to rearrange the delivery and flow of information by further reducing independent and dependent clauses and incorporating them as dependent elements within or attached to clauses or phrases. Non-finite verb phrases are thus part of a spectrum of devices running from independent clauses all the way down to prepositional phrases:

Sentence: *The woman was wearing the white dress. The woman went to the party.*

Adjective Clause: *The woman who was wearing the white dress went to the party.*

Participle Phrase: *The woman wearing the white dress went to the party.*

PP: *The woman in the white dress went to the party.*

PP: *The woman in white went to the party.*

Despite the changes in form, the meaning of each underlined constituent is much the same, and the function of each remains the same: each is an adjectival post-modifier of the noun *woman*. And yet, each form creates a different rhetorical effect: using fewer words reduces the weight and significance of the idea being expressed, making it more secondary to the main point of the sentence. The change in structure also changes the rhythm of the sentence, allowing us to manipulate the pace of the sentence and paragraph: shorter sentences read faster and so may have sharper impact when contrasted with longer sentences. We can see this in the following pair of sentences, the first of which uses a dependent clause that, in the second, is reduced to an infinitive phrase:

When one makes an error, one is being human.

To err is human.

PARTPs and INFPs can sometimes function in the same slot in a sentence, but they commonly carry different meanings. Consider these two sentences:

Though they'd met before at the cafe, a formal visit would secure an important relationship, necessary for a woman in Kabul running a business.⁶

Though they'd met before at the cafe, a formal visit would secure an important relationship, necessary for a woman in Kabul to run a business.

The participle *running* implies that the woman is already operating a business (or at least she has very real prospects of doing so), while the infinitive *to run* implies that she is not yet running the business but hopes to. That is, the participle implies a realized—or at least more potentially real—state of affairs, while the infinitive marks the event as unreal or hypothetical; hence the overlap between infinitives and semi-modal verbs (e.g. *have to V*, *want to V*, etc.).

Analyzing non-finite verb phrases: PARTPs and INFPs can often be analyzed in terms of how their form and function are similar to those of dependent clauses, and

we will have recourse to those similarities. However, as we've already seen, non-finite verb phrases also bear a strong resemblance to verb phrases that function as predicates. These similarities will prove useful in helping us analyze the function of various constituents—especially adverbials—within non-finite verb phrases.

12.1 Participles (PART) and Participle Phrases (PARTP)

A PARTP consists of a present or past participle, either alone or with complements and/or modifiers:

1. *Driving is one of the great pleasures of my life.*⁷
2. *Driving my car is my favorite activity.*⁸
3. *Driving my car on the highway is one of the great pleasures of my life.*

In sentence 1, *driving* is a PARTP:NOMINAL:SUBJ of the container clause *Driving is one of the great pleasures of my life*. The implied agent of the participle *driving* is “I” since, if we ask, “Who is the speaker talking about doing the *driving*?” the answer will be “him- or herself.” In relation to the speaker, the agent of *driving* is “I.”

In sentence 2, *Driving my car* is a PARTP:NOMINAL:SUBJ of the container clause *Driving my car is my favorite activity*. Within the PARTP, there are other constituents: along with the participle *driving*, there is an NP, *my car*, which is functioning as the DO of “driving”: the NP answers the question, “Someone is *driving* what?” Again, the implied agent of the PARTP *Driving my car* is “I.”

In sentence 3, *Driving my car on the highway* is still a PARTP:NOMINAL:SUBJ of the container clause *Driving my car on the highway is one of the great pleasures of my life*, and within the PARTP, *my car* is again an NP:DO of “driving.” But we have one more constituent within the PARTP: the PP *on the highway*, which answers the adverbial question, “Where is your *car being driven*?” which seems to indicate that the PP is some kind of adverbial locating the action named in the PARTP. To determine what type of adverbial it may be, we need to determine what its scope is and whether it is movable. The scope seems to be the whole PARTP since the entire activity of *driving my car* occurs *on the highway*. Thus, the PP might be a participle phrase modifier (PARTP:MOD), or it might be an adjunct. The major distinction between the two is movability. We will find that adverbial constituents of a PARTP cannot usually be moved from the end of the PARTP to the slot before the participle without changing the scope of the adverbial or simply making an ungrammatical sentence:

Driving my car on the highway is one of the great pleasures of my life.
On the highway driving my car is one of the great pleasures of my life.

By my reading, moving the PP changes its scope, so it may no longer just be telling about *driving my car* but could also be about “being one of the great

pleasures of my life.” That is, perhaps on the highway, driving my car is one of the great pleasures of my life. But, by contrast, on the city streets, riding my scooter is one of the great pleasures of my life. Since we cannot move the adverbial PP *on the highway* without changing its scope, in the original sentence, it is functioning as an adjunct.

PARTPMOD: Occasionally, an adverbial constituent of a PARTP will be movable within the PARTP:

*There’s long been speculation about the CFP expanding to 14 or 16 teams, with the Big Ten and SEC slowly beating the drum.*⁹
“*The Streets of Laredo*” derives from “*The Bard of Armaugh*,” which explains the incongruous lyrics about beating the drum slowly.¹⁰

The adverb *slowly* has the whole PARTP *beating the drum* in its scope, since it is not just the *beating* but the *beating of the drum* that is happening *slowly*. Therefore, *slowly* is functioning as a PARTPMOD.

As we just saw, a **PARTP may start not with the participle** but with an adverbial functioning as a PARTPMOD or as a subjunct that modifies the participle:

Subjunct: *Hardly knowing what he was doing, he took it from her.*¹¹
PARTPMOD: . . . *with the Big Ten and SEC slowly beating the drum.*

PARTPs can function as Nominals, Adjectivals, or Adverbials:

Nominal: *You’ll need to compute the cost of driving your own car.*¹²
Adjectival: *You may prefer to be the one driving your own car.*¹³
Adverbial: *You’re likely very comfortable driving your own car.*¹⁴

PARTPs functioning as nominals are, in traditional grammar, called “gerunds” or “gerund phrases.” The term “participle” or “participial” is, in traditional grammar, reserved for PARTPs functioning as adjectivals. Traditional grammar does not recognize participles as having an adverbial function. We will stick with calling both the *-ing* and the *-ed* forms “participles” and talking about how they function as nominals, adjectivals, and adverbials.

12.1.1 Nominal Participle Phrases

Rarely in English grammar can we say that something is always true, but here is one of those moments: when a PARTP functions as a nominal, the participle is always a present participle (the *-ing* form):

*Baking is my favorite activity to do with my kids.*¹⁵
**Baked is my favorite activity to do with my kids.*

Driving my car is my favorite activity.

**Driven my car is my favorite activity.*

Since past participles cannot function as nominals, we always know that a PARTP with a past participle must be functioning as an adjectival or an adverbial.

A PARTP:NOMINAL can perform the whole range of functions filled by other nominals, with the notable exception of OC:

SUBJ: Driving my car is my favorite activity.

*AGENT: A composite score was created by summing the five items.*¹⁶

*DO: I enjoyed using Ubers and not having to drive myself.*¹⁷

*SC: Food security is having enough safe and nutritious food to eat.*¹⁸

PCOMP: You'll need to compute the cost of driving your own car.

*IO: KDKA-TV's Jon Delano gave driving a truck a try with the able help of Paul Bulick.*¹⁹

As with all nominals, we can use the pronoun replacement test to identify each complete PARTP:NOMINAL.

In Chapter 7, we saw that V + NP:DO + PARTP is a verb complementation pattern all its own, different in its nature from V + DO + OC. We will look at that pattern more closely below. First, we need to look at PARTPs functioning as nominals that are functioning as SCs and IOs.

Nominal PARTP functioning as an SC: A copular *be* followed by a PARTP:NOMINAL:SC, as in, *Food security is having enough safe and nutritious food to eat*, looks like a *be* AUX followed by the present participle marking the progressive aspect, as in *My daughter is having a baby*.²⁰ The difference is simple: when we have *BE* + *V-ing* marking the progressive aspect of a verb, we can drop the *be* AUX, change the *V-ing* to a present or past form, and still have a sentence with a related meaning, in that the agent of the verb remains the same:

My daughter is having a baby. → *My daughter has a baby.*

But when the MV is copular *be* followed by a PARTP:NOMINAL:SC, we cannot make the same change and still have a sentence with a related meaning, because the agent of the participle changes:

Food security is having enough safe and nutritious food to eat.

**Food security has enough safe and nutritious food to eat.*

In the original sentence, the agent of *having* is a generic “someone” who *has enough safe and nutritious food to eat*. In the second version, the agent of *has* becomes *food security*.

Nominal PARTP functioning as an IO: Only a limited set of verbs take as their complement NOMINAL:IO + NOMINAL:DO (or its alternate, NOMINAL:DO

+ *TO/FOR* + NOMINAL:IO). Of these verbs, an even more limited set can take a nominal PARTP as the IO.

Jon Delano gave driving a truck a try.

?*Jon Delano gave a try to driving a truck.*

Debbie gives helping others her whole heart.

*Debbie gives her whole heart to helping others.*²¹

Other verbs that can take IO + DO do not easily take a nominal PARTP as the IO. Rather, putting the nominal PARTP in the first complement constituent slot tends to make the second complement an OC; you can try making up examples with verbs like *make* and *find*. Remember that in the NOMINAL:IO + NOMINAL:DO complement pattern, the two nominals always name different objects, while in the NOMINAL:DO + NOMINAL:OC complement pattern, the two nominals always name or refer to the same object. When we place a nominal PARTP in the first complement slot after the MV, in most cases, the NP in the second complement slot will name or refer to the same object as the PARTP:NOMINAL in the first complement slot.

A nominal or adjectival PARTP cannot function as an OC: We looked at this pattern back in 7.1.3.4 and concluded that the PARTP:VC provides adverbial information, so that in a sentence like, *They had left the engine_[NP:DO] running_[PARTP:VC]*²² the PARTP *running* tells *how* or *in what state* the engine had been left. Since we can't move the PARTP, and it has most of the clause in its scope, we can now say it is functioning as an adjunct.

For many verbs that take this pattern, the **NOMINAL:DO** names the agent of the **PARTP:VC**. For those verbs, we can readily paraphrase the relationship between the two complements with a dependent clause:

PARTP: *A good Samaritan found the dog_[NP:DO] wandering on the street_[PARTP:VC]*²³

NCL: *A good Samaritan found that the dog was wandering on the street.*

ADJCL:ESSENTIAL MOD: *A good Samaritan found the dog that was wandering on the street*

ADJCL:NON-ESSENTIAL MOD: *A good Samaritan found the dog, which was wandering on the street.*

ADVCL: *A good Samaritan found the dog while it was wandering on the street.*

Each paraphrase of the PARTP (NCL, ADJCL, ADVCL) highlights a different implied meaning for the original PARTP:

- **The NCL paraphrase** emphasizes the PARTP as implying a discovered fact or thing. It also implies concurrent action, in that the *finding* and the dog *wandering* happen at the same time.

- The ADJCL paraphrases describe the action named by the PARTP as concurrent with the action of the container clause. The ADJCL:ESSENTIAL MOD indicates that the audience needs the clause as identifying information for *the dog*; the ADJCL:NON-ESSENTIAL MOD indicates that the dog has been identified more specifically earlier and the audience does not need the clause to identify which particular dog is being discussed.
- The ADVCL paraphrase also highlights that the PARTP describes concurrent action.

All four paraphrases confirm that we have two concurrent actions which confirms the idea that, in sentences like this example, the PARTP is functioning as an adverbial.

So what? At the same time, these clause paraphrases suggest yet another connection among nominal, adjectival, and adverbial meaning: metaphorically, we understand “the time when someone is performing an action” (the adverbial parse) as “an object that can be *found*” (the nominal parse); at the same time, we understand “an action being performed by someone” as “a characteristic of the person performing the action” (the adjectival parse). Grammar, meaning, and habits of thought—how we understand the workings of the world—are all intertwined!

For other verbs that take the NOMINAL:DO + PARTP:VC complement pattern, **the agent of the PARTP is the subject of the sentence**: in *She lost money_[NP:DO] investing in the stock market_[PARTP:ADVERBIAL:VC]*,²⁴ *she* is the one who is doing the *investing*. For such sentences, we can construct the same range of paraphrases, except that there is no NCL paraphrase. (Try it!)

There are many verbs in English that take the complement pattern NOMINAL:DO + PARTP:VC; you can find a list of them back in 7.1.3.4. Here are a few more sentence examples:

NOMINAL:DO is agent of the PARTP:

*The police officer kept **him** talking for two hours.*²⁵
*He watched **the bees** buzzing from flower to flower.*²⁶
*Her strong throw sent **the rock** sailing over the wall.*²⁷

SUBJ is agent of the PARTP:

***Researchers** have spent countless hours compiling evidence.*²⁸
*I wasted years emailing scientists without even polite replies.*²⁹
***English** squandered many years of his life working for the U.S. Department of Defense.*³⁰

12.1.2 Adjectival Participle Phrases

When a PARTP functions as an adjectival, like other adjectival constituents, it can be a modifier of a noun. A participle alone may function as a pre-modifier of a noun, taking the adjective slot between the DP and the noun. Effectively, a participle in the pre-modifier position is indistinguishable from any other adjective; some words that end in *-ing* (e.g. *amazing, boring, exciting, frightening, interesting*)³¹ function primarily or solely as adjectives. We can check how well established a participle is as an adjective by whether it can take a degree subjunct like *very*:

an interesting book → *a very interesting book*
a sleeping dog → **a very sleeping dog*

An adjectival PARTP may also function as a post-modifier of a noun, in which case the PARTP can include the participle as well as complements and/or adverbials more complex than a subjunct.

An adjectival PARTP can function as an SC. However, like an adjectival PARTP functioning as a pre-modifier of a noun, the PARTP:ADJECTIVAL:SC is indistinguishable from any other ADJP and can consist only of the participle by itself, or with a degree subjunct like *very*. We can use this distinction to indicate the difference between a PARTP:ADJECTIVAL:SC and a verb in the progressive aspect:

MV in Present Progressive

*Detective Gibson is lying.*³²
 **Detective Gibson is very lying.*

V + PARTP:ADJECTIVAL:SC

*This is exciting.*³³
This is very exciting.

Present participles can always appear as an ADJECTIVAL:PRE-MOD OF N, and some are used more frequently as adjectives than as MVs in the present progressive (e.g. *interesting* and *exciting*):

PARTP:ADJECTIVAL:PRE-MOD OF N: *This is a very interesting story.*³⁴

PARTP:ADJECTIVAL:SC: *The story is very interesting.*³⁵

MV: *It is important for the nurse to understand that there is a difference between what is interesting the public and what is in the public interest.*³⁶

PARTP:ADJECTIVAL:PRE-MOD OF N: *You have a very exciting future ahead of you.*³⁷

PartP:Adjectival:SC: *The future outlook is very exciting.*³⁸

*MV: Today, a unique cross-genre blend of history and fantastic fiction is exciting authors and enticing readers.*³⁹

Those participles that are used more frequently as adjectival pre-modifiers of nouns than as MVs are precisely those that are most readily used as SCs.

If the PARTP:ADJECTIVAL includes not only the participle but complements and/or adverbials more complex than a subjunct, then the PARTP:ADJECTIVAL is typically a post-modifier of the noun. A PARTP:ADJECTIVAL functioning as a post-modifier of a noun may be either an essential or a non-essential modifier.

1. Pre-modifier: *All that stands between a speeding car and a cliff is a concrete barrier.*⁴⁰
2. Essential post-modifier: *Like a car speeding down the interstate, a boat creates its own breeze.*⁴¹
3. Non-essential post-modifier: *Mere hours later, Coombs had us jammed into a convoy of rental cars, speeding toward Switzerland.*⁴²

In sentence 2, the PARTP *speeding down the interstate* is an essential modifier because it provides information the audience needs in order to distinguish which particular *car* is being referred to. If, in sentence 2, we drop the participle phrase functioning as an essential modifier (*speeding down the interstate*), the sentence will still be well formed (*Like a car, a boat creates its own breeze*), but the scope of reference of a *car* will be less specific and potentially less clear.

In sentence 3, the PARTP *speeding toward Switzerland* is a non-essential modifier because it describes the cars, or possibly the caravan, or “us,” and it describes action that is coincident with the action described in the container clause (*We were jammed into a convoy of rental cars* and were, coincidentally, *speeding toward Switzerland*); but if we drop the PARTP:ADJECTIVAL that is functioning as a non-essential modifier, the scope of reference of the NP that the PARTP modifies remains clear: with or without the PARTP, we know which particular people are being referred to by the PRON “us” and which particular *convoy of rental cars* is being referred to by that NP.

In an adjectival PARTP, the participle may be either a present participle or a past participle:

- 4.a. PRESPART: *The hiding demons walked into the firelight.*⁴³
- 4.b. PASTPART: *The hidden demons are less predictable.*⁴⁴

However, not all past participles can be used as pre-modifiers of nouns:

- 5.a. *The lying snake looked her right in the eye.*⁴⁵
- 5.b. **The lied snake looked her right in the eye.*

In more complex PARTPs (such as sentences 2 and 3), there is a close parallel between the adjectival PARTP and an ADJCL, and there is a parallel between the non-essential modifiers and an ADVCL—specifically an adverbial of concurrent action:

PRESPART (Essential Modifier)

2. PARTP: *Like a car speeding down the interstate, a boat creates its own breeze.*
- 2.a. ADJCL: *Like a car that is speeding down the interstate, a boat creates its own breeze.*

PresPart (Non-Essential Modifier)

3. PARTP: *Mere hours later, Coombs had us jammed into a convoy of rental cars, speeding toward Switzerland.*
- 3.a. ADJCL: *Mere hours later, Coombs had us jammed into a convoy of rental cars, which was speeding toward Switzerland.*
- 3.b. ADVCL: *Mere hours later, Coombs had us jammed into a convoy of rental cars, as it was speeding toward Switzerland.*

PASTPART (Essential Modifier)

6. PARTP: *A black car driven by the masked Racer X forces the truck to pull over.⁴⁶*
- 6.a. ADJCL: *A black car that is driven by the masked Racer X forces the truck to pull over.*

PastPart (Non-Essential Modifier)

7. PARTP: *Earnhardt Ganassi Racing parked its iconic No. 8 car, driven by Aric Almirola, after the season's seventh race.⁴⁷*
- 7.a. ADJCL: *Earnhardt Ganassi Racing parked its iconic No. 8 car, which was driven by Aric Almirola, after the season's seventh race.*
- 7.b. ADVCL: *Earnhardt Ganassi Racing parked its iconic No. 8 car, when it was driven by Aric Almirola, after the season's seventh race.*

The PARTP:ADJECTIVAL with the present participle looks very much like an active voice ADJCL with the RELPRON:SUBJ and the progressive *be* AUX deleted, while the PARTP:ADJECTIVAL with the past participle followed by a *by*-PP:AGENTIVE looks like a passive voice ADJCL with the RELPRON:SUBJ and the passive *be* AUX deleted. This parallel between the PARTP and the dependent clause provides us with a test for identifying the form of the PARTP:ADJECTIVAL:

The adjective clause test for an adjectival participle phrase: To test whether a PARTP following a noun is a PARTP:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF N, turn the PARTP

into an ADJCL by adding an appropriate RELPRON:SUBJ and an appropriate *be* AUX. If the ADJCL is a fair paraphrase of the PARTP, then the PARTP is adjectival.

Also, as with nominal participle phrases, paraphrasing the PARTP:ADJECTIVAL as an ADJCL can help us identify the functions of constituents within the PARTP, especially adverbials.

Occasionally, a **PARTP:Adjectival that includes not only a participle but its complements and/or adverbials more complex than a subjunct** can appear in the slot between DP and noun, but note the use of quotation marks by the author to flag the self-conscious oddness of the usage:

8. *This “sticking your head in the sand” approach must change.*⁴⁸

This kind of construction is rare and very limited as to where it is appropriate. Similarly, in certain contexts, a **single word PARTP:ADJECTIVAL** may appear after the noun it modifies:

9. *Heav’n has no rage like love to hatred turn’d/Nor hell a fury like a woman scorn’d.*⁴⁹

10. *A penny saved is a penny earned.*⁵⁰

This usage is a poetic inversion: we would more commonly speak of *a scorned woman*. But it works just like any construction with an adjectival past-participle-phrase functioning as a post-modifier of a noun: the noun being modified by the PARTP is the patient—the DO—of the participle. We can always see this by using an ADJCL to paraphrase the NP that contains the PARTP:

- 9.a. *... Nor hell a fury like a woman who has been scorned (by someone).*

→ *Someone has scorned a woman.*

- 10.a. *A penny that was saved (by someone) is a penny that is earned (by someone).*

→ *Someone saved (a penny). Someone earned a penny.*

A noun modified by a present PARTP names the agent of the participle—the actor performing the action named by the participle. A noun modified by a past PARTP names the patient of the participle: the person, place, or thing immediately affected by the action. Either way, as with other adjectival modifiers, a PARTP:ADJECTIVAL typically needs to be close to the noun it modifies. This last point becomes even more significant in discussing adverbial PARTPs and the relationship between an adverbial PARTP and an adjectival PARTP that functions as a non-essential adjectival modifier.

12.1.3 Adverbial Participle Phrases

Depending on whether they can be moved to both the beginning and end of their container clause, adverbial PARTPs may function as sentence or clause modifiers, or adjuncts:

PARTP:ADVERBIAL:SENTMOD

11. *More than a dozen other musical acts, hoping to be popular, recorded “I’ll Smile Again.”*⁵¹

PARTP:ADVERBIAL:CLAUSE MODIFIER

12. *O’Neill does too often take the bait when journalists, hoping to make news, tempt him to say something that they can label “controversial.”*⁵²

PARTP:ADVERBIAL:ADJUNCT

13. *Shunned by the other parents, Stephanie takes up with the glamorous, elusive and mysterious Emily Nelson.*⁵³

PARTPs often appear in the three positions in clauses that we have come to associate with sentence and clause modifiers:

- 11.a. *Hoping to be popular, more than a dozen other musical acts recorded “I’ll Smile Again.”*
More than a dozen other musical acts, hoping to be popular, recorded “I’ll Smile Again.”
More than a dozen other musical acts recorded “I’ll Smile Again,” hoping to be popular.
- 12.a. *O’Neill does too often take the bait when, hoping to make news, journalists, tempt him to say something—anything—that they can label “controversial.”*
O’Neill does too often take the bait when journalists, hoping to make news, tempt him to say something—anything—that they can label “controversial.”
O’Neill does too often take the bait when journalists tempt him to say something—anything—that they can label “controversial,” hoping to make news.

Sometimes, however, they cannot:

- 13.a. *Shunned by the other parents, Stephanie takes up with the glamorous, elusive and mysterious Emily Nelson.*
Stephanie, shunned by the other parents, takes up with the glamorous, elusive and mysterious Emily Nelson.

**Stephanie takes up with the glamorous, elusive and mysterious Emily Nelson, shunned by the other parents.*

The movement of the PARTP is blocked, in part, by the presence of the second NP, *the glamorous, elusive and mysterious Emily Nelson*, which names another animate actor who could, conceivably, *be shunned*. Our default is to read the agent or patient of the PARTP as the closest reasonable NP.

Sometimes movement of a PARTP:ADVERBIAL just seems to be blocked by distance:

14. *Approaching the turn, Santos made his move.*⁵⁴
Santos, approaching the turn, made his move.
?Santos made his move, approaching the turn.
15. *Buffeted by the elements, a large ship sails through a powerful storm.*
*A large ship, buffeted by the elements, sails through a powerful storm.*⁵⁵
?A large ship sails through a powerful storm, buffeted by the elements.

The third version of sentences 14 and 15 may be grammatically well formed, but they are stylistically weak because of the separation between the present PARTP and its agent or the past PARTP and its patient.

Nonetheless, whether they can be moved to all three slots, and thus are clearly SENTMODS, or cannot be moved away from their agents or patients, and thus must be considered adjuncts, these PARTPs all have the entire container clause in their scope and provide adverbial contextualizing information for the characters and action in the container clause, commonly telling *why* or *when* the action occurred.

Adverbial PARTP in the middle of a clause: When a PARTP is placed between the NP:SUBJ and VP:PRED of the container clause, and is separated from the agent by commas, it may be paraphrased by either a non-essential ADJCL or an ADVCL:

AdjCL Paraphrase

- 11.b. *More than a dozen other musical acts, who were hoping to be popular, recorded "I'll Smile Again."*

AdvCL Paraphrase

- 11.c. *More than a dozen other musical acts, because they were hoping to be popular, recorded "I'll Smile Again."*

As we have already seen, there is a connection between non-essential adjectival information and adverbial information: both can provide context or framing for the action of the container clause. Because both of these paraphrases work, we must conclude that when the apparently adverbial PARTP is placed between the SUBJ and PRED, adjectival meaning may also be available to the reader.

12.1.4 The Agent—or Patient—of the Participle

We have mentioned that present participles have agents and past participles have patients. It is important to understand the relationship between the participle and its agent or patient for two reasons: first, in revising a PARTP into a dependent or independent clause, we need to be able to identify the logical agent of a present participle, or patient of a past participle, to make it the subject of the clause. Second, to use PARTPs to clearly convey meaning, we have to be careful about locating the PARTP near its agent or patient: when a PARTP is located too far from its agent or patient, the reference or meaning of the PARTP can become unclear or ambiguous, and, with adjectival and adverbial PARTPs, if the agent or patient of the PARTP is absent, the result can be a dangling participle.

The agent or patient of the participle is typically explicit in the container clause, especially with adjectival and adverbial PARTPs; the agent is often implicit with nominal PARTPs (remember: nominal PARTPs always use present participles). In adjectival and adverbial PARTPs, the agent or patient of the participle is an important constituent of the container clause that anchors the PARTP, linking it to the container clause and helping to make clear what the function of the PARTP is within the container clause. A true “dangling participle” is always an adjectival or adverbial PARTP whose agent or patient has been deleted from the container clause.

The agent of a nominal PARTP can be explicit:

16. *Running the team has been O'Malley's full-time job.*⁵⁶

To find the agent of the PARTP, we ask the same kind of question we would ask with a finite verb: “Who or what is PARTP?” “Who or what is *running the team*?” The answer, *O'Malley*, is the agent of the PARTP.

The agent of a nominal PARTP is often implicit:

17. *Buying a house takes time.*⁵⁷

There is no stated agent of the PARTP *buying a house*, no NP that answers the question, “Who is *buying a house*?” The only available noun, *time*, isn't the

actor performing the action named in the PARTP. Rather, the agent of the PARTP is an implied, abstract person, and the subject/topic of the container clause is the abstract person's abstract act of *buying a house*. However, we have a related construction in which the PARTP is preceded by a possessive determiner:

- 17.a. *His buying a house in town didn't mean much.*⁵⁸

In this sentence, the PARTP *buying a house* behaves like a single noun, and its nominal status is further marked by the possessive determiner. The possessive determiner *his* names the agent of *buying*.

The agent or patient of a PARTP:ADJECTIVAL or PARTP:ADVERBIAL generally must be explicit. If a PARTP:ADJECTIVAL is an essential modifier, then the agent or patient of the PARTP is the noun being modified by the PARTP and that agent or patient must be explicit. Consider the sentence:

18. *The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.*⁵⁹
 19. *The damage caused by oxidation builds up in our cells.*⁶⁰

In sentence 18, the agent of *walking* is *The people*; in sentence 19, the patient of *caused* is *The damage*.

When the PARTP functions as a non-essential adjectival modifier, or as an adverbial, the agent or patient should be explicit in order to make the reference of the PARTP clear. Unfortunately, we can delete the agent or patient of the PARTP if two conditions both hold: (1) if the agent or patient of the PARTP is the same as the subject of the container clause, and (2) if the MV in the container clause is transitive; we then can put the MV into passive voice and delete the agent of the container clause, thus also deleting the agent or patient of the PARTP. The result is almost invariably either a PARTP with vague or ambiguous reference or a dangling participle.

Consider the following sentences in which the agent (11.a) or patient (13.a) of the PARTP is explicitly stated, and the agent or patient of the **PARTP** is the NP:SUBJ of the container clause:

- 11.a. *Hoping to be popular, more than a dozen other musical acts*_{[AGENT OF "Hoping";}
 _{SUBJ OF "recorded"]} *recorded "I'll Smile Again."*
 13.a. *Shunned by the other parents, Stephanie*_[PATIENT OF "Shunned"; SUBJ OF "takes up with"]
 takes up with the glamorous, elusive and mysterious Emily Nelson.

Each of these PARTPs may be functioning as a non-essential adjectival modifier or an adverbial SENTMOD. Let's put the container clause in passive voice (11.d and 13.b) and then delete the agent of the container clause, thus removing the agent (11.e) and patient (13.c) of the PARTP:

Passive Voice

- 11.d. ?*Hoping to be popular*, “I’ll Smile Again” was recorded by more than a dozen other musical acts.
 13.b. ?*Shunned by the other parents*, the glamorous, elusive and mysterious Emily Nelson is taken up with by Stephanie.

Passive Voice, Agent Deleted

- 11.e. **Hoping to be popular*, “I’ll Smile Again” was recorded.
 13.c. **Shunned by the other parents*, the glamorous, elusive and mysterious Emily Nelson is taken up with.

The passive voice versions of these sentences are distinctly awkward and unclear, forcing the reader to backtrack and decipher that, no, in fact, “I’ll Smile Again” is not the agent of *hoping* and that it is not “Emily Nelson” who was *shunned*. When we delete the agent from the passive voice container clause, we get true dangling participles, in that the first option for an agent or patient for the participle is ridiculous, and there is no second option with which to make sense of the participle’s meaning.

So what? One of the reasons that some teachers warn so strongly against using passive voice is that passive voice is involved in dangling both participles and other modifiers. However, the passive voice verb is not, in itself, the problem: passive voice merely aids and abets the “crime” of dangling participles.

The agent of a PARTP can appear in several different places in the container clause. We have already seen that the agent of a PARTP can appear as the subject of the container clause and as a possessive determiner. It can also appear in the complement of the MV in the container clause:

20. *Playing in the band* has also helped Olsen_[NP:DO] stay out of trouble.⁶¹

Olsen is the one who is *playing in the band*. The agent of a PARTP can even be the whole container clause:

21. Someone dashes into the frame at the last minute, *ruining the shot*.⁶²

Here, it wasn’t just *someone* that ruined the shot; rather, the whole clause is the agent of the PARTP, a relationship that can be paraphrased by:

- 21.a. *Someone dashing into the frame at the last minute ruins the shot*.
 21.b. *Someone who dashes into the frame at the last minute ruins the shot*.

Having the whole clause be the agent of the PARTP is much like having an entire clause be the antecedent of a RELPRO-WORD, as in:

21.c. *Someone dashes into the frame at the last minute, which ruins the shot.*

The RELPROCLAUSE *which* refers back to the whole preceding clause, *Someone dashes into the frame at the last minute*.

Absolute phrases: Another context in which a PARTP is used with an explicit agent is exemplified in the following sentences:

*Our business being concluded, Paul closed the meeting.*⁶³

*"I think that just cost me a shot at a playoff," he said, the words coming out of his mouth like lead matzo balls.*⁶⁴

*Campaign ads have been dumbed down now to the level of professional wrestling, the difference being that wrestling is occasionally funny.*⁶⁵

In each of these sentences, the PARTP includes as a constituent a NOMINAL:AGENT, and the entire NOMINAL:AGENT + PARTP is commonly called an **absolute phrase**. Absolute phrases are a useful stylistic device for presenting non-essential-but-contextualizing information. They are adverbial and function as SENTMODS (apply the tests and see for yourself). Note that in all of these examples, we could precede the PARTP with the preposition *with*, turning the PARTP into the PCOMP; the PP:ADVERBIAL:SENTMOD has the same essential meaning as the original absolute phrase, as in *With our business being concluded, Paul closed the meeting*.

12.1.5 PARTPs with Auxiliary, Semi-Modal, and Imperfect Aspectual Verbs

In a PARTP it is very common for present participles to take AUX verbs that mark perfect aspect and passive voice, as well as semi-modal and imperfect aspectual verbs. However, past participles cannot take auxiliaries. In a PARTP where the participle includes AUX and/or semi-modal or imperfect aspectual verbs, the first word of the complete participle takes the present participle form. For the verb *drive*, *driving* is the present participle, and *having driven* is the perfect present participle. Native English speakers have many of these forms in our repertoire of ordinary usage. Here are some examples of the modal, perfect, imperfect, and passive present participle. The present participle does not take the progressive aspect; we cannot have two *-ing* forms next to each other in the same verb:

Present Participle: *Driving home to Evanston, he felt his years had not been wasted.*⁶⁶

Modal Present Participle: *Those are the folks that end up having to drive to Atlanta.*⁶⁷

Perfect Present Participle: *I was there in DC, having driven down from New York City.*⁶⁸

Modal Perfect Present Participle: *Not wanting to have driven all this way for nothing, we figured we might as well get out and walk up the path.*⁶⁹

Imperfect Present Participle: *Smith forgot to lock the doors before starting to drive.*⁷⁰

Modal Imperfect Present Participle: *Just having to start driving D around again seems so hard.*⁷¹

Passive Present Participle: *They wouldn't need to fear being driven into bankruptcy.*⁷²

Modal Passive Present Participle: *I couldn't fathom having to be driven everywhere.*⁷³

Perfect Imperfect Present Participle: *The impression from the simulator studies is that sleepiness soon after having started to drive reaches levels high enough to result in a crash.*⁷⁴

Perfect Passive Present Participle: *When Churchill got there, having been driven through a city undergoing an aerial assault, he found about 100 people drinking champagne in the shelter.*⁷⁵

Of course, the more complicated these present participle phrases get, the less common they are in actual English usage. But we can and do use the simpler ones fairly often.

12.1.6 PARTPs Preceded by a Subordinator

A PARTP may sometimes be preceded by a **subordinating conjunction**:

22. *When shown the best techniques, students improve.*⁷⁶

23. *Tootsie is holding its own, though given its reviews, I thought it would be doing better.*⁷⁷

We find this construction with most SCONJs. With those subordinating conjunctions that commonly also function as prepositions, it makes more sense to parse them as PPs with a nominal PARTP:PCOMP. We can test for whether we have an SCONJ with a PARTP or a preposition with a PARTP:NOMINAL:PCOMP by using the pronoun replacement test:

22. *When [shown the best techniques], students improve.*

22.a. **When [it/that], students improve.*

23. *Tootsie is holding its own, though [given its reviews], I thought it would be doing better.*

- 23.a. *Tootsie is *holding its own*, though [it/this], I thought it would be doing better.
 24. After [being shown the prototype and how to use it], Somers loved it.⁷⁸
 24.a. After [that], Somers loved it.

Words like *after* are considered prepositions when followed by a clear nominal but are SCONJs when followed by a clause or PARTP that does not allow for the pronoun replacement test. Words like *when* and *though* are almost always SCONJs since only rarely can they be followed by a nominal alone.

A PARTP preceded by an SCONJ is always adverbial, functions like an ADVCL:SENTMOD, and can always be paraphrased by an ADVCL:

- 22.b. When (they are) shown the best techniques, children improve.
 25. While (she is) being driven home, Mikaela ponders why a super advanced robot would transform into a “piece-of-crap Camaro.”⁷⁹

12.2 Infinitives (INF) and Infinitive Phrases (INFP)

Infinitive phrase forms: Most commonly, the infinitive appears as the particle *to* plus the base form of the verb:

To err is human.
*It's easy to get kids to run a marathon.*⁸⁰

However, the word *to* is commonly deleted from the **infinitive** following the DO after certain verbs:

*I just saw you kick her.*⁸¹
*She felt the baby move.*⁸²
*They watch me eat.*⁸³ *You must help me eat this Sky!*⁸⁴

We label the infinitive without *to* as the “bare infinitive” rather than describing it as a tensed form because the NP preceding the infinitive does not have to agree with the verb in person and number, as it would if the verb were finite. We also have constructions with the **to-infinitive** that closely parallel those with the bare infinitive:

*Reaching down, he helped me (to) climb up and onto the seat between them.*⁸⁵
*The quotidian problems of everyday life could actually help your sister (to) heal.*⁸⁶

The infinitive appears in four different formal contexts:

1. The **to-infinitive**—*to* + the base form of the verb.
2. The **bare infinitive**—the base form of the verb.

3. The ***in order to infinitive***—*in order to* + the base form of the verb.
4. The ***for-to infinitive***—*for* + NOMINAL + *to* + the base form of the verb.

We will find that the *in order to* infinitive construction helps us in identifying adverbial INFPs, while the *for-to* infinitive construction will help us identify the agent of an infinitive.

Like PARTPs, INFPs may appear as the infinitive by itself or as an infinitive plus complements and/or adverbials:

*To govern is to choose.*⁸⁷

*To govern a country requires one to choose and accept actions that are necessary evils.*⁸⁸

*The art of parliamentary government is to govern the country by means of continuous conversation.*⁸⁹

In each of these sentences, the highlighted INFP functions as a nominal, which functions, respectively, as the SUBJ in the first two container clauses and an SC in the third. In the second sentence, the NP *a country* is the DO of the infinitive *to govern*. In the third sentence, the PP *by means of continuous conversation* is an adverbial functioning as an adjunct: it is adverbial in meaning (telling *how* the country will be governed); we cannot move it; and it has a weight roughly equal to the other constituents of the INFP.

Occasionally, an adverbial constituent of an INFP will be movable within the INFP:

*One goal of the research is to **better** understand the brain's circuitry.*⁹⁰

*One goal of the research is to understand the brain's circuitry **better**.*

The Adv *better* also has the whole INFP, *to understand the brain's circuitry*, in its scope since it is not just the *understanding*, but the *understanding of the brain's circuitry* that is to become *better*. Therefore, *better* is functioning as an INFPMOD. The whole INFP *to better understand the brain's circuitry* is, in turn, functioning as a NOMINAL:SC. Generally, an ADVERBIAL:INFPMOD cannot appear before the *to* of the infinitive, just as an ADVERBIAL:CLAUSEMOD cannot appear before the SUBCONJ.

Infinitive phrase functions: INFPs can function as nominals, adjectivals, or adverbials:

Nominal: *To govern*_[INFP:NOMINAL:SUBJ] *is to choose.*

Adjectival: *The candidate* *to watch in the California governor's race*_[INFP:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF "candidate"] *is None of the Above.*⁹¹

Adverbial: *They should be ready* *to go with a full roster*_[INFP:SUBJUNCT/MOD OF "ready"]⁹²

12.2.1 Nominal Infinitive Phrases

INFPs cannot perform the whole range of nominal functions. They consistently and clearly function as subjects, agents, and SCs:

SUBJ: *To govern is to choose.*

AGENT: *It's so easy to forget about it.*⁹³

SC: *The art of parliamentary government is to govern the country by means of continuous conversation.*

When an infinitive phrase functions as an SC, it is always nominal:

The art of parliamentary government is [to govern the country by means of continuous conversation].

The art of parliamentary government is [this].

Nominal infinitive phrase functioning as a DO? As we saw in Chapters 6 and 7, it is an interesting question as to whether a nominal INFP can function as a DO. Let's puzzle over this a bit more:

1. *I want to work on the next show.*⁹⁴
2. *I began to work on the next show.*
3. *I began working on the next show.*

So far, I have argued that in sentence 1, *want to* is a semi-modal verb and the complete verb is *want to work*. Likewise, in sentences 2 and 3, I have argued that *began to* and *began* are imperfect aspectual Vs and the complete verbs in these sentences are *began to work* and *began working*.

At the same time, we might also follow traditional grammar in parsing these sentences so that everything after the first verb (*want*; *began*) is a NOMINAL:DO. This seems to be verified by the pronoun replacement test since we can reasonably paraphrase sentences 1–3 as follows:

- 1.a. *I want it.*
- 2.a. *I began it.*
- 3.a. *I began it.*

Which is the “right” parse? I don't know. But if we look at the way different verbs are actually used, in this position, some verbs seem to be more like semi-modal or imperfect aspectual verbs and some seem to be less so. *Want to* can be paraphrased by *may*, and thus parsing it as a semi-modal verb seems fruitful. And *begin/begin to* seem to name an action that is integral with the action named by

the following verb (c.f. the progressive AUX *be*, as in *I am running*), and thus parsing them as aspectual verbs seems fruitful. Now consider:

4. *I love to work on the next show.*
5. *I love working on the next show.*

Here is an instance where meaning and usage may clearly impact parsing. Using the verb “love” in such contexts seems to presuppose some object of the verb: a thing or person that is loved, a “beloved.” While the action expressed by *love/love to* may seem aspectual (inseparable from the action named by the following verb), because feeling “love” presupposes an object of that love, it may be more fruitful here to parse *to work/working on the next show* as a NOMINAL:DO—that is, as the literal and grammatical object of that love. At the same time, when we put these sentences into passive voice, we get:

- 4.a. *?To work on the project is loved by me.*
- 5.a. *?Working on the project is loved by me.*

Perhaps parsing *love/love to* as imperfect aspectual verbs is the better answer. Try to think of more verbs in English that can be followed by *to* + V or by V + *-ing*. Which analysis seems to work better? Why?

INFPs as verb complements: INFPs don’t function as IOs and PCOMPS because the word *to* gets in the way. The particle *to* that marks the infinitive can also be a preposition and is also often implied with the IO (remember the *to-for* test for the IO). Instead, in the PCOMP and IO positions where we might like to use a nominal INFP, we use a PARTP:

***INF P:NOMINAL:PCOMP:** **The young colonel had devised a plan for_[PREP] to drive the Spanish out of the Bahamas’ capital.*

PARTP:NOMINAL:PCOMP: *The young colonel had devised a plan for_[PREP] driving the Spanish out of the Bahamas’ capital.⁹⁵*

INFPs don’t function as OCs. As we saw in 7.1.3.5, there is a verb complementation pattern in which the MV is followed by a NOMINAL:DO and an INFP:VC:

*Those orientations allow people_[NP:DO] to be ruthless_[INFP:VC].*⁹⁶
*His doctor persuaded him_[NP:DO] to take time off_[INFP:VC].*⁹⁷
*These classes encourage students_[NP:DO] to think critically_[INFP:VC].*⁹⁸

Back in Chapter 7, we discussed why these INFPs are not OCs, but a little further exploration is now in order. Recall that, when the INFP functions as a second verb complement (VC), the preceding DO is always the agent of the INF. As with the relationship between a DO and an OC, we can paraphrase the relationship

between the DO and the INFP:VC by inserting a form of *be*. In *He and his wife found Cincinnati charming*_{[NP:DO] [ADJ:OC]}⁹⁹ in the context of the *finding*, *Cincinnati is charming*. Apparently likewise, in *His doctor persuaded him to take time off*, in the context of the *persuading*, *He is to take time off*. However, there is a difference: in the DO + OC sentence, *is* is the copular *be*, having the value of an equal sign: *Cincinnati = charming*. In the DO + INFP:VC sentence, *is* forms part of a semi-modal verb, *is to*. The meaning of the MV in the clause already implies modality: just because someone is *persuaded* to do something, that does not mean that they have, in fact, done it. Likewise with *allow* and *encourage*. I would argue that the INFP:VC in the predicate carries that sense of modality forward: *he is to take time off*, but he may or may not do so.

There are verbs that are commonly followed by a NOMINAL:DO + INFP where the INFP is not a complement, but rather an adjectival modifier of the preceding noun (and so, part of the NOMINAL:DO), or an adverbial functioning as an adjunct (but not a complement) or a SENTMOD.

DO + INFP:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF N: In the sentence *The company announced plans to sell the studios*_{[N] [INFP]}¹⁰⁰ the INFP *to sell the studio* is an adjectival modifier of *plans*, telling *what kind of plans*. As a modifier, we can drop it from the sentence, and what remains is still grammatically well formed. When we put the sentence in passive voice, the INFP moves with the noun: [*Plans to sell*] *were announced in July*.¹⁰¹ And note that, unlike when the INFP functions as a second verb complement, the agent of the infinitive is not *plans*; rather, there are *plans for the company to sell the studios*: the agent is the SUBJ of the sentence. Finally, we can reasonably paraphrase the relationship between *plans* and the INFP with an ADJCL:MOD OF “plans”: *The company announced plans by which it is to sell the studios*. Here are two more examples:

Active voice: *The deputy secretary of state also discussed measures to protect Turkish truck drivers in Iraq*_{[N] [INFP:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF “measures”]}¹⁰²

Passive voice: [*Measures to protect them*] *were discussed at the Fourth World Social Forum on Migration*.¹⁰³

Active voice: *OFY-San Bernardino established its eligibility to participate in the DASS program*_{[N] [INFP:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF “eligibility”]}¹⁰⁴

Passive voice: [*Eligibility to participate*] *is established as herein set forth*.¹⁰⁵

DO + INFP:ADVERBIAL:ADJUNCT or SENTMOD: In the sentence *We must take action to protect the integrity of our classrooms*_{[N] [INFP]}¹⁰⁶ the INFP *to protect . . . classrooms* is an adverbial functioning as a SENTMOD. We know it is adverbial because we can insert *in order* before the infinitive: *We must take action in order to protect the integrity of the program*;¹⁰⁷ this helps show that the INFP is telling *why we must take action*. We know that the INFP is a modifier because we can drop it and still have a grammatically well-formed sentence. When we put

the sentence in passive voice, the INFP does not move with the preceding noun: *Action must be taken to protect kids from e-cigarettes.*¹⁰⁸ The INFP is thus not adjectival or tied to the NP:DO. And we know the INFP is a SENTMOD because we can move it:

We must take action to protect the integrity of our classrooms.
To protect the integrity of our classrooms, we must take action.
We, to protect the integrity of our classrooms, must take action.

Here are a couple of further examples:

Active voice: *Your child can borrow money_[NP:DO] to pay for college_[INFP:ADVERBIAL:SENTMOD].*¹⁰⁹

Active voice: *Public units borrow money in order to pay for capital projects.*¹¹⁰

Passive voice: *[Money] is borrowed [to pay interest on what is owed].*¹¹¹

Active voice: *Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders joins us_[PRON:DO] to talk about his new book_[INFP:ADVERBIAL:SENTMOD].*¹¹²

Active voice: *Fassi joins us in order to talk about creating a dreamlike journey.*¹¹³

Passive voice: *[We] are joined by Columbus Crew SC president and general manager Tim Bezbatchenko [to discuss the land of the new downtown stadium].*¹¹⁴

12.2.2 Adjectival Infinitive Phrases

An adjectival INFP can only function as a post-modifier of a noun:

*The urge to sneeze_[INFP:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF "urge"] was becoming unbearable.*¹¹⁵

*The coach saw my desire to succeed_[INFP:ADJECTIVAL:MOD OF "desire"].*¹¹⁶

We can use the pronoun replacement test to identify whether an INFP is functioning as an adjectival post-modifier of a noun and is therefore part of an NP:

[The urge to sneeze] was becoming unbearable.

[It] was becoming unbearable.

The coach saw [my desire to succeed].

The coach saw [it].

Unlike a PARTP:ADJECTIVAL, an INFP:ADJECTIVAL can only be a post-modifier of a noun—regardless of whether the INF stands alone or has complements and/or adverbial dependents.

While an adjectival present PARTP typically modifies the noun that is the agent of the participle, and an adjectival past PARTP typically modifies the noun that is the patient of the participle, the noun being modified by an INFP:ADJECTIVAL may

be the agent of the infinitive, but it is not necessarily, or even typically, so.¹¹⁷ The noun that the INFP modifies may have other roles:

- **Agent of the infinitive:** *She enlisted **friends** to help her.*¹¹⁸ *Friends* is the agent of *help*. You could paraphrase the NP including the INFP as *friends **are** to help her*.
- **DO or patient of the infinitive:** *This is **the method** to adopt.*¹¹⁹ *The method* is the DO or patient of *adopt*. You could paraphrase the NP including the INFP as *One is to adopt **the method***.
- **PCOMP within the INFP:** *It was **an alien place** in which to live.*¹²⁰ *In which* would be rewritten as *in an alien place* and would be an adverbial in the paraphrase, *One might live **in an alien place***; or *They had many items to choose from,*¹²¹ which could also read, *They had many items from which to choose*¹²²—*One could choose from **many items**.*¹²³

The noun being modified by the adjectival INFP always has a function within the INFP.

The agent of the INFP:ADJECTIVAL is often not explicitly stated. In the four examples just given, only the first one has an explicit agent for its infinitive (*friends*); the other three have implied agents (some words are added for clarity):

This is the method for one to adopt.
It was an alien place in which one might live.
They had many items for one to choose from.

The implicit agents are best paraphrased as indefinite (*one*), as they refer to no definite person or actor. Not only are the agents of INFPs typically indefinite, but also a majority of the nouns modified by adjectival INFPs are indefinite, indicating that adjectival INFPs are generally used to introduce new or unfamiliar information—to talk about general cases or abstractions, rather than definite, specific instances.¹²⁴ This is consistent with our previous observation that V-TO-V constructions, and other constructions with TO + V in them, are very often modal or imperfect in meaning, naming hypothetical, not fully realized, or abstract actions.

Identifying an INFP:ADJECTIVAL functioning as a post-modifier of a noun: In trying to identify an INFP:ADJECTIVAL, it is often useful to paraphrase the INFP with an ADJCL, as we did with a PARTP:ADJECTIVAL functioning as a post-modifier of a noun. If the INFP:ADJECTIVAL is a non-essential modifier, its agent will always be explicit, and to paraphrase it with an ADJCL will only require adding an appropriate **RELPRON** and **AUX**:

Non-Essential INF:P:ADJECTIVAL

He reset jury selection, to have started this week, for Nov. 21.

*He reset jury selection, **which was** to have started this week, for Nov. 21.¹²⁵*

Likewise, when the INF:P:ADJECTIVAL is an essential modifier and the agent is explicit:

Essential INF:P with Explicit Agent

She enlisted friends to help her out.

*She enlisted friends **who were** to help her out.*

The agent of the essential INF:P:ADJECTIVAL is often implicit, as we have seen above. When the agent of the INF:P is implicit, we also need to supply a subject for an ADJCL paraphrase:

Essential INF:P with Implicit Agent

This is the method to adopt.

*This is the method **that one is** to adopt.*

We can always use an ADJCL to paraphrase an INF:P:ADJECTIVAL:POST-MODIFIER OF N.

12.2.3 Adverbial Infinitive Phrases

INFPs functioning as adverbials are more flexible and have a broader range of functions than do adverbial PARTPs. Adverbial INFPs may function as:

- Sentence and clause modifiers.
- Adjuncts.
- Disjuncts.
- Subjuncts in ADJP:SC and ADJP:OC.

As we saw above, we can distinguish an INF:P:ADVERBIAL from nominal and adjectival INFPs, as well as from V-TO-V constructions by using:

The *in order* test for adverbial infinitive phrases: Given a sentence with *TO* + V, if we insert the words *in order* before the word *to* and the sense of the sentence does not change, then the combination *TO* + V marks the beginning of an INF:P:ADVERBIAL.

Consider the following examples:

InfP:Adverbial

We must take action to protect the integrity of our classrooms.

*We must take action **in order** to protect the integrity of the program.*

InfP:Adjectival

The urge to sneeze was becoming unbearable.

The urge **in order to sneeze was becoming unbearable.*

InfP:Nominal

To govern is to choose.

****In order** to govern is to choose.*

INFP:ADVERBIAL:SENTMOD: Adverbial INFPs are commonly used as sentence modifiers:

***In order to form a more perfect Union**, we the people of the United States do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.*

*We the people of the United States, **in order to form a more perfect Union**, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.*

*We the people of the United States do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America **in order to form a more perfect Union**.*

We can obviously move the INFP *in order to form a more perfect Union* without changing the meaning of the sentence, and we can easily frame a question around the INFP: “Why did we ordain and establish this Constitution?” *In order to form a more perfect Union*. The scope of the INFP is the entire container clause since *we the people* do the *forming*, and *to form a more perfect union* is *why we the people ordain and establish this Constitution*.

INFPs can also function as dependent clause modifiers:

INFP:ADVERBIAL:NCLMOD

Gates knew [that, to make change stick, the officers carrying it out had to feel they had a stake in the decision].¹²⁶

INFP:ADVERBIAL:ADJCLMOD

Harris was playing with a man [who, to put it kindly, was confused].¹²⁷

INFP:ADVERBIAL:ADVCLMOD

*That's [because Congress, to reduce the budget deficit, has forced companies to delay pension contributions].*¹²⁸

INFP:ADVERBIAL:ADJUNCT: Infinitive phrases are often used as adjuncts:

*I am a single mom of 2 boys, and I work to support us.*¹²⁹

*I just slipped and fell when I was running to see Einstein.*¹³⁰

Despite having the combination V-TO-V, in these sentences we do not have a semi-modal followed by a verb, as shown by the *in order* test:

*I work **in order** to support us.*

*I was running **in order** to see Einstein.*

Both of these INFPs have the whole container clause in their scope: in each example, the NP:SUBJ of the container clause is the agent of the INFP; in each case, the INFP gives a reason (*why*) for the predicate. In neither of these sentences is the INFP easily moved without sounding like Yoda:

*?To support us I work. *I, to support us, work.*

**To see Einstein I was running. *I, to see Einstein, was running.*

In the following two sentences, the INFPs are adjuncts within, respectively, a PARTP and an INFP:

*Yet the real estate investment trust now faces the challenge of [reinvesting the proceeds to maintain earnings].*¹³¹

*So even if they sell the property, they have a duty [to reinvest the proceeds to benefit the trust].*¹³²

In these two sentences, if the containers for the adjuncts were clauses instead of non-finite verb phrases, then the adjuncts would be clause modifiers. Because the containers are non-finite verb phrases, in both cases, we cannot move the INFPs (*to maintain earnings*; *to benefit the trust*). Therefore, in both sentences, the INFP is an adjunct with, respectively, the PARTP *reinvesting the proceeds* and the INFP *to benefit the trust* in its scope.

INFP:ADVERBIAL:DISJUNCT: Like a SENTMOD, a disjunct can be moved within the container clause to the beginning, end, or the slot between subject and predicate, and disjuncts have the whole container clause in their scope. However, we cannot frame a question around a disjunct. The disjunct also gives the speaker's opinion of or observation about the content of the container clause; this

is clear in the case of an INFP:DISJUNCT because the agent of the INFP will be *I*. INFPs form disjuncts using a simple but highly productive pattern:

*To be totally honest, my first emotion was annoyance.*¹³³

*Not to say craft cider can't surprise you, but, usually, if you can smell it, you will taste it.*¹³⁴

In the first example, the INFP:ADVERBAL:DISJUNCT can be easily moved to the other slots in the sentence, while in the second example, the disjunct is not easily moved (try it). We cannot frame a question around either the nonnegated or the negated INFPs functioning as disjuncts (try this, too). And we can identify the agent by adding *FOR* + NOMINAL to the front of the INFP: *for me to be totally honest; for me not to say craft cider can't surprise you*. We will talk more about the agent of the INFP in 12.2.4.

An INFP:ADVERBIAL can commonly function as a SUBJUNCT in an ADJP:SC or ADJP:OC:

INFP:ADVERBIAL:SUBJUNCT in an ADJP:SC

*Congress was ready*_[ADJP:SC].

*Congress was ready to fund it*_[ADJP:SC].¹³⁵

*Poetry does not have to be hard*_[ADJP:SC].

*Poetry does not have to be hard to read*_[ADJP:SC].¹³⁶

INFP:ADVERBIAL:SUBJUNCT in an ADJP:OC

*I found it hard*_[ADJP:OC].

*I found it hard to open some compartment lids*_[ADJP:OC].¹³⁷

These INFPs tell *how* or *in what manner* about the ADJS in their scope; the INFPs are not movable; and their scope is tightly limited. It seems reasonable to label them as subjuncts.

12.2.4 The Agent of the Infinitive

As we noted above, the agent of an infinitive is often implicit and best paraphrased by an indefinite pronoun. For example, in the sentence *Poetry does not have to be hard to read*, the agent of the infinitive *to read* is implicit, and the sentence is not talking about some specific person reading. The agent of the infinitive is best named by an indefinite pronoun such as *one*: *One is/wants to read (poetry)*.

Less often, the agent of the infinitive is explicitly stated in the container clause, as in the sentence *I found it hard to open some compartment lids*. The

agent of the infinitive is *I*, since I am the one who is *opening some compartment lids*. We can thus paraphrase the INFP with the sentence *I want to open some compartment lids*.

As we have seen above, there is a conventional structure of the form *FOR-NOMINAL-TO*, in which the agent of the infinitive is stated explicitly:

*She feels fortunate to have started small.*¹³⁸ (**for** her_[AGENT] **to have started**)
I found it hard to open some compartment lids. (**for** me_[AGENT] **to open**)
*It takes a lot of courage **for** scientists_[AGENT] **to speak out.***¹³⁹

The NP between *for* and *to* is the agent of the infinitive. Notice that if the agent of the infinitive following *for* is a personal pronoun, it takes the objective form: in this context, *for* behaves like a preposition and so demands the objective form. In some contexts, it is tempting to read the *FOR* + NP as a PP. But part of the point of the sentence involves the close relationship between *for me* and *to open some compartment lids*. If we analyze the two as separate constituents, then we change their scope and lose the agent-verb connection between *me* and *open*. It is more useful to analyze the *FOR* + NP + *TO* + V construction as a particular sort of complete INFP with an explicit agent.

Even in sentences without the *FOR* + NP explicit agent of the INFP, and in which you cannot insert *FOR* + NP, this construction can help serve as a test for identifying the agent of the infinitive:

I work to support us.
*I work **for whom** to support us?*
***For me* to support us.**

She feels fortunate to have started small.
Fortunate for whom to have started small?
***For her* to have started small.**

To err is human.
For whom to err is human?
***For one* to err is human.**
***For us* to err is human.**

The *FOR-NOMINAL-TO* structure for identifying the agent of an infinitive also works with the phrase *in order* that we have used to check whether an INFP is adverbial. Combining the two gives us *in order FOR-NOMINAL-TO*:

*Pseudonyms were used **to ensure the confidentiality of all participants**.*¹⁴⁰
*Pseudonyms were used **in order to ensure the confidentiality of all participants**.*
*Pseudonyms were used **in order for the researchers to ensure the confidentiality of all participants**.*

So what? Being able to identify the agent of an INFP is important both for revising sentences for clarity and for changing the order of information within sentences to maintain the topic of a paragraph from sentence to sentence.

12.2.5 INFPs with Auxiliary, Semi-Modal, and Imperfect Aspectual Verbs

As with present participles, it is very common for infinitives to take AUX verbs that mark aspect and passive voice, as well as semi-modal and imperfect aspectual verbs. In a multi-word infinitive, the first word of the complete infinitive takes the infinitive form. Thus, *to drive* is the infinitive, and *to have driven* is the perfect infinitive. Native English speakers have many of these forms in our repertoire of ordinary usage. Here are some examples of the modal, perfect, progressive, imperfect, and passive infinitive:

Infinitive: *Salles walks to her car to drive home at the end of her workday.*¹⁴¹

Modal Infinitive: *It is in our nature as Americans to want to drive everywhere.*¹⁴²

Perfect Infinitive: *Males were more likely to have driven while drunk.*¹⁴³

Modal Perfect Infinitive: *It's the stupidest thing I've ever felt, to want to start fighting off death at thirty-four like my father does, . . . to want to have inherited the same system that grabbed his heart from the inside and squeezed it like a vise.*¹⁴⁴

Progressive Infinitive: *It doesn't make any sense for people like that to be driving for Uber or Lyft.*¹⁴⁵

Modal Progressive Infinitive: *We need to figure out a way for semis to want to be driving on the highway too.*¹⁴⁶

Imperfect Infinitive: *Pick the right time to start driving on the highway.*¹⁴⁷

Modal Imperfect Infinitive: *It's the stupidest thing I've ever felt, to want to start fighting off death at thirty-four like my father does.*

Passive Infinitive: *McBride and a handful of other workers were ushered into a temp agency van to be driven to a factory job.*¹⁴⁸

Modal Passive Infinitive: *It would have been extremely impolite to expect to be paid for helping an uncle.*¹⁴⁹

Perfect Progressive Infinitive: *The researchers found that teens were less likely to have been driving a large pickup.*¹⁵⁰

Perfect Imperfect Infinitive: *The agents thought it unusual for a traveler, such as Mr. Rivero, to have begun driving in Las Cruces.*¹⁵¹

Perfect Passive Infinitive: *How disheveled I was, and miffed at my date, not even to have been driven home.*¹⁵²

Progressive Imperfect Infinitive: *It would be too dangerous for any vehicle at all to be attempting to drive.*¹⁵³

As with the more complicated PARTP constructions, the more complicated the verb of the INFP, the less common they are in actual English usage. However, we can and do use the simpler ones fairly often.

12.2.6 INFPs Preceded by a Subordinator

Nominal, adjectival and adverbial INFPs may sometimes be preceded by a subordinator:

Nominal infinitive phrase with a subordinator: With nominal INFPs, we cannot use the subordinators *that* or *if*, but we can use *whether* and nearly the whole list of *wh*-words. As with *wh*-NCLs, in nominal INFPs, the *wh*-word has a function within the INFP.

*I didn't know whether to laugh or cry.*¹⁵⁴

*For years I never had to think about what to do or when to do it.*¹⁵⁵

*I want to learn how to play "Here Comes the Sun" by The Beatles.*¹⁵⁶

In the preceding examples, *what* is a PRON:DO of "to do." *When* and *how* are PROADVs and require a little more analysis.

One of the easiest ways to analyze the INFP is to paraphrase it with a clause. *When to do it* becomes *When one ought to do it*. To analyze the function of the PROADV, it is simplest to turn it into a substantive adverbial, such as *today*. This gives us *Today one ought to do it*. The adverbial is movable, at least to the end of the clause: *One ought to do it today*. ?*One, today, ought to do it*. We can frame a question around the adverbial: *When ought one to do it?* *Today*. And the scope of the adverbial is the whole INFP: both the subject (*one*) and the predicate are contained in the timeframe of the adverbial (*today*). All of this information helps us label the function of *when* within the INFP. The one significant difference between *today* and *when* is that *when* cannot be moved. Since *when* has the whole INFP in its scope, but cannot be moved, we can conclude that *when* is a PROADV:ADJUNCT.

If we do the same sort of analysis of *how to play "Here Comes the Sun,"* we find that the substantive adverbs we may substitute for the word *how* are, like *how* itself, hard to move. Remember that *wh*-pro-words are commonly taken from their place in SVC clause order and moved to the front of a dependent clause. So in paraphrasing the INFP with a clause, we may need to restore the PROADV to the slot it fills in the default SVC order: *I am to play "Here Comes the Sun" how*. Replacing *how* with a substantive adverbial, we get something like *I am to play "Here Comes the Sun" well*, or, *I am to play "Here Comes the Sun" on the guitar*. We already know that the adverbial is not movable; and the scope of the adverbial is the whole INFP since the ADVP (*well*; *on the guitar*) characterizes the "playing of 'Here Comes the Sun'"—effectively a whole predicate—and

has a broader scope than we find with subjuncts. Therefore, we determine that *how* is a PROADV:ADJUNCT.

Here is a list of ***wh*-subordinators that can precede an INFP**: *how, what, when, where, which, who, whom, why*. INFPs beginning with these *wh*-words are always nominal and can function in all of the roles fulfilled by nominals except IO and OC:

SUBJ: *Whom to invite is a big minefield.*¹⁵⁷

*What to avoid is what someone once called the definition of hell: truth realized too late.*¹⁵⁸

AGENT: *There is what to investigate.*¹⁵⁹

DO: *I want to learn how to play "Here Comes the Sun."*

*Terry asked her how she decided what to print and whom to trust.*¹⁶⁰

PCOMP: *We do give some thought to what to wear.*¹⁶¹

SC: *The real question is what to tolerate.*¹⁶²

***Wh*-PRO-WORD functions**: Within the INFP:NOMINAL, the *wh*-words function in all of the ways we have already seen with interrogative and relative pro-words, and with *wh*-subordinators in NCLs and ADVCLs (10.2.1.1; 10.2.2), but for one exception: the *wh*-PRONs cannot be the agent of the INFP. (Try it!) In an INFP, a *wh*-PRON can only be the complement of the infinitive or a PCOMP.

Adjectival INFP with a subordinator: An INFP with a subordinator can function as an adjectival only with the subordinator *whether* and therefore, reasonably, in idioms with nouns that express the idea of having a choice:

*This case presents the question whether to overrule Nevada v. Hall, 440 U.S. 410 (1979).*¹⁶³

*They will have to make a decision whether to participate or not to participate.*¹⁶⁴
*Parents need a genuine choice whether to stay at home and take care of their children.*¹⁶⁵

It is unusual that these INFP:ADJECTIVAL constructions take *whether* as a subordinator because this word is never used to mark an ADJCL. Despite their adjectival meaning and function, there is no way to paraphrase these INFPs as ADJCLs. The answer may be that they are derived from sentences in which *whether* + INFP functions as a NOMINAL:PCOMP, such as

*The Court has so far avoided the question of whether to overrule the Chevron doctrine altogether.*¹⁶⁶

Adverbial INFP with a subordinator: We also have a very limited set of idioms in which we can place an SCONJ in front of an INFP, creating an adverbial.

The SCONJs that can appear with infinitive phrases are *as if*, *as much as*, *as though*, *even if*, *even though*, *if only*, *inasmuch as*, and *unless*:

*He shrugged, **as if** to say, *Miles and I are friends, too.**¹⁶⁷

*Several times Thornton started, **as though** to speak, but changed his mind.*¹⁶⁸

*I don't have anything to add **unless** to say thank you.*¹⁶⁹

These adverbial SCONJ + INFP constructions can be paraphrased by ADVCLs:

*He shrugged, **as if** he were going to say . . .*

*Several times Thornton started, **as though** he were going to speak.*

*I don't have anything to add **unless** I were to say thank you.*

The adverbial SCONJ + INFP construction always functions as a SENTMOD or a clause modifier.

12.3 Key Points

- Non-finite verb phrases—participle and infinitive phrases (PARTPs; INFPs)—may comprise a non-finite verb alone or may include modifiers and complements. Thus, like dependent clauses, they have both a complex internal structure and function as a single constituent within a container phrase or clause.
- PARTPs and INFPs may be nominal, adjectival, or adverbial and can perform most of the functions of other nominals, adjectivals, and adverbials.
- In structure, PARTPs and INFPs are like partial or incomplete predicates.
- A PARTP or INFP always has an agent, which may be explicit or implied. To ensure that the reference of a PARTP or INFP is clear and to avoid dangling modifiers, a reader must be able to easily identify the agent.
- The complete participle or infinitive may include perfect, progressive, and passive AUX verbs and semi-modal and imperfect aspectual verbs.
- PARTPs and INFPs may be preceded by a limited variety of subordinators.

12.4 Exercises: Participle and Infinitive Phrases

Identify the Participle Phrases 1: A mix of real-world and made-up sentences¹⁷⁰

- Identify each **complete PARTP**.
- For each PARTP, identify whether it is functioning as a nominal, adjectival, or adverbial, and identify its function in or in relation to the container clause.
 - For adjectival PARTPs, where relevant, note whether the PARTP is an **essential** or **non-essential** modifier.

- For each complete PARTP:
 - Identify the complete participle.
 - Identify the agent and, as relevant, the patient of the participle.
 - Identify the modifiers and complements of the participle.
 - For each modifier or complement, identify its form and function within or in relation to the PARTP.
 - **Remember:** a PARTP may consist of a participle without any modifiers or complements.
 - **Also:** note any participles (or apparent participles) that are part of finite verbs, and note the tense, modality, aspect, or voice that causes the verb to include a present or past participle form.
- A. What's ahead for New York's radical plan for relieving traffic?
 - B. Driving from Plainfield, NJ, into lower Manhattan takes McCord Fitzsimmons about 45 minutes on a good day.
 - C. That's when he can avoid driving in rush-hour traffic, which turns the same commuting time into a 2 1/2-hour slog.
 - D. Attempting to avoid the problem, he listens to satellite radio reports, but the stop-and-go traffic is driving him crazy.
 - E. Savvy New Yorkers know the subways are the fastest way of getting around, but that isn't helping Fitzsimmons, who, working as a video technician, needs to drive for his job.
 - F. New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg has proposed a congestion pricing plan, including a daytime tax on vehicles traveling through Manhattan, hoping to reduce vehicle traffic, improve air quality, and increase commerce.
 - G. Modeled on a London, England plan, Bloomberg's proposed scheme will have vehicles tracked via scanning of license plates, and EZ Pass toll collectors.
 - H. New York officials are exploring ways of fairly implementing plans, and the city should be receiving federal funds if the plan is passed into law.
 - I. Stepping back to news from January 2008: The Iowa caucuses delivered handsome victories to Democrat Barack Obama, bidding to be the first Black president, and Republican Mike Huckabee, a Baptist preacher and former governor banking on doing well in South Carolina.
 - J. But the New Hampshire primaries muddled the waters by handing the Democratic spoils to former first lady Hillary Clinton and to Senator John McCain for the Republicans.
 - K. Looking further back in history: On January 4, 1912, the British explorer Robert Scott, taking four men with him, began his final dash to the pole, hoping to be the first to reach the South Pole.

- L. Leading Scott by sixty miles, a Norwegian expedition commanded by Roald Amundsen was moving swiftly.
- M. The sleds used by both teams grew lighter as their provisions dwindled.
- N. Reaching the pole on January 17, the British found the Norwegians had already been there.
- O. Weakened by scurvy, frostbite, and exhaustion, the five explorers, knowing they had very little hope of survival, set out on the 800-mile journey back to their base ship.

Identify the Participle Phrases 2: Real-world sentences¹⁷¹

Use the following text and the same instructions as in “Identify the Participle Phrases 1.” **By my count, there are 38 PARTICIPLES in this article.**

- (A) Regan, Jim. “Sometimes less is more.” <http://csmonitor.com>. Posted Aug. 29, 2002. www.csmonitor.com/2002/0829/p25s01-stin.html. Accessed Sep. 15, 2018.
- (B) It’s an unfortunate fact that the very features that make many exceptional websites worth viewing contribute to the viewer’s impatience, as he or she waits for large files to trickle their way down the Internet pipeline. (C) This week’s review will introduce a pair of sites that are a bit friendlier to dial-up modems—one providing amusement and the other enlightenment—and will close with a special case that proves that some material is worth almost any wait.
- (D) First is a site that sets the standard in low-bandwidth interactivity. (E) 5k is an annual contest where designers are invited to create websites or web applications using HTML, JavaScript, Flash, or whatever they want—as long as the complete project weighs in at less than five kilobytes. (F) (Which means that you could fit more than 250 of these experiments on a single floppy disk.) (G) Leading by example, even the host site is minimalist in appearance, using only two colors (black and white) in its design, leaving it looking a bit like a late-’80s Macintosh interface.
- (H) Now in its third year, 5k attracted 366 entries for the 2002 competition, and some of the results are genuinely impressive. (I) The collection of winners includes an experiment in single-cell reproduction (as well as a multi-cell flagellate simulation), a kaleidoscope, and a rather unique version of Pong.
- (J) The grand-prize winner was a simple but attractive browser “toy,” activated by dragging one’s pointer across the screen. (K) My favorite was Night Waltz, an app that allows the surfer to “dance” with trees. (L) Each entry is given its own page, with scoring statistics, an introduction from the author, and an area for public discussion of the merits or shortcomings of the design. (M) Links to the 2000 and 2001 competitions are available at the top of each page.

- (N) Unless you're a designer, you're not likely to spend a great deal of time here, and there's a good chance that not all the entries will work on your computer (even the website's own links to the previous years' competitions had a way of randomly changing from buttons to nearly invisible lines as I toured the site), but it is interesting to see that so much can be done with so little. (O) And it's always satisfying to be able to spend more time viewing a page than waiting for that page to appear.
- (P) Next, is the The Memory Hole, a site dedicated to "rescuing knowledge and freeing information." (Q) The Memory Hole makes an interesting complement to the better-known The Smoking Gun, but while The Smoking Gun favors uncovering sources of amusement (certain stars' unusual contract riders) and personal transgressions (an America West pilot's bar tab), The Memory Hole deals with documents that governments and corporations would rather that you didn't see.
- (R) Launched in July, The Memory Hole is another basic black-and-white site (with just a touch of red), so it's as easy to view as 5k. (S) Examples include:
- A less than encouraging report of a GAO test of security measures at federal office buildings in Atlanta, Georgia. (T) ". . . They were able to move freely and extensively throughout these facilities during both day and evening hours and were not challenged by anyone . . ."
 - An article which was posted, and then removed, from the NewsMax website, in which a CIA official calls for "Sending SWAT Teams into Journalists' Homes," to combat leaks of classified documents
 - A map of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (deleted from the USGS site) that depicted caribou calving grounds in areas that the administration wanted to open to oil exploration
- (U) In each case, the material is described in brief, with links to relevant websites and related information. (V) In addition to the Memory Hole's own collection, the site also provides offsite links to similar coverage in the commercial media, such as an *Atlantic Monthly* piece about the long history of attempts to destroy embarrassing information—linked to Enron's recent paper shredding spree.
- (W) The Memory Hole demonstrates how powerful a tool the Web can be when it comes to the retrieval and dissemination of information (especially information that certain parties would prefer to suppress), and this final offering demonstrates the same principle, albeit in an entirely different context.
- (X) While I'm not aware that Leonard Nimoy is actively trying to inhibit the online display of his '60s music video The Ballad of Bilbo Baggins (which

I stumbled across at MetaFilter), there's a good chance that he would rather it had vanished along with go-go boots and Nehru jackets. (Y) And yet, while the Web exists, so shall this unfortunate attempt to step out of Mr. Spock's shoes. (Z) The QuickTime movie won't load as quickly as 5k or Memory Hole, but if you need a laugh, this will definitely be a case of time invested rather than time spent.

Identify the Infinitive Phrases 1: Made-up sentences

- Identify each **complete INFP**.
 - For each INFP, identify whether it is functioning as a nominal, adjectival, or adverbial, and identify its function in or in relation to the container clause.
 - For adjectival INFPs, where relevant, note whether the INFP is an **essential** or **non-essential** modifier.
 - For each complete INFP:
 - Identify the complete infinitive.
 - Identify the agent of the infinitive.
 - Identify the modifiers and complements of the infinitive.
 - For each modifier or complement, identify its form and function within or in relation to the INFP.
 - **Remember:** an INFP may consist of an infinitive without any modifiers or complements.
 - **Also:** note any semi-modal or imperfect aspectual verbs that consist of V + *to* that are part of finite verbs, and note the tense, modality, aspect, or voice of the complete finite verb.
- A. It's so easy to fall in love.
- B. To see the world in a grain of sand takes a discerning eye.
- C. To tell you the truth, I actually love Malomars.
- D. For me to have the money to buy Malomars would be heaven.
- E. My assignment was to carefully read all of the text on a box of Malomars.
- F. In relating my obsession with Malomars, I try to present a true picture of my childhood.
- G. To tell the truth of my experiences is my aim.
- H. Researchers have found many ways to eat a Malomar.
- I. To write better advertising, I had to take on a new career.
- J. I desired to communicate my true feelings about Malomars to my readers.
- K. In my commercial work I have been able to express great emotion.
- L. You cannot appreciate the depth of my desire for you to succeed.
- M. I have counted on you to be a good source of information.

- N. Unquestionably, what I need is to buy a stack of new CDs.
 O. My quest is to dream the impossible dream.
 P. I like to eat apples and bananas.
 Q. I know how to play tennis.

Identify the Infinitive Phrases 2: Real-world sentences¹⁷²

Use the same instructions as in “Identify the Infinitive Phrases 1.” **By my count, there are 14 INFPs in this passage.**

- ¶1 (A) Discipline, it has been suggested, is the means of human spiritual evolution. (B) This section will examine what lies in back of discipline—what provides the motive, the energy for discipline. (C) This force I believe to be love. (D) I am very conscious of the fact that in attempting to examine love we will be beginning to toy with mystery. (E) In a very real sense we will be attempting to examine the unexaminable and to know the unknowable. (F) Love is too large, too deep ever to be truly understood or measured or limited within the framework of words. (G) I would not write this if I did not believe the attempt to have value, but no matter how valuable, I begin with the certain knowledge that the attempt will be in some ways inadequate.
- ¶2 (A) One result of the mysterious nature of love is that no one has ever, to my knowledge, arrived at a truly satisfactory definition of love. (B) In an effort to explain it, therefore, love has been divided into various categories: eros, philia, agape; perfect love and imperfect love, and so on. (C) I am presuming, however, to give a single definition of love, again with the awareness that it is likely to be in some way or ways inadequate. (D) I define love thus: the will to extend one’s self for the purpose of nurturing one’s own or another’s spiritual growth.
- ¶3 (A) At the outset I would like to comment briefly on this definition before proceeding to a more thorough elaboration. (B) First, it may be noticed that it is a teleological definition; the behavior is defined in terms of the goal or purpose it seems to serve—in this case, spiritual growth. (C) Scientists tend to hold teleological definitions suspect, and perhaps they will this one. (D) I did not arrive at it, however, through a clearly teleological process of thinking. (E) Instead I arrived at it through observation in my clinical practice of psychiatry (which includes self-observation), in which the definition of love is a matter of considerable import. (F) This is because patients are generally very confused as to the nature of love. (G) For instance, a timid young man reported to me: “My mother loved me so much she wouldn’t let me take the school bus to school until my senior year in high school. (H) Even then I had to beg her to let me go. (I) I guess she was afraid that I would get hurt, so she drove me to and from school every day, which was very hard on her. (J) She really loved

me.” (K) In the treatment of this individual’s timidity it was necessary, as it is in many other cases, to teach him that his mother might have been motivated by something other than love, and that what seems to be love is often not love at all. (L) It has been out of such experience that I accumulated a body of examples of what seemed to be acts of love and what seemed not to be love. (M) One of the major distinguishing features between the two seemed to be the conscious or unconscious purpose in the mind of the lover or non lover.

¶4 (A) Second, it may be noticed that, as defined, love is a strangely circular process. (B) For the process of extending one’s self is an evolutionary process. (C) When one has successfully extended one’s limits, one has then grown into a larger state of being. (D) Thus the act of loving is an act of self-evolution even when the purpose of the act is someone else’s growth. (E) It is through reaching toward evolution that we evolve.

¶5 (A) Third, this unitary definition of love includes self-love with love for the other. (B) Since I am human and you are human, to love humans means to love myself as well as you. (C) To be dedicated to human spiritual development is to be dedicated to the race of which we are a part, and this therefore means dedication to our own development as well as “theirs.” (D) Indeed, as has been pointed out, we are incapable of loving another unless we love ourselves, just as we are incapable of teaching our children self-discipline unless we ourselves are self-disciplined. (E) It is actually impossible to forsake our own spiritual development in favor of someone else’s. (F) We cannot forsake self-discipline and at the same time be disciplined in our care for another. (G) We cannot be a source of strength unless we nurture our own strength. (H) As we proceed in our exploration of the nature of love, I believe it will become clear that not only do self-love and love of others go hand in hand but that ultimately they are indistinguishable.



Figure 12.1

Notes

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A Grand Review Exercise

The remainder of this book is taken up by a review exercise in which you will take the text of a single essay from a popular magazine and identify all of the phrase and clause structures we have discussed. This will serve not only to review and reinforce what you have studied, but to show you how much you have learned. It will also show you just a smattering of the ways in which grammatical structures—patterns, repetitions, contrasts, embedding of structures within structures—help to create the rhythms, textures, and rhetorical effects that are commonplace in effective prose.

Real-world sentences: Using the entire text of the essay, “Fighting the Wrong War,” which you can find on pages 248–249, do the following series of review exercises.

1. **Noun Phrases:** Identify each complete NP; for each NP, identify its function; for each NP, identify the head noun.
2. **Prepositional Phrases:** Identify each complete PP; for each PP, identify whether it is adjectival or adverbial; identify its function.
3. **Adjective Phrases:** Identify each complete ADJP; identify its function.
4. **Determiner Phrases:** Identify each complete DP; for each determiner, identify its type (e.g. possessive determiner, quantifier, etc.); for each DP, identify the noun it specifies.
5. **Pronouns:** Identify each PRON and PRONP; identify its form (e.g. personal, possessive, relative, indefinite, etc.); identify its function; and, **where relevant**, identify the attributes of the PRON (case, number, person, gender, animateness).
6. **Adverb Phrases:** Identify each complete AdvP and, for each, identify its function using **both** sets of terminology we have discussed: modifier and complement **and** subjunct, adjunct, etc.
7. **Verbs:** Identify each **complete finite V**; for each, identify its tense, mood, aspect, and voice.

8. **Verb Complements:** For each **complete finite VP**, identify its complete complement(s), and identify its complement pattern using the list in 7.2. **Also**, identify each **complete phrasal verb** and its pattern using the list in 7.2.
9. **Independent and Dependent Clauses:** For each independent and dependent clause, identify its complete SUBJ and PRED and each simple SUBJ and PRED. If the sentence is not in SVC order, identify how it has been rearranged (e.g. interrogative, passive, expletive *there*, etc.).
10. **Dependent Clauses:** For each dependent clause, identify the complete clause and whether it is an ADJCL, NCL, or ADVCL. Identify its function within its container clause, and:
 - For each ADJCL, identify the relative pro-word; identify the form of the relative pro-word; and identify its function within the ADJCL. If there is no relative pro-word, state what pro-word is implied and what its function would be within the ADJCL. **Also**, for each ADJCL, where relevant, note whether the ADJCL is an **essential** or **non-essential** modifier.
 - For each *wh*-NCL, identify the *wh*-subordinator, its form, and its function within the NCL.
 - For each ADVCL, if the SCONJ is a *wh*-word, identify its form and its function within the ADVCL.
11. **Participle Phrases:**
 - Identify each complete PARTP.
 - For each PARTP, identify whether it is functioning as a nominal, adjectival, or adverbial, and identify its function in or in relation to the constituent that contains it.
 - For adjectival PARTPs, where relevant, note whether the PARTP is an **essential** or **non-essential** modifier.
 - For each complete PARTP:
 - Identify the complete participle.
 - Identify the complete agent of the participle. If the agent is implied, name it, and state that it is implied.
 - For a PARTP with a past participle, indicate both the agent and patient. If the patient is implied, name it, and state that it is implied.
 - Identify each immediate constituent of the PARTP (modifiers and complements of the participle).
 - For each constituent, identify its form and function within or in relation to the PARTP.

- **Remember:** a PARTP may consist of a participle without any modifiers or complements.
- **Also,** note any participles (or apparent participles) that are part of finite verbs, and note the tense, modality, aspect, or voice that causes the verb to include a present or past participle form.

12. Infinitive Phrases:

- Identify each complete INFP.
 - For each INFP, identify whether it is functioning as a nominal, adjectival, or adverbial, and identify its function in or in relation to the container clause.
 - For adjectival INFPs, where relevant, note whether the INFP is an **essential** or **non-essential** modifier.
 - For each complete INFP:
 - Identify the complete infinitive.
 - Identify the complete agent of the infinitive. If the agent is implied, name it, and state that it is implied.
 - Identify each immediate constituent of the INFP.
 - For each constituent, identify its form and function within or in relation to the INFP.
 - **Remember:** an INFP may consist of an infinitive without any modifiers or complements.
 - **Also,** note any semi-modal or imperfect aspectual verbs that consist of *TO* + V that are part of finite verbs, and note the tense, modality, aspect, or voice of the complete finite verb.
13. **Nominals:** Identify each complete nominal constituent, its form, and its function.
14. **Adjectivals:** Identify each complete adjectival constituent, its form, and its function. Where relevant, note whether the adjectival is an **essential** or **non-essential** modifier
15. **Adverbials:** Identify each complete adverbial constituent and, for each, identify its form and whether it is functioning as a subjunct, adjunct, disjunct, conjunctive adverbial, SENTMOD, clause modifier, PARTPMOD, or INFPMOD.

Glossary

absolute adjective also called a non-gradable adjective; an adjective that cannot be marked for degree by adding *-er/-est* or the adverbs *more/most*, e.g. *a brick wall*; **bricker/*brickest*. *See also gradable adjective.*

absolute adverb also called a non-gradable adverb; adverbs that cannot be marked for degree by adding *-er/-est* or the adverbs *more/most*, e.g. *too happy*; **tooter/*tooest*. *See also gradable adverb.*

absolute phrase a **participle phrase** preceded by an explicit agent, functioning as a **sentence modifier**.

active voice in active voice sentences, the **agent** performing the action is named in the subject of the sentence, the verb follows in the predicate, and the **patient**—the person or thing receiving the action—is named after the verb. *See also passive voice.*

adjectival a sentence constituent that functions like an **adjective phrase**, whether as a modifier of a **noun**, **subject complement**, or **object complement**. Other forms that may function as an adjectival include **adjective clauses**, **prepositional phrases**, **participle phrases**, **infinitive phrases**, **noun phrases**, and **nominal appositives**.

adjectival appositive phrase an **adjective phrase** placed directly after the **noun** it modifies and functioning as a **non-essential modifier**.

adjective (Adj) a part-of-speech category comprising words that function as the head of an **adjective phrase**. Also defined as words that answer *which* or *what kind of* about a **noun**. *See also absolute adjective; gradable adjective.*

adjective clause (AdjCl) a **dependent clause** that functions as an **essential modifier** or **non-essential modifier** of a **noun**. An adjective clause is marked by a **relative pronoun**.

adjective phrase (AdjP) phrase comprising an **adjective** head, and modifiers of the adjective, which will be **adverb phrases** or other **adverbials**. An adjective phrase may function as a modifier of a **noun**, a **subject complement**, or an **object complement**.

adjunct adverbial type of **adverbial** that appears in the predicate of a **clause** or as a **constituent** of a **non-finite verb phrase**. The **scope** of an adjunct may be just the predicate, or the entire phrase or clause of which it is a constituent. Adjuncts typically are not easily moved to the beginning or end of their container clause, or to the slot between the **subject** and **predicate**, and typically work as the answer to a question.

adverb (Adv) a part-of-speech category comprising words that function as the head of an **adverb phrase**. Adverbs are just one category of **adverbials** and can also be defined as words that provide information about location, time, manner, reason, and amount—or that answer questions like *where*, *when*, *how*, *why*, and *how much*.

- adverb clause (AdvCL)** a **dependent clause** that most often functions as a **sentence modifier**. An adverb clause is marked by a **subordinating conjunction**.
- adverbial** a sentence constituent that functions like an **adverb phrase**, whether as a modifier of an **adjective**, **adverb**, or **verb**, or as a **subject complement** or **object complement**. Other forms that may function as adverbials include **adverb clauses**, **prepositional phrases**, **participle phrases**, and **infinitive phrases**.
- adverb of concurrent action** an **adverbial** that indicates that more than one action is happening at the same time.
- adverb phrase (AdvP)** phrase comprising an **adverb** head, and modifiers of the adverb which will also be adverbs or other **adverbials**. An adverb phrase may function as a modifier of an adverb, modifier of a **verb**, **sentence modifier**, a **subject complement**, or an **object complement**.
- affix** a morpheme (sound-meaning unit) added to a root (typically a basic form of a word) that changes its **function** and/or **meaning**. A derivational affix may be added to the beginning or end of a **root** (e.g. *in* + *form* + *ation*) and is understood to create a new word (*inform*; *formation*; *information*). In English, inflectional affixes are added only to the ends of words, changing their grammatical function (e.g. *ball* + *s*; *play* + *ing*).
- agent** the character performing the action named by a **verb**. With **active voice** verbs, the agent is named in the **subject**. With **passive voice** verbs, the agent will be named after the verb in a **prepositional phrase** beginning with *by* or, less often, *with*; or the agent may be deleted entirely from the sentence. In **existential-*it*** and **existential-*there*** sentences, the agent is displaced from the subject position. **Non-finite verbs** also have agents. *See also* **instrument**.
- agentive** in a **passive voice** clause, the function of the prepositional phrase that follows the verb and whose noun phrase names the **agent**. *See also* **instrumental**.
- animate** a feature of **personal pronouns** and **reflexive pronouns** that are used to refer to animate beings (e.g. *I, you, he, she, yourself, themselves*). *See also* **inanimate**.
- antecedent** a **nominal** that is referred back to by a **pronoun** or other **pro-word**.
- appositive** a **nominal** or **adjectival** that is placed in “apposition” to a **noun** and functions as a **non-essential modifier** of that noun.
- article** a type of **determiner** that specifies whether a **noun** refers to a definite/specific or indefinite/generic object (*a, an, the*).
- aspect** the feature of the **verb** that marks whether the action is completed or perfected (**perfect aspect**); in progress (**progressive aspect**); incomplete, intermittent or flawed (**imperfect**), or **habitual**. Aspect is marked in the verb by the presence of **aspectual verbs**.
- aspectual verb** auxiliary *have* followed by the **past participle** of an auxiliary or **main verb**, marking the **perfect aspect**; and auxiliary *be* followed by the **present participle** of an auxiliary or **main verb**, marking the **progressive aspect**; and a diverse category of **imperfect aspectual verbs**, which may be followed by the present participle or *to* + **base form** of an **auxiliary** or another imperfect aspectual verb, or the main verb, marking the **imperfect aspect**.
- auxiliary verb (Aux)** sometimes known as a “helping verb.” A verb that precedes the **main verb** and serves to mark the **mood**, **aspect**, and **voice** of the verb. Auxiliary verbs have three defining features: (1) they may be inverted with the subject to form an **interrogative sentence** (2) the negative *n't* attaches to them; (3) they may be used to form a **tag question**. *See also* **aspectual verb**, **passive voice auxiliary**, and **modal auxiliary**.
- bare infinitive** the **infinitive** form of the verb when it is not preceded by the particle *to*. The bare infinitive may function as a **verb complement**. *See also* **infinitive**.

base form dictionary form of **gradable adjectives** (e.g. *big*; *serious*) and **gradable adverbs** (e.g. *fast*; *deeply*). *See also* **comparative form**; **superlative form**.

base form verb the dictionary/**bare infinitive** form of a **verb**.

beneficiary *see* **indirect object (IO)**.

cardinal numbers counting numbers (*one, two, three*, etc.) which may function as **determiners** or **indefinite pronouns**. *See also* **ordinals**.

case feature marked in **personal pronouns**, indicating whether they function as the **subject (nominative case)**, **complement of a preposition** or **verb complement (objective case)**, or to indicate ownership or possession (**possessive case**).

case inflection changes in spelling of **personal pronouns** that indicates their **case**, e.g. *they* (**nominative**), *them* (**objective**), *theirs* (**possessive**).

clause a group of words that includes a **noun phrase** or other **nominal** functioning as a **subject** and a **verb phrase** functioning as a **predicate** in which the **head noun** of the subject agrees in **number** and **person** with the **complete verb** in the predicate, and in which the predicate includes all **complements** required by the **verb**. A **sentence** is one type of clause, also called an **independent clause**. *See also* **adjective clause (AdjCL)**; **adverb clause (AdvCL)**; **dependent clause**; **independent clause**; **noun clause (NCL)**; **phrase**; **sentence**.

clause modifier an **adverbial** functioning as a modifier of a **dependent clause**. The details of its form, function, and identification are the same as those for a **sentence modifier**.

closed class any class of words that is generally static in that we cannot create new ones, nor do we generally stop using existing ones. **Pronouns** are, on the whole, a closed class, as are one-word **prepositions**.

common noun a **noun** that names an object using a general term (e.g. *dog*) as opposed to a specific name (e.g. *Rover*). Common nouns are generally not capitalized. *See also* **proper noun**.

comparative form form of **gradable adjectives** (e.g. *bigger*; *more serious*) and **gradable adverbs** (e.g. *faster*; *more deeply*). *See also* **base form**; **superlative form**.

complement a required constituent that *completes* the sense of a **head** within a container constituent, such that, without the complement, the container constituent would not be grammatically well formed or clearly convey essentially the same meaning. **Prepositions** and most **verbs** require complements. *Compare* **modifier**. *See also* **prepositional phrase**; **verb complement (VCOMP)**.

complementizer a word placed at the beginning of a **dependent clause** that marks the clause as dependent. The **clause** is then understood to function as a **complement** of the complementizer. *See also* **subordinating conjunction**; *that*-clause.

complete predicate within a **clause**, the complete **verb phrase**, comprising the **complete verb**, its **complements**, and **modifiers**. *See also* **predicate (PRED)**; **simple predicate**.

complete subject within a **clause**, the complete **nominal** that is functioning as the **subject** of the **verb** in the **complete predicate**. *See also* **simple subject**; **subject (SUBJ)**.

complete verb within a **clause**, the complete verb comprises a **main verb** and all of its accompanying **auxiliary**, **imperfect aspectual verbs**, and **semi-modal verbs**. The term “complete verb” may also be used to refer to a **participle** or **infinitive** and their accompanying auxiliary, imperfect aspectual, and semi-modal verbs.

complex sentence a sentence that comprises a **container clause** with one or more **dependent clauses**. *See also* **compound-complex sentence**; **compound sentence**.

complex transitive verb a **verb** that takes as its **complement** both a **nominal** functioning as a **direct object** and a second complement of any type.

- compound-complex sentence** two or more conjoined **independent clauses** that, among them, contain one or more **dependent clauses**. *See also* **complex sentence**; **compound sentence**.
- compound noun** a multiple-word **noun** (e.g. *soccer ball*, *fly fishing*, *border collie*) or **noun phrase** (e.g. *The United States of America*) that we usually regard as and which generally functions as a single word. Many compound nouns are listed in dictionaries as single entries.
- compound sentence** two or more conjoined **independent clauses**. *See also* **complex sentence**; **compound-complex sentence**.
- conjoining punctuation** commas, colons, semicolons, parentheses, dashes, and hyphens, used in roles in which they function much as **coordinating** or **correlative conjunctions**.
- conjunction (CONJ)** part-of-speech class of **function words** and punctuation that join together other **constituents** that share the same function. *See also* **conjoining punctuation**; **coordinating conjunction (CCONJ)**; **correlative conjunction (CORRELCONJ)**; **subordinating conjunction (SCONJ)**.
- conjunctive adverbial** type of **adverbs** and **adverbials** that primarily function to conjoin **independent clauses** or paragraphs, e.g. *first . . . next*; *however*; *consequently*; *in conclusion*. Their **scope** is thus two or more **sentences**. Conjuncts can typically be moved to the beginning or end of their container clause, or between the **subject** and **predicate**, and can rarely be the answer to a question.
- conjunctive interjection** an interjection that indicates the speaker's recognition of a preceding utterance or some larger context that is shared by the speaker and the hearer (see **elliptical interjection**, **simple interjections**).
- conjunctive punctuation** punctuation marks that function like **conjunctions**, including commas, semicolons, colons, parentheses, dashes, hyphens, and virgules.
- constituent/constituency** the notion that, within the grammar, phrases and clauses are composed from other elements, "constituents" of the phrase or clause, according to the rules of the grammar. As its constituents, a phrase may include words, other phrases, or clauses; as its constituents, a clause may include phrases or other clauses (see **obligatory constituent**, **optional constituent**).
- container clause** a clause that "contains" a **dependent clause**, and within which the dependent clause is a **constituent**. A container clause may itself be either a **dependent** or an **independent clause**.
- content word** classes of words that are thought of as primarily conveying meaning. **Nouns**, **verbs**, **adjectives**, and many **adverbs** (e.g. *quickly*, *happily*) are typically regarded as content words. *See also* **function words**.
- coordinating conjunction (CCONJ)** a subclass of **conjunctions** comprising words used to join together words, phrases, and clauses that have the same function. Coordinating conjunctions traditionally include *and*, *or*, *but*, *for*, *nor*, *yet*, *so*.
- copular be** *be* used as the **main verb** in a clause. *See also* **copular verb**.
- copular verb** a verb that "couples" the **subject** to a **subject complement (SC)**: a **nominal**, **adjectival**, or **adverbial** that renames or ascribes a quality or attribute to the subject. Copular verbs may indicate a state (e.g. *seem*, *smell*) or a result (e.g. *become*, *grow*).
- correlative conjunction (CORRELCONJ)** a **coordinating conjunction** with two components that frame the constituents that are being conjoined, e.g. *either . . . or*, *neither . . . nor*, *not only . . . but also*, and, *both . . . and*.
- counterexpectation** an event of state of affairs that is counter to the expectations of the speaker or writer. Counterexpectation can be marked by completive *done*, reinforcing *like*, and indignant *come*, among other features of the grammar.

- counterfactual** a sentence that names a state of affairs that did not in fact happen. Counterfactuality can be marked by a **subordinator** or **complementizer** (e.g. *if*) with the past **perfect** (*I had seen*), the past **modal perfect** (*I would have*), or the **subjunctive** (*I were*).
- count noun** a noun that refers to a countable object (e.g. *dream, letter, arm*). *See also* **mass noun**.
- dangling participle** a **participle phrase** with a **past participle**, and the **agent** deleted and unavailable from the context. The participle “dangles” because the audience cannot easily determine the agent or doer of the action named by the participle.
- declarative sentence** a sentence in SVO order that makes a statement or declaration; generally regarded as the unmarked order for a sentence in English. *See also* **interrogative**; **imperative**; **expletive-*there***; **expletive-*it***; **passive voice**; **inversion**.
- default** *see* **unmarked**.
- demonstrative** *this, that, these, and those* used as **determiners** or **pronouns**.
- dependent** constituents of a **phrase** that modify, specify, or complement the **head** of the phrase.
- dependent clause** an **adjectival**, **adverbial**, or **nominal** clause that is a constituent—and so a dependent—of a **container clause** or phrase. Dependent clauses are typically marked by a subordinating word, such as a **relative pronoun** (for adjective clauses), the **subordinators** or **complementizers** *that, whether, if*, or a range of ***wh*-words** (for noun clauses), or a **subordinating conjunction** (for adverb clauses). *See also* **adjective clause (AdjCL)**; **adverb clause (AdvCL)**; **independent clause**; **noun clause (NCL)**.
- derivational affix** *see* **affix**.
- descriptive adjective** words such as *tall, beautiful, happy, miserable, and blue* that name qualities possessed by the things named by **nouns**: they *describe* nouns. *See also* **determiner (DET)**.
- determiner (DET)** a part-of-speech category comprising words that function as **specifiers** of **nouns** within **noun phrases**, and specifiers of **pronouns** within **pronoun phrases**. Determiners appear at the front of noun and pronoun phrases, ahead of the **adjective phrase** pre-modifier of the noun or pronoun. There are several categories of determiners, including **articles**, **demonstratives**, **possessives**, **quantifiers** (including **cardinal numbers**, **plural numbers** + *of*, **fractions**, and **multipliers**), **partitives** (including many **quantifiers** + *of*, **fractions** + *of*, and **cardinal numbers** + *of*), and **ordinal numbers**. *See also* **determiner phrase (DP)**.
- determiner phrase (DP)** one or more **determiners** working together as a **specifier** of a **noun** or **pronoun** as **constituents** of a **noun phrase** or **pronoun phrase**. A determiner is not, properly, a **phrase**, in that it does not have a **head** and dependent **constituents**.
- direct object (DO)** a **noun phrase** or other **nominal** that functions as the **complement** of a **finite** or **non-finite verb** and names the **patient** or the thing acted upon. A verb that takes a DO as its complement is **transitive** and in the **active voice** and can be transformed into a **passive voice** construction. *See also* **verb complement (VComp)**.
- disjunct adverbial** a type of **adverbial** that expresses the opinion or attitude of the speaker/writer (e.g. *hopefully*, which means “I am hopeful that”). Disjuncts can usually be moved to the beginning or end of their container clause, but typically cannot be the answer to a question.
- ditransitive verb** a verb that takes as its complement both a **noun phrase** or other **nominal** functioning as a **direct object** (NP:DO) and a noun phrase or other nominal functioning as an **indirect object** (NP:IO). *See also* **intransitive verb**; **monotransitive verb**; **transitive verb**.

- do support** adding an **auxiliary** *do* when no other auxiliary is present and a sentence transformation requires an auxiliary, as in transforming a **declarative** sentence to an **interrogative** (e.g. *I want* → *do I want?*), or in negating a verb (e.g. *I do not want*).
- ellipsis** deletion of a constituent, sometimes indicated by three periods (a mid-sentence ellipsis) or four periods (a sentence-final ellipsis). A sentence, clause, or phrase that might be interpreted as depending on deleted material for its meaning can be referred to as in an **elliptical sentence** or an **elliptical interjection**.
- elliptical interjection** an **interjection** that may be understood as a sentence with parts deleted; for example, *Help!* might be understood as a shortened version of the imperative sentence *Help me!* *See also* **conjunctive interjection**; **simple interjection**.
- elliptical sentence** a sentence in which some necessary constituent has been elided or left out. *See also* **fragment**.
- ergative verb** a **verb** that may be either **transitive** or **intransitive** (e.g. *She opened the door*; *The door opened*).
- essential modifier** in a **noun phrase**, an **adjectival** modifier whose meaning the audience requires in the context in order to distinguish the particular object to which the **noun** refers. Essential modifiers are also called restrictive modifiers. *See also* **non-essential modifier**.
- existential-it sentence** a sentence with **expletive** *it* in the subject position that asserts the existence of some person, thing, or state of affairs.
- existential-there sentence** a sentence with **expletive** *there* in the subject position that asserts the existence of some person, thing, or state of affairs.
- expletive** a word without meaning that is used as a placeholder (e.g. **expletive-there**, **expletive-it**) or simply to mark a constituent as being of a particular class (e.g. **expletive-that**).
- expletive it** the word *it* used as a dummy subject in an **existential-it** sentence; the sentence reordering is called **it-extraposition**.
- expletive that** the word *that* used as an **expletive** or **complementizer** to mark a **noun clause**.
- expletive there** the word *there* used as a dummy subject in an **existential-there** sentence.
- feminine (F)** a feature of **personal pronouns**, **reflexive pronouns**, and **possessive determiners**, marking them as referring to literally (e.g. *woman*) or conventionally (e.g. *ship*) female antecedents. *See also* **gender**; **gender-neutral (GN)**; **masculine (M)**; **neuter (NEU)**.
- finite verb** the form of a verb that can be inflected for **tense** and **person** (see **non-finite verb**).
- first person** the “person” of the speaker/author, marked in **personal pronouns** (*I/me/mine*; *we/us/ours*), **reflexive pronouns** (*myself*; *ourselves*), and **possessive determiners** (*my*; *our*). *See also* **second person**; **third person**.
- form** one of the defining features of sentence constituents, along with **function** and **meaning**. Forms are named by part-of-speech labels (e.g. **noun/noun phrase**) and can be identified by the kinds of **inflectional affixes** they take.
- for-to infinitive** a form of the **infinitive** where the verb is preceded by *for* + **NOMINAL** + *to*, and the nominal names the **agent** of the infinitive.
- fraction** a type of **determiner** that specifies that a **noun** refers to some fractional portion of an object (e.g. *half a*, *one third the*). Fractions may also function as **indefinite pronouns** (e.g. *half*, *one third*).
- fragment** any word, **phrase**, **dependent clause**, or any portion of a phrase or clause spoken, or in writing punctuated, as if it were a **sentence** or grammatically complete utterance.

function one of the defining features of sentence constituents, along with **form** and meaning. Functions are roles in **phrases** and **clauses** (e.g. **head**, **complement**, **modifier**, **subject**, **predicate**).

function word a class of words that are usually thought of as not primarily carrying meaning, but as relating **content words** to each other. **Conjunctions**, **prepositions**, **determiners**, and some **adverbs** (e.g. *very*, *just*, *not*) are all usually considered function words. *See also* **content words**.

gender a feature of **personal pronouns**, **reflexive pronouns**, and **possessive determiners**, marking them as referring to literally or conventionally **masculine**, **feminine**, **neuter**, or non-gendered antecedents.

gender-neutral (GN) **third-person personal pronouns**, **possessive determiners**, and **reflexive pronouns** that are understood to refer to **animate** entities without reference to their gender, including both plural and singular *they*, *them*, *their*, *theirs*, *themselves*, *themselves*, and the non-mainstream English *themselves*, *themselves*, *themselves*.

generic noun a **noun** (or, more properly, **noun phrase**) that refers to the general category of an object. The sentence *Dogs like to run* implies that it is generally true of *dogs* as a category that they like to run. *See also* **specific noun**.

generic past a special tense marked only by the **verb** *used to* (pronounced “useta”), marking an action as having occurred generally and habitually in the past.

gerund/gerund phrase in traditional grammar, the term for a **participle phrase** functioning as a **nominal**.

gradable adjective gradable adjectives have three forms or degrees: the **base**, the **comparative**, and the **superlative**. Comparative and superlative degrees may be formed by adding *-er/-est* (e.g. *bigger/biggest*) or *more/most* (e.g. *more/most serious*). *See also* **absolute adjective**.

gradable adverb gradable adverbs have three forms or degrees: the **base**, the **comparative**, and the **superlative**. Comparative and superlative degrees may be formed by adding *-er/-est* (e.g. *faster/fastest*) or *more/most* (e.g. *more/most deeply*). *See also* **gradable adverb**.

habitual aspect in Black Language, the word *be* is used to mark the action named by the **main verb** as habitual or routine, e.g. *Every day, he be late*. *See also* **aspect**; **generic past**.

head the central, required constituent of a phrase, e.g. a **noun** in a **noun phrase**. *See also* **dependents**.

helping verb *see* **auxiliary verb**.

historical present use of **present-tense verb** forms to describe action that took place in the past.

imperative mood **mood** that indicates commands. The imperative mood is marked by the deletion of the **subject** and a **modal auxiliary** from the subject-verb-complement sentence, and by the **main verb** taking the **base form**.

imperfect aspect an **aspect** marked in a **verb** by the presence of an **imperfect aspectual verb**, indicating that the action named by the **complete verb** is imperfect because it is somehow incomplete, intermittent, or flawed.

imperfect aspectual verb a **verb** such as *start* or *try* followed by the **present participle** form of an **auxiliary** or **main verb**, or followed by *to* + the **base form** of an auxiliary or main verb, that marks the **imperfect aspect**.

inanimate a feature of the **personal pronoun** *it* and the **reflexive pronoun** *itself*, which are used to refer to inanimate objects. *See also* **animate**.

indefinite pronoun a subclass of **pronouns** that refer to indefinite persons or objects (e.g. *anyone*, *all*, *few*, *somebody*). Indefinite pronouns are the only subclass of pronouns that routinely can take both **modifiers** and **determiners**.

independent clause a complete clause that is not contained within—and so, not a dependent of—another clause. *See also* **clause**; **dependent clause**.

indicative mood the default or unmarked mood of all **main verbs**; thus named because a verb in the indicative mood indicates an actual event and asserts it as a fact.

indirect object (IO) a **noun phrase** or other **nominal** that functions as the complement of a finite or non-finite verb and names the recipient or beneficiary of the act—the character whom the **patient** is transmitted *to*, or *for* whom the action is done. The indirect object may appear immediately after the **verb** or in a **prepositional phrase** marked by the **preposition** *to* or *for*.

infinitive (INF) one of the **non-finite** forms of a verb, consisting of the particle *to* followed by the **base** form of the verb. The infinitive may also be used without the particle *to* (the **bare infinitive**); preceded by the particle *for* and a **nominal** that functions as the **agent** of the infinitive (the **for-to infinitive**); or preceded by *in order* to mark that an **infinitive phrase** is functioning as an **adverbial**. The infinitive functions as the **head** of an infinitive phrase.

infinitive phrase (INFP) an **infinitive**, which may appear alone or with **complements** and/or **modifiers**. An INFP can function as a **nominal**, **adjectival**, or **adverbial**, though it cannot function in all of their respective roles.

inflectional affix *see* **affix**.

instrument an inanimate character performing the action named by a verb. With **active voice** verbs, the instrument is named in the **subject**. With **passive voice** verbs, the instrument will be named after the **verb** in a **prepositional phrase** beginning with *by* or, less often, *with*; or the instrument may be deleted entirely from the sentence. *See also* **agent**.

instrumental in a **passive voice** clause, the function of the **prepositional phrase** that follows the **verb** and whose **noun phrase** names the **instrument**, an alternative name for the **agent** when the agent is an inanimate character (e.g. *The victim was killed with a gun*). *See also* **agentive**.

interjection (INTERJ) a word or phrase that expresses emotion and has no grammatical relation to other words in the sentence; often followed by an exclamation point to indicate the strength of the emotion expressed (e.g. *Oh dear! Ouch! Wow!*). *See also* **conjunctive interjection**; **elliptical interjection**; **simple interjection**.

interrogative pro-adjective a **pro-word** that marks an interrogative sentence by standing in for an **adjectival** constituent of the sentence and being moved to the front of the sentence. *Which* can be an interrogative pro-adjective when its antecedent adjectival modifies a plural **count noun** or a singular **mass noun**, because these nouns can be used without a **determiner**. *How* can also be an interrogative pro-adjective when its antecedent is an adjective phrase functioning as a **subject complement**. *See also* **interrogative sentence**.

interrogative pro-adverb a **pro-word** that marks an interrogative sentence by standing in for an **adverbial** constituent of the sentence and being moved to its front (e.g. *how*; *how much*; *when*; *where*; *why*).

interrogative pro-determiner a **pro-word** that marks an interrogative sentence by standing in for a **determiner** in the sentence and being moved to its front (e.g. *what*, *which*, *whose*).

interrogative pronoun a **pronoun** that marks an interrogative sentence by standing in for a **nominal** constituent of the sentence and being moved to its front. Some interrogative pronouns are unmarked for **case** (*what*, *whatever*; *which*, *whichever*); others, as appropriate, must take the case form required by their function within the sentence, whether **nominative** (*who*, *whoever*), **objective** (*whom*, *whomever*), or **possessive** (*whose*).

interrogative pro-word a **pro-word** that marks an interrogative sentence by standing in for a constituent of the sentence and being moved to its front. *See also* **interrogative pro-adjective**; **interrogative pro-adverb**; **interrogative pro-determiner**; **interrogative pronoun**.

interrogative sentence a sentence whose order or structure has been altered so that the sentence poses a question rather than making a statement or declaration. Interrogative sentences may be made (1) by reversing the order of the **subject** and the first **auxiliary** of the complete verb; (2) with copular *be* as the **main verb** and no **auxiliary**, by reversing the order of the subject and the verb; (3) by preceding (1) or (2) with an **interrogative pro-adverb** (e.g. *how, when, where, why*); and (4) by replacing a word in the declarative sentence with an **interrogative pro-word** of the same form and moving the interrogative pro-word to the front of the interrogative sentence. *See also* **declarative sentence**; **inversion**.

intransitive phrasal verb a **phrasal verb** that takes no complement (e.g. *We give up!*). *See also* **transitive inseparable phrasal verb**; **transitive separable phrasal verb**.

intransitive verb a **verb** that takes no complement. *See also* **ditransitive verb**; **monotransitive verb**; **transitive verb**.

invariant be *see* **habitual aspect**.

inversion a common rhetorical and poetic device in which the order of two of the major **clause** constituents (**subject**, **verb**, **complement**) are reversed.

irregular verb a **verb** in which the **past tense** form and/or the **past participle** are not formed by the addition of *-ed*, e.g. *drive*: past *drove*; past participle *driven*.

it extraposition a sentence construction in which an **expletive it**, followed by a copular verb, is used to shift the entire sentence into a **noun clause** in the **predicate**.

kernel sentence the combination of the **simple subject** and the **simple predicate**.

locative complement (LC) an **adverbial** that names a location (tells *where*), functioning as a **verb complement**.

main verb (MV) in a **complete verb**, the final word in the verb, which names the action. A main verb may be preceded by one or more **auxiliary verbs**.

manner complement (MC) an **adverbial** that names a manner of performing an action (tells *how*), functioning as a **verb complement**.

marked a grammatical structure is considered marked when its form is altered so that it differs from some common or expected **default** or **unmarked** structure. For example, the **modal mood** is marked in the verb by the addition of a **modal auxiliary verb**. The addition of the modal auxiliary marks the verb as different from the default **indicative** form.

masculine (M) a feature of **personal pronouns**, **reflexive pronouns**, and **possessive determiners**, marking them as referring to literally (e.g. *man*) or conventionally (e.g. *God*) male antecedents. *See also* **feminine (F)**; **gender**; **gender-neutral (GN)**; **neuter (NEU)**.

mass noun a noun that refers to a mass or otherwise uncountable object (e.g. *sand, soccer, homework*). *See also* **count noun**.

meaning one of the ways of defining a part-of-speech category (e.g. a **noun** is defined as a word that names a person, place, thing, quality, or idea).

modal auxiliary an **auxiliary verb** that marks the **modal mood**; *can, could, shall, should, will, would, may, might, must*.

modal mood mood of the verb marked by the presence of a **modal auxiliary**. The modal auxiliary marks the action named by the verb as not actual.

modifier a **constituent** that qualifies or limits the meaning of the **head** of a phrase, or of an entire clause. A modifier is tied to its head—that is, within the sentence, the

modifier has to be located close to the word or clause it is modifying. Modifiers are **optional constituents**: if we drop them, then the sentence will still be grammatically well-formed. *Compare* **complement**.

monotransitive verb verb that takes only a **nominal** functioning as a **direct object** in its **complement**. *See also* **transitive verb**; **ditransitive verb**; **intransitive verb**.

mood a feature of the **verb** that indicates whether the action named by the verb is actual or hypothetical. *See also* **indicative mood**; **modal mood**; **imperative mood**; **subjunctive mood**.

multiple negation in many English varieties, the use of two or more negative terms in a single clause (e.g. *I ain't got no money*).

multiplier a type of **determiner** that specifies that a **noun** refers to some multiple amount of an object (e.g. *once a, twice the*).

N-bar (N') intermediate structure between a **noun** and a **noun phrase**; helps illustrate the internal complexity of modification within the noun phrase.

negative concord *see* **multiple negation**.

neuter (NEU) a feature of **personal pronouns**, **reflexive pronouns**, and **possessive determiners**, marking them as referring to antecedents that are usually inanimate and are understood to have no gender. *See also* **feminine (F)**; **gender**; **gender-neutral (GN)**; **masculine (M)**.

nominal any sentence constituent that functions in any of the roles filled by a **noun phrase** (e.g. **subject**, **complement of a preposition**, or one of several **verb complements**: **direct object**, **indirect object**, **subject complement**.) Other forms that may function as nominals include **participle phrases**, **infinitive phrases**, **noun clauses**, and rarely **prepositional phrases**.

nominal appositive phrase a **noun phrase** used as a **non-essential modifier** of a noun.

nominative absolute a nominal appositive phrase that modifies a clause.

nominative case the unmarked form of **personal pronouns** and **relative pronouns** (e.g. *I, you, he, she, it, we, they, who*) indicating that the pronoun is functioning as the **subject of a verb**, or as the **subject complement** of a verb.

nominative case pronoun *see* **nominative case**.

non-essential modifier an adjectival modifier of a noun whose meaning the audience does not require in the context in order to distinguish the particular object to which the noun refers. Non-essential modifiers, also called non-restrictive modifiers, are usually set off from the sentence by commas. *See also* **essential modifier**.

non-finite verb the **present participle**, **past participle**, and **infinitive** forms of a **verb** that cannot be inflected for **tense** and **person**.

non-finite verb phrase a **phrase** comprising a **non-finite verb** along with its **complements** and **modifiers**. Non-finite verb phrases may function as **nominals**, **adjectives**, or **adverbials**, and may include **auxiliary verbs**, **imperfect aspectual verbs**, and **semi-modal verbs**; they may also include a **subordinating conjunction**.

non-gendered *see* **gender-neutral (GN)**.

non-gradable adverb *see* **absolute adverb**.

non-restrictive modifier *see* **non-essential modifier**.

noun (N) a part-of-speech category comprising words that function as the head of a **noun phrase**. Nouns are just one category of **nominals**, and can also be defined as words that name a person, place, thing, quality, or idea—or that answer *what* or *who*.

noun clause (NCL) a **dependent clause** that fulfills a variety of **nominal** functions. *That*-type noun clauses are marked by an **expletive** (*that, whether, if*), and can function as **subject**, **agent**, **direct object**, **indirect object**, and **complement of a preposition**. *Wh*-type noun clauses are marked by a **wh-pro-word**, and can function

as subject, direct object, indirect object, **subject complement**, **object complement**, and complement of a preposition.

noun phrase (NP) phrase comprising a **noun head**, **determiners** that specify the noun, and **adjectival modifiers** of the noun. A noun phrase may function as **subject**, **agent**, **direct object**, **indirect object**, **subject complement**, **object complement**, and **complement of a preposition**.

number feature marked in **personal pronouns** (e.g. *I* → *we*), **reflexive pronouns** (e.g. *myself* → *ourselves*), **possessive determiners** (e.g. *my* → *our*), and **demonstratives** (e.g. *this* → *these*) indicating whether they refer to one or more than one **antecedent**. For most **nouns**, the default number is **singular**, with **plural** number being marked by the addition of *-s*; exceptions include nouns that are only plural (e.g. *pants*; *scissors*). In all **verbs** (except *be*), number is marked in the **third-person singular** by the addition of *-s*. *See also* **singular**; **plural**.

object complement (OC) some verbs that take a **direct object** as a first complement also take a second complement, a **nominal**, **adjectival**, or **adverbial** functioning as an object complement (OC), so-called because, just as a **subject complement** refers back to or renames the **subject** of a **copular verb**, so an OC refers back to or renames the direct object.

objective case form of **personal pronouns** and **relative pronouns** (e.g. *me*, *him*, *her*, *us*, *them*, *whom*) indicating that the pronoun is functioning as the **complement of a preposition**, or as the **direct object** or **indirect object** of a **verb**.

objective case pronoun *see* **objective case**.

obligatory constituent a constituent that, according to the rules of the grammar, must be included in order to complete its **container** constituent. For example, many **verbs** require a **complement**, and a **preposition** generally requires a **nominal** complement as obligatory constituents of, respectively, a **prepositional phrase** and a **verb phrase**. *See* **constituent**, **optional constituent**.

optional constituent a constituent that, according to the rules of the grammar, may be included, but is not required for its **container** constituent to be complete. **Modifiers** are always optional constituents. *See also* **constituent**; **modifier**; **obligatory constituent**.

ordinals number forms and other words (*first*, *second*, *third*, *next*, *last*, etc.) that mark “order,” and which may function as **determiners**, **indefinite pronouns**, or **conjunctive adverbials**. *See also* **cardinal numbers**.

parse, parsing the act of identifying the **constituents** of a sentence and its component **phrases** and **dependent clauses**.

participle (PART) one of the **non-finite** forms of a verb. There are two forms of the participle: the **present participle** and the **past participle**.

participle phrase (PARTP) a **participle**, which may appear alone or with its **complements** and/or **modifiers**. A PARTP can function as a **nominal**, **adjectival**, or **adverbial**, though it cannot function in all of their respective roles.

particle a little word, which may merely be a function word, such as *to* in **complex modals** and **imperfect aspectual verbs**; or *of* in **determiners**; or which may be part of an idiomatic construction as in a **phrasal verb** (e.g. *beat up*; *throw out*).

partitive a type of **determiner** that specifies that a **noun** refers to some part of an object (e.g. *few of*, *a lot of*).

passive voice in a passive voice clause, the **default** subject-verb-complement order is altered so that the **patient** is named in the **subject**; the verb form includes the **passive voice auxiliary** *be* followed by the **past participle** form of the next **auxiliary** or the **main verb**; and the **agent** is either named after the verb in a **prepositional phrase** beginning with *by* or, less often, *with*, or the agent may be deleted entirely from the sentence.

- passive voice auxiliary verb** the auxiliary verb *be* followed by the **past participle** of a verb: this combination marks the **passive voice** in a clause, or in a **participle phrase** or **infinitive phrase**.
- passivization** the process of transforming a clause with a **transitive verb** from **active voice** to **passive voice**.
- past participle** one of the **non-finite** forms of a verb, commonly, the *-ed* form; also identifiable as the form of the verb that follows the *have* auxiliary to form the **perfect aspect** (e.g. *have baked*; *have driven*). See also **participle (PART)**.
- past tense** one of the two finite forms of every verb, along with the **present-tense** form. Generally used to refer to past action, past-tense verbs may be used to refer to a one-time event in the past, or past habitual action.
- patient** the person or thing receiving the action named by a verb, usually named by the **direct object** of a **transitive verb**.
- perfect aspect** marked in the verb by the **perfect aspectual auxiliary** *have*, followed by the **past participle** of an auxiliary or the **main verb**. Indicates that the action named by the **complete verb** is complete or “perfected.”
- perfect aspectual auxiliary** the auxiliary verb *have* followed by the **past participle** form of an auxiliary or **main verb**.
- person** a feature marked in **personal pronouns**, **reflexive pronouns**, and **possessive determiners**. The **first person** is the person speaking (*I, we*); the **second person** is the person spoken to (*you*); the **third person** is the person spoken about (*he, she, it, they*). See also **first person**; **second person**; **third person**.
- personal pronoun** the subset of **pronouns** that are marked for **person**, **number**, **gender**, and **animacy**.
- phatic (PHATIC) utterance** words, phrases, and clauses like *hello, goodbye, really, and how are you* that we use to initiate, further, or conclude social interactions, but that otherwise have no literal meaning.
- phrasal verb** a verb that consists of a **main verb** followed by one or more **particles**, the combination functioning as if it were a single word, much like a **compound noun**. See also **intransitive phrasal verb**; **transitive inseparable phrasal verb**; **transitive separable phrasal verb**.
- phrase** a group of words that together form a single, more complex constituent within another phrase or within a **clause**. A phrase (with the exception of **determiner phrases**) comprises a **head** word alone, or a head word with obligatory **complements** and/or **modifiers**.
- plural (PL)** feature marked in **personal pronouns**, **reflexive pronouns**, and **possessive determiners**, and **demonstratives** indicating that they refer to more than one **antecedent** (e.g. *we/us/ours/ourselves/our*; *they/them/theirs/themselves/their*). For most **nouns**, plural number is marked by the addition of *-s*; exceptions include nouns that are only plural (e.g. *pants; scissors*). See also **number**; **singular (SG)**.
- possessive case** a form of **personal pronouns** (e.g. *mine, his, hers, ours, theirs*), **relative pronouns** (*whose*), and **determiners** (e.g. *my, your*), and in **noun phrases** by the addition of *'s* (e.g. *the young student* → *the young student's*) indicating that the pronoun, determiner, or noun phrase is functioning to mark possession or ownership. Note that the addition of *'s* to a noun phrase changes the noun phrase into a **possessive determiner**.
- possessive determiner** a subset of determiners that indicate possession or ownership, including *my, your, his, her, its, our, and their*. When an *'s* is added to a noun phrase, the noun phrase becomes a possessive determiner. See also **possessive case**.
- possessive pronoun** a subset of **personal pronouns** that indicate possession or ownership, including *mine, yours, his, hers, its, ours, and theirs*. See also **possessive case**.

postcedent a noun phrase or clause that follows a **pronoun** and which the pronoun refers forward to or anticipates.

post-modifier a **modifier** that follows its **head**. *See also* **pre-modifier**.

predicate (PRED) within a clause, the function of the **verb phrase**. *See also* **simple predicate**; **subject (SUBJ)**.

predicate adjective an **adjectival** functioning as the complement of a **copular verb**; a type of **subject complement**.

predicate nominative a **nominal** functioning as the complement of **copular verb**; a type of **subject complement**.

pre-modifier a **modifier** that precedes its **head**. *See also* **post-modifier**.

preposition (P) a part-of-speech category comprising words that function as the head of a **prepositional phrase**. Prepositions most commonly comprise one word (e.g. *at, in, on*), but may also comprise two (e.g. *close to, out of*), three (e.g. *on behalf of*), or even four words (e.g. *in the name of*). Prepositions establish a relationship, often in space or time, between the **nominal** that functions as the **complement of the preposition** and another constituent of its container constituent.

prepositional phrase (PP) a phrase comprising a **preposition** head and a **nominal** that functions as the **complement of the preposition**. A prepositional phrase may function as an **adjectival post-modifier** of a **noun**. A prepositional phrase may also function as an **adverbial**, functioning as a **sentence modifier**, or as a **modifier** of an **adjective, adverb, or verb**, or as a **complement** of a verb.

prepositional verb a verb that idiomatically requires as its **complement** a **nominal** functioning as a **direct object** followed by a **prepositional phrase** with a specific **preposition** as its **head**, e.g. *talk someone into something*; *stack the odds against someone*.

present participle one of the **non-finite** forms of a **verb**, always ending in *-ing*. In a **finite verb**, the present participle appears after the **progressive aspect auxiliary** *be*, and after many **imperfect aspectual verbs** (e.g. *start studying*). The present participle also functions as the head of a present **participle phrase**. *See also* **participle (PART)**.

present tense one of the two finite forms of every **verb**, along with the **past-tense** form. Despite its name, we generally do not use the present-tense form alone to refer to present action, preferring the present **progressive aspect** form of the verb. We generally use the present-tense form to refer to habitual action, past action (also called the **historical present**), and future or hypothetical action.

pro-adjective a **pro-word** that takes the place of an **adjective** in an **interrogative sentence** (*how, which*) or a **noun clause** (*how, what, whatever, which, whichever*).

pro-adverb a **pro-word** or **pro-phrase** that takes the place of an **adverbial** in an **interrogative sentence** (e.g. *how, how long, when, whenever, where, why*); in an **adjective clause** (*why, when, where, that*); in a **wh-clause** (e.g. *how, how long, however, when, whenever, where, why*); or as a **subordinating conjunction** in an **adverb clause** (*however, when, whenever, where, wherever*). *See also* **relative pro-adverb**.

pro-clause a **pronoun** whose **antecedent** or **postcedent** is a clause, e.g. *The wind blew down our tent, which ended our camping trip. What ended our camping trip? The wind blew down our tent!*

pro-determiner a **pro-word** that takes the place of a **determiner phrase** in an **interrogative sentence** (*what, which, whose*); in an **adjective clause** (*whose*); in a **wh-clause** (*what, whatever, which, whichever, whose, whosever, whoever's*); or as a **subordinating conjunction** in an **adverb clause** (*whichever, whatever*).

progressive aspect marked in the verb by the **progressive aspectual auxiliary** *be*, followed by the **present participle** of an **auxiliary** or the **main verb**. Progressive

aspect indicates that the action named by the **complete verb** is ongoing or “in progress.”

progressive aspectual auxiliary the **auxiliary verb** *be* followed by the present participle form of an auxiliary or **main verb**.

pronoun (PRON) a part-of-speech category comprising words that stand in the place of, and refer to, other **nominals**. There are six types of pronoun: **demonstrative pronouns**; **indefinite pronouns**; **interrogative pronouns**; **personal pronouns**; **reflexive pronouns**; and **relative pronouns**. Indefinite pronouns regularly function as the **head** of a **pronoun phrase**. Interrogative, personal, reflexive, and relative pronouns are marked for **case**.

pronoun phrase (PRONP) phrase comprising a **pronoun** head (most commonly an **indefinite pronoun**) and **adjectival modifiers** of the pronoun. A pronoun phrase may fulfill all **nominal** functions.

proper noun a **noun** that names a specific object (e.g. *Rover*) as opposed to a general category (e.g. *dog*). Proper nouns are always capitalized. *See also* **common noun**.

pro-word a word that stands in for an **antecedent** phrase, a **postcedent** phrase, or refers to a generic person, thing, or quality, or to something in the context of the discourse. *See also* **pro-adjective**; **pro-adverb**; **pro-determiner**; **pronoun (PRON)**.

quantifier a type of **determiner** that specifies that a **noun** refers to some quantity of an object (e.g. *all*, *none*, *some*). Quantifiers may also function as **indefinite pronouns**.

quotative verb used to introduce a complement that includes directly or indirectly quoted speech or thought. Quotative verbs may be **intransitive**, taking only the quotation as a complement, or they may be **transitive**, taking a **direct object** or **indirect object** as well as the quotation.

reflexive pronoun (REFLEXIVEPRON) A **personal pronoun** or **possessive determiner** base plus *-self/-selves*. Reflexive pronouns are used as a **complement** of a **preposition**, **verb**, **participle**, or **infinitive**. They may also function emphatically, as a **nominal appositive**, referring back to an immediately preceding **noun phrase**.

regular verb verb in which the **past tense** and the **past participle** are both formed by the addition of *-ed*.

relative pro-adverb (RELPROADV) a **relative pro-word** that marks an **adjective clause** (also called a “relative clause”) by standing in for an **adverbial** constituent of the clause and being moved to its front (*why*, *when*, *where*, *that*).

relative pro-clause (RELPROCL) a **relative pronoun** (*which*) whose **antecedent** is a clause, e.g. *The wind blew down our tent, which ended our camping trip*.

relative pro-determiner (RELPRODET) a **relative pro-word** (*whose*) that marks an **adjective clause** (also called a “relative clause”) by standing in for a **determiner** in the clause and being moved to its front.

relative pronoun (RELPRON) a **relative pro-word** (*that*, *which*, *who*, *whom*) that marks an **adjective clause** (also called a “relative clause”) by standing in for a **nominal** constituent of the clause and being moved to its front. *Who* and *whom* are marked, respectively, for the **nominative** and **objective cases**.

relative pro-word **pro-words** that mark the beginning of an **adjective clause** (also called a “relative clause”) by standing in for a **constituent** in the clause and being moved to its front. *See also* **relative pro-adverb (RELPROADV)**; **relative pro-clause (RELPROCL)**; **relative pro-determiner (RELPRODET)**; **relative pronoun (RELPRON)**.

restrictive modifier *see* **essential modifier**.

scope refers to the extent of the reference of an **adverbial**. *See also* **adjunct adverbial**; **conjunctive adverbial**; **disjunct adverbial**; **sentence modifier**; **subjunct adverbial**.

- second person** the “person” of the addressee, marked in **personal pronouns** (*you/you/s*), **reflexive pronouns** (*yourself/yourselves*), and **possessive determiners** (*your*). *See also* **first person**; **third person**.
- semi-modal verb** combinations of a **verb** + *to* that have **modal** meaning, e.g. *have to*, *be going to*, *ought to*, *wish to*, *long to*, etc.
- sentence** the more common term for an **independent clause**.
- sentence modifier** a type of **adverbial** that has an entire independent clause in its **scope**. It can be moved to the beginning or end of its container clause, or between the **subject** and **predicate**, and it almost always works as the answer to a question.
- simple existential** an **existential-*it*** sentence used to make statements about weather, time, or distance (e.g. *It's very hot*), but in which the **subject complement** (e.g. *very hot*) cannot be moved to replace the **expletive *it*** (**Very hot is*).
- simple interjection** a single word or brief phrase of exclamation, usually followed by an exclamation point. Simple interjections may be sounds (e.g. *Ugh!*), words (e.g. *Good grief!*), obscenities (e.g. *Oh fuck!*), or euphemisms (e.g. *Oh fudge!*). *See also* **conjunctive interjection**; **elliptical interjection**.
- simple predicate** the complete verb (main verb and auxiliary verbs, semi-modals, and imperfect aspectual verbs) within the **complete predicate** of a clause. *See also* **complete predicate**; **predicate (PRED)**.
- simple subject** the head of a **nominal** that is functioning as a **subject** of a clause. When a **noun clause** functions as the **subject** of its **container clause**, the simple subject of the noun clause is the simple subject of the container clause (e.g. in [*Whoever gets home last*]_[NCL;SUBJ] *is a rotten egg*, the **pronoun *whoever*** is the subject of *gets* and the simple subject of *is*). *See also* **subject**; **complete subject**.
- singular (SG)** feature marked in **personal pronouns** (e.g. *I/me/mine*), **reflexive pronouns** (e.g. *myself*), **possessive determiners** (e.g. *my*), and **demonstratives** (e.g. *this/that*) indicating that they refer to a single **antecedent**. For all **verbs** except *be*, the **third person** singular form is marked by the addition of *-s*. *See also* **number**; **plural (PL)**.
- specific noun** a **noun** (or, more properly, a **noun phrase**) that refers to a particular individual member of a category. In the sentence *My dog likes to run*, the NP *my dog* refers to one specific dog. *See also* **generic noun**.
- specify/specifier** the function of a **determiner** as a constituent of a **noun phrase** or a **pronoun phrase**. Unlike a **modifier**, a determiner functioning as a specifier is not always **optional** in a noun phrase.
- subject (SUBJ)** in a **clause**, the **nominal** that names the actor performing the action named by the **verb** in the **predicate**. *See also* **complete subject**; **simple subject**.
- subject complement (SC)** a **nominal**, **adjectival**, or **adverbial** functioning as the complement of a **copular verb**. A subject complement either renames the **subject** or names a quality that is being ascribed or joined to the subject.
- subjunct adverbial** a type of **adverbial** that functions as a **modifier** of a **verb**, **adjective**, or **adverb**. The **scope** of a subjunct will be no more than one or two words; they cannot be moved away from the words they modify; and subjuncts typically do not work as the answer to a question.
- subjunctive mood** mood indicating that the action is **counterfactual**: a state of affairs that did not in fact happen. The subjunctive is marked in the **present tense** by the use of *be* with all **persons** and **numbers** (e.g. *If there be any present*), and in the **past tense** by the use of *were* with all persons and numbers (e.g. *If I were you*).
- subordinate clause** *see* **adverb clause (AdvCL)**.
- subordinating conjunction (SCONJ)** a subclass of **conjunctions** that mark the beginning of an **adverb clause** (also called a “subordinate clause”) and join it to its

super-ordinate container clause. These include *although*, *because*, *since*, *until*, *when*, *whenever*, *while*; however, some of these words can also be prepositions (*as*, *since*, *though*, *until*).

superlative form a form of **gradable adjectives** (e.g. *biggest*; *most serious*) and **gradable adverbs** (e.g. *fastest*; *most deeply*). *See also* **base form**; **comparative form**.

SVC (subject-verb-complement) the **default** order of **clauses** in English.

tag question a question “tagged” onto the end of a **declarative sentence**. A tag question incorporates an **auxiliary verb** (e.g. *I was eating macarons, wasn't I?*).

temporal complement (TC) an **adverbial** that names a period of time (tells *when*), functioning as a **verb complement**.

tense a feature marked in **finite verbs**. In a **complete verb**, tense is marked only once, on the first word of the verb. For all verbs except *be*, the **present tense** is the **base form**, except in the **third-person singular**, which adds *-s*. For **regular verbs**, the **past tense** is marked by adding *-ed*. **Irregular verbs** form the past tense in numerous ways, e.g. *drive/drove*; *run/ran*; *dig/dug*; *put/put*. Tense has less to do with absolute time (the speaker or writer's actual now) than with how the speaker or writer is locating events relative to themselves and some narrative moment in time. *See also* **past tense**; **present tense**.

tensed verb the **finite** forms of a **verb**. In a **complete verb**, tense is marked only once, on the first word of the verb. *See also* **finite verb**; **past tense**; **present tense**; **tense**.

that perhaps the most functionally versatile word in English; *that* can function as

- An intensifying **adverb** (e.g. *Nothing can taste that good.*).
- A **demonstrative determiner** (e.g. *Franz wants that ball.*).
- A **demonstrative pronoun** (e.g. *That is the ball that Franz wants.*).
- A **relative pronoun** (e.g. *That is the ball that Franz wants.*).
- A **relative pro-adverb** (e.g. *I remember the day that we went to the beach.*).
- An **expletive**, marking the beginning of a **that-clause** (**noun clause**; e.g. *That Franz wants the ball is evident.*).
- Part of a multi-word **subordinating conjunction** (e.g. *Franz wants a new ball so that he can use it in Wednesday's game.*).

that-clause a type of **noun clause** that is **marked** by beginning with **expletive-*that***, ***whether***, or ***if***. The expletive marking the noun clause has no meaning or grammatical role in the noun clause or the **container clause**; it only serves to mark the beginning of the noun clause. *See also* ***wh*-clause**.

third person the “person” of whom or what is being spoken about, marked in **personal pronouns** (*he/him/his*; *she/her/hers*; *it/its*; *they/them/theirs*), **reflexive pronouns** (*himself*; *herself*; *itself*; *themselves*), and **possessive determiners** (*his*; *her*; *its*; *their*). *See also* **first person**; **second person**.

tough movement a type of sentence in which the **predicate** comprises an **adjective phrase** followed by an **infinitive phrase** (e.g. *This problem is [tough] [to solve]*), where the **subject** of the **main verb** (*This problem*) is the **direct object** of the infinitive. Such sentences can be rearranged in two ways: as an **expletive-*it*** sentence (*It is tough to solve this problem*); or with the infinitive phrase as the subject (*To solve this problem is tough*). *Tough movement* works for a long list of adjectives in English.

transitive inseparable phrasal verb a **phrasal verb** that takes as a **complement** a **nominal** functioning as a **direct object**, and in which the **particle** of the phrasal verb must immediately follow the **verb** and precede the direct object (e.g. *We toyed with the idea. *We toyed the idea with.*). *See also* **intransitive phrasal verb**; **transitive separable phrasal verb**.

transitive separable phrasal verb a **phrasal verb** that takes a **nominal** functioning as a **direct object** as a complement, and in which the **particle** of the phrasal verb may precede or follow the direct object, unless the direct object is a **pronoun**, in which case the particle must follow the direct object (e.g. *I turned off the light. I turned the light off. *I turned off it. I turned it off*). *See also* **intransitive phrasal verb**; **transitive inseparable phrasal verb**.

transitive verb any **verb** that takes in its **complement** a **nominal** functioning as a **direct object**. A transitive verb may have more than one complement, but one must be a direct object. **Ditransitive verbs** are transitive for both complements. Only transitive verbs may be put into **passive voice**. *See also* **ditransitive verb**; **intransitive verb**; **monotransitive verb**.

unmarked the default or most common form of a grammatical structure. For example, a Subject (agent)-Verb-Object (patient) **clause** is an unmarked or default form in English, while a clause in **passive voice** is regarded as **marked** by the change in the order of constituents and the change in the form of the complete verb.

untensed verb *see* **non-finite verb**.

verb (V) a part-of-speech category comprising words that function as the head of a **verb phrase**. Verbs can be defined as words that name actions. Verbs can be categorized as **finite** (**tensed**, **past**, **present**) and **non-finite** (**bare infinitive**, **base form**, **infinitive**, **present participle**, **past participle**). Subclasses of verbs include **auxiliary verbs**, **imperfect aspectual verbs**, **main verb**, **modal auxiliary**, **semi-modal verb**. *See also* **complete verb**; **predicate (PRED)**.

verb complement (VCOMP) an obligatory constituent of the **verb phrase** that completes the meaning and grammatical sense of the verb. Both **finite verbs** and **non-finite verbs** will take complements. *See also* **direct object (DO)**, **ditransitive verb**; **indirect object (IO)**; **locative complement**; **manner complement**; **monotransitive verb**; **object complement**; **phrasal verb**; **quotative verb**; **subject complement**; **temporal complement**.

verb phrase (VP) phrase comprising a **verb** as its **head** along with **modifiers** and **complements**. The verb phrase functions as the **predicate** of a **clause**.

voice a feature of **transitive verbs** indicating whether the **agent** that performed the action named by the **verb** is the **subject** of the verb (**active voice**); or the **patient** is the subject and the agent is named in a **prepositional phrase** after the verb or not named at all (**passive voice**). Active voice is regarded as the **unmarked** sentence order; passive voice is always marked by the use of an **auxiliary** *be* followed by the **past participle** form of an **imperfect aspectual verb** or the **main verb**. *See also* **active voice**; **passive voice**; **agentive**; **instrumental**.

wh-clause a type of **noun clause** that is **marked** by beginning with a **wh-pro-word**. The *wh*-word marks that the clause is a **dependent clause** and a noun clause; and the *wh*-word has a function within the noun clause. *See also* **that-clause**.

wh-pro-word *how*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *which*, *who*, *why*, and any of the words derived from them, including *whose/whom*; any of these words with *-ever*. Forms with *who* are **marked for case**. *See also* **interrogative pro-adjective**; **interrogative pro-adverb**; **interrogative pro-determiner**; **interrogative pronoun**; **relative pro-adverb**; **relative pro-clause**; **relative pro-determiner**; **relative pronoun**; **relative pro-word**; **subordinating conjunction**; **wh-clause**.

zero aspect (Ø-aspect) the unmarked or default aspect. A complete verb that does not include an **aspectual auxiliary** (*have*, *be*) or an **imperfect aspectual verb** (e.g. *try*, *begin to*) is unmarked for **aspect**, and so is said to have “zero aspect.”

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