

~~A-Z of English Grandma Words~~

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Grammar Words

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Adjectives are describing words. We use them to describe nouns (things). For example: *the **tall** building / an **interesting** novel / a **short** conversation / a **new** year, etc.*

An **Adverbial Clause** is part of a sentence which tells us how or when something happened. For example, “I woke up **at seven o’clock**”.

Adverbs describe the verb in a sentence – the action, how something is being done. For example, “Maria spoke **loudly**”. In this sentence, “spoke” is the verb/action and “loudly” describes how the verb/action was done.

The English **alphabet** has 26 letters. There are 5 vowels – **a, e, i, o** and **u**. The remaining 21 letters are called consonants – **b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, w, x, y** and **z**.

There are three **articles** in the English language: “a” and “an” (indefinite articles) and “the” (definite article). We normally use an article before a common noun (an everyday object or thing). We use “a” and “an” when the noun is non-specific – e.g. “A school in Cambridge” – and we use “the” if we are talking about a particular thing, something that we are already aware we’re talking about – e.g. “*The* school in Cambridge”. We use “an” before words that start with a *vowel sound* and “a” before words that start with a *consonant sound*.

We use **clauses** to make sentences. There may be several clauses in one sentence. For example:

“The weather was nice, so we went for a picnic.”

In this sentence there are two clauses: the *main clause* (“The weather was nice”) and a *subordinate clause* (“so we went for a picnic”). The clauses are separated by a comma. A subordinate clause gives extra information about the main clause. A subordinate clause can’t be a separate sentence on its own, while a main clause can. A subordinate clause needs a main clause for it to make sense.

Conjunctions are words that link together clauses and phrases in a sentence. Words like: “and”, “because”, “but”, “or”, and “so”. For example: “I didn’t enjoy watching all the rubbish on television, **so** I gave away my set to a local school **and** cancelled my TV licence”.

Consonants are the 21 letters of the alphabet which are not vowels, namely: **b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, w, x, y, and z.**

A **consonant sound** is the sound made by a word which begins with a consonant, for example: “**cat**”, “**dog**”, and “**mouse**”. This includes the “yuh” sound at the beginning of some words which start with the vowel “u”, like “university”, “union”, “uniform” and “unicycle”. This is why we say, “**a** university” and “**a** union” rather than “*an* university” and “*an* union”. Although these words begin with a vowel, they don’t begin with a vowel *sound*, so we have to use article “a” rather than “an”.

A **contraction** is the short form (or *contracted form*) of a verb. For example: “I’ll” is a contraction of “I will”, “She’d” is a contraction of “She had” and “Jeff’s” is a contraction of either “Jeff is” or “Jeff has”.

A **determiner** is a word that goes before a noun to give further information about that noun. For example, in the phrase “some eggs”, “some” is a determiner which matches the plural noun “eggs”. We know from the plural determiner “some” and the plural “s” at the end of “egg” that there is more than one “egg”. Other common determiners include: articles (“**the** egg”, “**an** egg”), possessive determiners (“**my** egg”, “**her** egg”), question words (“**which** eggs?”, “**whose** eggs?”) and quantity words (“**many** eggs”, “**more** eggs”).

An **infinitive verb** is the basic form of a verb. For example, “To go” is an infinitive verb, while “I go” (present simple tense), “I went” (past simple tense) and “I was going” (past continuous tense) are all ways of using the same basic form of the verb to show action happening at different times or in different tenses.

Inversion – which literally means reversal – is the word we use in English grammar to describe what happens to the word order of a sentence if we change it from a statement to a question. For example, this sentence is a statement: “Melinda is a qualified pilot”. To make this statement into a

question we need to swap around the verb (“is”) and subject (“Melinda”), like this: “Is Melinda a qualified pilot?” We must also change the full stop of the statement into a question mark. It is helpful to remember inversion when writing statements and question forms. “He has ...” is inverted to become “Has he ...?” (question form), “You could...” is inverted to become “Could you ...?” (question form) and “They didn’t ...” is inverted to become “Didn’t they ...?” (question form), and so on.

its and it’s are often confused, perhaps because they sound the same. However, they have completely different meanings and functions within a sentence. “Its” is the possessive adjective which indicates that something belongs to “it”, for example: “The dog finished **its** dinner and went outside”. “It’s” is a contracted form of either verb to be (“it is”) or verb to have (“it has”). For example: “**It’s** a nice day, isn’t it?” (“*It is* a nice day, isn’t it?”) or “**It’s** been a nice day, hasn’t it?” (“*It has* been a nice day, hasn’t it?”).

A **letter** is one part of a word. There are 26 letters in the English alphabet, ranging from “a” to “z”. We normally need to use more than one letter to make a word, although the letter “I” on its own is a word (“I like you”) and so is the letter “a” (“I like you **a** lot”).

We use the term **lower case** to describe small letters. There are two cases in the English alphabet: *lower case* (small letters) and *upper case* (capital letters or big letters). We normally start a sentence with a capital letter, but then continue using only small letters, apart from for abbreviations (e.g. “ITV”) and for words which always start with a capital letter, like names of people, places and companies. These words are called *proper nouns*.

Nouns are things. There are lots of different kinds of nouns:

Common nouns are everyday things which we can see and touch (like “table”, “chair”, “coat” and “swimming pool”).

Proper nouns are words which always start with a capital letter, like the names of people, places, companies, days and months (for example: “Eric Morrison”, “Birmingham”, “The Forth Bridge”, “The Royal Shakespeare Company”, “Monday” and “February”).

Abstract nouns are things that we can’t see or touch but are there all the same. They describe things like feelings (“happiness” and “love”), qualities (“loyalty” and “weakness”) or concepts (“democracy” and “peace”).

Countable nouns (also known as “count nouns”) are things which have plural forms – i.e. they can be counted using numbers. For example: “one bag, two bags”, or “one mobile phone, two mobile phones”.

Uncountable nouns (also known as “noncount nouns”) are things which are not separate items and cannot be counted. We don’t know how many of them there are. For example: “bread”, “A slice of bread” or “Some bread” not “a bread” or “two breads”.

A **paragraph** is a chunk of text which is made up of several different sentences. If you are reading a novel there could be three paragraphs on one page with about four or five different sentences in each paragraph.

Phrases are parts of a sentence and are used to make clauses. They are made up of one or more words and there are different types, for example:

noun phrases – e.g. “fish and chips”

verb phrases – e.g. “eats”, “is eating”, “has eaten”, “has been eating”

prepositional phrases – e.g. “in the kitchen”

We use the **plural form** of a noun when there is more than one of it. For example, if there is more than one “table” we use the plural form, which is “tables”. We can make the *regular plural* form of most nouns by adding “s” to the end of the word (e.g. one “bed” becomes two “beds”, and one “pen” becomes two “pens”). Some nouns have an *irregular plural* form, so we have to add different endings, like “es” (e.g. one “box” becomes two “boxes” and one “church” becomes two “churches”). For nouns that end in “y” we usually replace the “y” with “ies” (e.g. one “party” becomes two “parties” and one “strawberry” becomes two “strawberries”). There are a few other irregular plural endings, e.g. nouns ending in “f” have the plural ending “ves” (“loaf” becomes “loaves”), and there are some nouns that have their own unique plural form, e.g. one “child” becomes two “children” and one “mouse” becomes two “mice”.

We use **possessive apostrophe “s”** after a name and before a noun (a thing) to show that this thing belongs to the name. For example: “Julie’s schoolbook” (the “schoolbook belongs to “Julie”) and “Scunthorpe United’s loyal supporters” (the “loyal supporters” belong to “Scunthorpe United”).

A **preposition** is a word that describes where something is. For example, “**in** the kitchen”, “**under** the stairs”, “**on** the table” and “**opposite** the bank”.

Personal subject pronouns are words which go before a verb to replace nouns (the name of somebody or something). For example, instead of saying “Robbie said ...” you could use the personal subject pronoun “he” to make: “He said ...”, or instead of saying “The university library was closed” you could use the personal subject pronoun “it” to make: “It was closed”. We use these words in place of nouns when it is clear what or who you are talking about. The personal subject pronouns in English are: **I, you, he, she, it, we,** and **they**.

Possessive determiners – **my, your, his, her, its, our** and **their** – are words that give us information about who owns what, for example: “This is **my** banana and that’s your **coconut**”.

We use the different symbols called **punctuation marks** to make our writing easier to read. For example, without punctuation marks we wouldn’t know where one sentence finished and another began. Some of the most commonly used punctuation marks are:

- . *full stop*. We put a full stop at the end of each sentence, unless it is a question or needs an exclamation mark (e.g. “My uncle lives in Newfoundland.”). It is also used with abbreviations (e.g. “e.g.”).
- ,
- ’ *apostrophe*. We use an apostrophe before an “s” to show that something belongs to someone or something else (e.g. “Letitia’s stapler”) or to show that part of a word is missing, e.g. with contracted verb forms, like “It’s raining” (the apostrophe replaces the “i” of “is raining”) and “Paul’s gone home early” (the apostrophe replaces the “ha” of “has gone”).
- ? *question mark*. A question mark is used at the end of a question, instead of a full stop (e.g. “What time does the film start?”).
- ! *exclamation mark*. We put the exclamation mark at the end of a sentence which has a stronger emphasis than other sentences. It may

be that the sentence is amusing (e.g. “My dog has no nose. How does he smell? Terrible!”) or insulting (e.g. “I’m sorry but your dog really *does* stink!”) or any sentence that conveys a strong emotion (e.g. “Oh no! Someone’s stolen my MP3 player!”).

“ ” *speech marks*. Speech marks go around part of a text which is spoken by someone. This is to make it stand out from the rest of the text. E.g.

The mechanic had a good look inside the bonnet and said, “There’s no hope, I’m afraid. You don’t need a mechanic, you need a miracle worker!” I tried to hide my disappointment. “OK”, I replied.

; *semi-colon*. A semi-colon is a short pause in a sentence. It is not as long a pause as a full stop, but it’s longer than a comma. For example, if you read the following piece of text out loud, you could count two beats for a full stop, one beat for a semi-colon and half a beat for a comma: “The boys started running, but they were soon out of breath; it wasn’t long before the gang caught up with them”.

: *colon*. A colon is similar to a semi-colon in that it helps to divide a sentence and provides a longer pause than a comma, but about half the pause of a full stop. It is used differently because it shows that the clause which comes after it follows on from the clause before it. For example, in the sentence: “The children opened their present: they couldn’t believe what they found!” the idea in the second clause (“they couldn’t believe ...”) follows on from the action in the first clause (“The children opened their present ...”). Using a colon is like saying, “There’s more to come in the next part of the sentence”. It provides a short pause in a sentence and points the way to a continuing thought or action.

() *brackets*. We can use brackets to slip extra information into a sentence, without disturbing the flow of the sentence too much. For example: “It had been John’s idea to invite Becky (who was secretly in love with him) to Heather’s birthday party”. Brackets are known as *parentheses* in American English.

- *hyphen*. We use a hyphen to join together two related words (for example: “post-Impressionism” and “south-west”) and to write numbers as words (for example “35” becomes “thirty-five”). It is also used at the end of a line to show that a word continues on the next line, e.g. “frequently”, and to indicate distances between times (“1914-1918”) and places (“London-Brighton”).

– *dash*. A dash is longer than a hyphen and has a different job. We use it to separate a particular clause from the rest of a sentence, for

example: “We had been to Frankfurt four times – five if you count changing flights once on the way to Sydney – but had never spent New Year’s Eve there”. It is also used to indicate a pause or a change in the sentence’s train of thought, for example: “Roger took off his socks thoughtfully – it had been an extremely trying day”.

/ forward slash. We use the forward slash when writing the address of a page on the internet, for example:
“https://purlandtraining.com/”

A **question form** is used to make a sentence that asks a question, for example: “What time is it?” These sentences end with a question mark instead of a full stop. Question forms often begin with “wh-” question words, like “**who**”, “**what**”, “**where**”, “**when**”, “**why**”, “**which**” and “**how**”. “How” can be considered an honorary “wh-” question word because it contains both the letters “w” and “h”!

A **sentence** is a self-contained group of words which begins with a capital letter (“A”, “B”, “C”, etc.) and ends with a full stop (“.”), question mark (“?”) or exclamation mark (“!”). For example:

Derby County’s astonishing unbeaten run at home continued unabated.

We use the **singular form** of a noun when there is just one of it. For example, one “table” (“tables” would be the regular plural form) and one “tooth” (“teeth” is the irregular plural form).

Subject-Verb-Object is the phrase used to describe a common sentence structure in English. In the sentence: “The children are eating ice-creams”, “The children” is the subject, “are eating” is the verb form (the action – what the subject is doing) and “ice-creams” is the object (the thing that is having the action done to it).

We use the term **upper case** to describe capital letters (or *big letters*). We normally start a sentence with a capital letter, but then use small letters for the rest of the words, apart from abbreviations and words which always start with a capital letter, like names of people, places and companies.

Verbs are action words, or *doing words*. They tell us what somebody or something is doing in a sentence. For example, in the sentence “John washed his car”, “washed” is the verb, or action, John is the person doing the action (the *subject*), and “his car” is the thing that is having the action done to it (the *object*). Verbs can be regular and irregular. Most verbs are *regular*, which means that they all follow the same rules, for example when forming the past tense all regular verbs end with “ed” (“walk” becomes “walked” and “play” becomes “played”, and so on). However, some very common verbs are *irregular*, which means they don’t follow the same rules as regular verbs and you just have to learn their forms separately. Common irregular verbs are: “to be”, “to do”, “to have” and “to go”. These four verbs are also the most common auxiliary verbs. Auxiliary verbs are helping verbs: they help a main verb to form a verb phrase. In this sentence: “Ricky and Jessica are teaching their daughter to swim”, “are” is an auxiliary verb (from verb “to be”) which helps the main verb “teaching” (from verb “to teach”).

There are several different **verb tenses** in the English language. It is worth being aware of (or, better still, *learning*) some common *verb tables* in each of the following tenses: **present simple**, **present continuous**, **present perfect**, **past simple**, **past continuous**, **past perfect** and **future forms** (e.g. “going to”). For example, let’s look at the verb “to eat”, which is an irregular verb:

(Note: these verb tables do not cover negative and question forms for each tense, which can also be studied, e.g. “I eat / I don’t eat / Do I eat?” and so on.)

present simple tense verb table:

I eat, You eat, He eats, She eats, It eats, We eat, They eat

present continuous tense verb table (with verb “to be” in the present tense as an auxiliary verb):

*I am eating, You are eating, He is eating, She is eating, It is eating,
We are eating, They are eating*

present perfect tense verb table (with verb “to have” in the present tense as an auxiliary verb):

*I have eaten, You have eaten, He has eaten, She has eaten, It has eaten,
We have eaten, They have eaten*

past simple tense verb table:

I ate, You ate, He ate, She ate, It ate, We ate, They ate

past continuous tense verb table (with verb “to be” in the past tense as an auxiliary verb):

I was eating, You were eating, He was eating, She was eating, It was eating, We were eating, They were eating

past perfect tense verb table (with verb “to have” in the past tense as an auxiliary verb):

I had eaten, You had eaten, He had eaten, She had eaten, It had eaten, We had eaten, They had eaten

future form with “going to” and verb “to be” in the present tense as an auxiliary verb:

I'm going to eat, You're going to eat, He's going to eat, She's going to eat, It's going to eat, We're going to eat, They're going to eat

future form with “will” in the present tense as an auxiliary verb:

I will eat, You will eat, He will eat, She will eat, It will eat, We will eat, They will eat

There are 5 **vowels** in the English alphabet: **a, e, i, o** and **u**. The other 21 letters of the alphabet are called *consonants*.

A **vowel sound** is the sound made by a word which begins with a vowel, for example: “**a**nimal”, “**e**ducation”, “**I**ndia”, “**o**range” and “**u**mbrella”.

A **word** is a part of a sentence made up of one or more letters. Words in a sentence are separated by a single space on either side. Several words with a capital letter at the beginning of the first one and a full stop after the last one together form a sentence.