



## Keys to Understanding Language

### Terminology

accent stress pattern marked with a diacritical marking showing the stressed intonational pattern

adjective An **adjective** modifies a noun. It describes the quality, state or action that a noun refers to.

#### ADJECTIVE RULES:

- i) Adjectives can come before nouns: a new car
- ii) Adjectives can come after verbs such as be, become, seem, look, etc.: that car looks fast
- iii) They can be modified by adverbs: a very expensive car
- iv) They can be used as complements to a noun: the extras make the car expensive

adverb Most *adverbs* in English are formed by adding *-ly* to an *Adjective*. An adverb is a word that modifies the meaning of a *Verb*; an *Adjective*; another adverb; a *Noun* or *Noun Phrase*; *Determiner*; a *Numeral*; a *Pronoun*; or a *Prepositional Phrase* and can sometimes be used as a *Complement* of a *Preposition*.

Article a, and and the

abstract noun An abstract noun refers to states, events, concepts, feelings, qualities, etc., that have no physical existence.

Agent The *Agent* is the person or entity that performs the action described by a *Verb*. It is most commonly used in the *Passive* when the agent is used with 'by':

Eg.: The politician's career was ruined by the scandal.

agreement When *words* have a *grammatical* relationship which affects the form of one or more of the elements then they agree. THREE GIRLS shows *agreement* because the *Noun* has the *Plural Inflection*, which is required by the *Number*.

### auxiliary verb USE:

'DO', 'BE' and 'HAVE' are the English *auxiliary verbs* used in a *negative* structure, a *question* or to show *tense*.

### DESCRIPTIONS OF ENGLISH AUXILIARY VERBS:

1/ 'DO', 'DON'T', 'DOES' and 'DOESN'T' are used for *questions* and *negatives* in the *Present Simple Tense*, and 'DID' and 'DIDN'T' are used in the *Past Simple Tense*.

2/ 'BE' is used with the *Present Participle* in *Continuous (Progressive) Verbs*. It is also used with the *Past Participle* in the *Passive*

3/ 'HAVE' is used with the *Past Participle* to form the *Perfect Aspect*

clause A Clause is a part of a sentence that usually contains a Subject and a Verb. It is usually connected to the other part of the Sentence by a Conjunction. It is not a complete sentence on its own.

common noun Nouns which are not written with a capital letter do not refer to the name of an individual person or thing and are called common nouns.

copula verb copula verb is a verb that connects the subject to the complement. They are sometimes called linking verbs.

EG: That food smells nice.

('Smells' connects the subject to the adjective that describes it.)

The following are the principle Copula Verbs in English that can be used to connect the subject to an adjective:

Be; Look; Feel; Taste; Smell; Sound; Seem; Appear; Get; Become; Grow; Stay; Keep; Turn; Prove; Go; Remain; Resemble; Run; Lie

count noun A Countable Noun is a noun that has both a singular and a plural form. The plural is normally made by the addition of '-s'.

eg: A horse Two horses

Nouns that do not have plural forms are called uncountable nouns or mass nouns

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idiom A phrase which has a meaning that is commonly understood by speakers of the language, but whose meaning is often different from the normal meaning of the words is called an IDIOM

Infinitive The **Infinitive** usually occurs with 'To' (for example To go, To come, To wear etc.), except after an auxiliary or modal verb.

It is a verb form that shows no person, tense or aspect.

EXAMPLES OF THE INFINITIVE:

*I had to go*

*I must go*

*I want to sing*

*To err is human*

*You don't know her*

*You may come*

interrogative pronoun **Wh-** question word, when it acts as a pronoun is an interrogative pronoun:

EG: *What is her phone number?*

EG: *Who is in charge?*

intransitive verb An intransitive verb is one that does not take an object.

EG: *They arrived.* (The verb does not require an object to complete it.)

irregular past tense verb An **irregular verb** is one that does not take the -ed ending for the Past Simple and Past Participle forms. Some verbs do not change; *put* \ *put* \ *put*, while others change completely; *buy* \ *bought* \ *bought*, etc.

Irregular verbs fall into 5 categories:

1. Base Form
2. Past Simple
3. Past Participle
4. 3rd Person Singular
5. Present Participle / Gerund

Modal Modal verbs are used to express ideas such as possibility, intention, obligation and necessity.

CAN, COULD, WILL, WOULD, SHALL, SHOULD, OUGHT TO, DARE and NEED are some examples.

eg: I would have told you, if you had wanted me to.

eg: Yes, I can do that.

Mood **Mood** shows the attitude of the speaker or the writer to the action or state described by the verb.

1) The **Indicative** is the verb used in ordinary statements and questions:

*She went home.*

*Has she called yet?*

2) The **Imperative** is used to give orders and instructions:

*Go home.*

*Come and see me.*

3) The **Subjunctive** is used to express doubts, wishes, etc. It is not used much in English any more and exists in a few phrases:

*If I were you, I'd speak to her about it straightaway.*

*Be that as it may*

Negative A negative structure can show the absence of a noun or any other substantive, the non-performance of the action described by a verb, or the non-existence in the case of a stative verb. An adverb or adjective can equally be negated so that it expresses the absence of the quality or characteristic described. Negation can be used to break the linking function of a preposition so that the items governed by it are shown to be separate.

non count noun An **Uncountable Noun** has no plural.

eg: **milk; water; wood** and **air** These nouns usually have no plural forms.

Uncountable Nouns are sometimes called mass nouns

predicate the verb and any complement of the verb, which can include the object, adverbial, etc..

participle There are two participles in English: the present participle and the past participle. They can both be used as adjectives

The **present participle** is formed by adding **-ing** to the base form. It is used in

- i) Continuous or Progressive verb forms - I'm leaving in five minutes.
- ii) As an adjective: A dying man

The **past participle** is formed by adding **-ed** to the base form, unless it is an irregular verb. It is used:

- i) As an adjective - A tired group
- ii) With the auxiliary verb 'have' to form the perfect aspect - They've just arrived.
- iii) with the verb 'be' to form the passive - He was robbed a couple of days ago

past tense verb

passive verb The **Passive** occurs in most aspects and tenses and changes the emphasis:

EG: *My roof was damaged by the storm.* - (The storm caused the damage, but the cause is less important to me than the damage to my roof, because I will have to repair it.)

It is also called the Passive Voice

possessive pronoun **Mine, yours, his, hers, its, ours, theirs** are the *possessive* pronouns used to substitute a noun and to show possession or ownership.

EG. This is *your* disk and that's *mine*. (*Mine* substitutes the word disk and shows that it belongs to me.)

preposition A **preposition** is a word that links a noun, pronoun or gerund to other words. They can have a variety of meanings:

*Direction-* He's going **TO** the shops

*Location-* It's **IN** the box

*Time*- He left **AFTER** the lesson had finished

*Possession*- The Government **OF** Italy

Some prepositional phrases can function like single word prepositions; **next to, in front of**, etc., called complex prepositions.

progressive tense verb The progressive, or continuous, aspect is formed with the auxiliary verb 'to be' + - ing, the present participle. It shows that an action or state, past, present, or future, was, is or will be unfinished at the time referred to:

**I'm reading** Nelson Mandela's autobiography. (action unfinished now)

She **was having** a shower when the phone rang. (action unfinished at the time the phone rang)

pronoun a word that substitutes a noun or noun phrase. There are a number of different kinds of pronouns in English.

TYPES OF PRONOUN:

1 \ Demonstrative Pronoun - this, that, these, those

2 \ Personal Pronoun - I, you, he, she, etc..

3 \ Possessive Pronoun - mine, yours, his, etc..

4 \ Reflexive Pronoun - myself, yourself, etc..

5 \ Interrogative Pronoun - who, what, where, etc..

6 \ Negative Pronoun - nothing, no, nobody, etc..

7 \ Reciprocal pronoun - each other, etc..

8 \ Relative Clause - who, whose, which, that, etc..

9 \ Quantifier - some, any, something, much, many, little, etc

proper noun Proper nouns are the names of individual people, places, titles, calendar times, etc..

eg: Janet; Simon; London; The President; Tuesday.

Proper nouns are always written with a capital letter

reflexive pronoun **Myself; yourself; himself; herself; itself; ourselves; yourselves; themselves** are the *reflexive pronouns*. Reflexive pronouns are used when the complement of the verb is the same as the subject.

EG. He shot **himself**.

The reflexive pronoun can also be used to give more emphasis to the subject or object.

EG. I did it **myself**. (I want to emphasize the fact that **I** did it.)

EG. They spoke to the Director **herself**. (Emphasizing the importance of the Director)

Rhyme When words at the end of lines of poetry have the same sound so that they work together to produce an effect, the poem has a rhyme

transitive verb **Transitive Verb** is one that takes an object.

EG: He opened **the door**. ('Door' is the object of the action; it is affected by the operation.)

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simile A **simile** is a comparison between two different things, designed to create an unusual, interesting, emotional or other effect often using words such as '**like**' or '**as ... as**'.

Common comparisons are with the qualities associated with animals (as sly as a fox, as brave as a lion, etc.).

Syllable A word can be divided into **syllables**. Each syllable is a sound that can be said without interruption and are usually a vowel which can have consonants before and/or after it.

Synonym **synonym** is a word that means the same as another word, or more or less the same. If a word is slightly different, it is a near-synonym.

EG: '*Movie*' is a synonym of '*film*'. In this example the former is more common in American English and the latter in British English

upper case In writing, letters can be written two ways; **T** or **t**. **T** is a **capital letter**, or **upper case**, and **t** is lower case. Capital letters are used at the beginning of a sentence and for a proper noun.

verb phrase **Verbs** are one of the major grammatical groups, and all sentences must contain one. verbs refer to an **action** (do, break, walk, etc.) or a **state** (be, like, own). The **verb phrase** is the main verb plus the complement, object, and/or adverbial:

She **sent me a lovely birthday card**. (everything except the subject, '*she*', is the verb phrase)

The verb tense shows the time of the action or state. Aspect shows whether the action or state is completed or not. Voice is used to show relationships between the action and the people affected by it. Mood shows the attitude of the speaker about the verb, whether it is a declaration or an order. Verbs can be affected by person and number to show agreement with the subject.