

Royal Fireworks

Language Arts

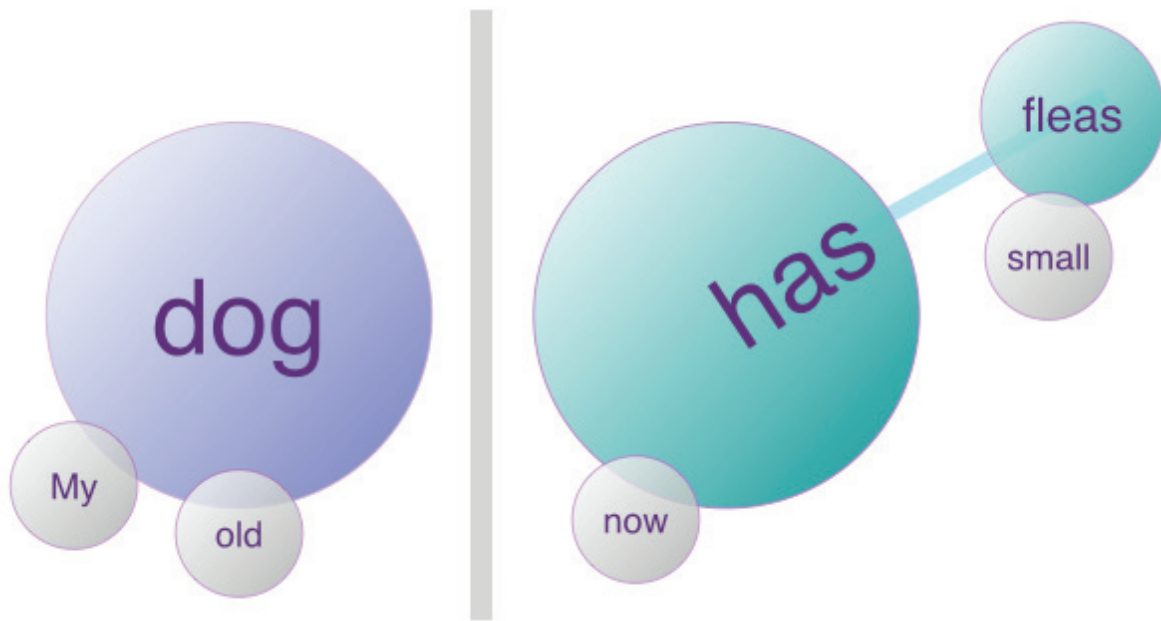
by Michael Clay Thompson

The Magic Lens I

Sixth Edition

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To the Student

I should declare my bias now because I do not come to bury grammar; I come to praise it. This will be, to many, evidence of my naiveté because teaching traditional grammar has become controversial pedagogy or, at best, questionable judgment. Do I not realize that social realities obviate the teaching of traditional grammar and that I am wasting valuable classroom time clinging to a pedantic subject that my students will neither master, nor apply, nor retain?

I do not. From a utilitarian point of view, I think grammar is an intellectual pocketknife; it is small, easily purchased, and so useful that one would not dream of being without it. And not only do I not think that grammar is unteachable, I think that it is one of the most teachable subjects because its concepts are so few and well-defined.

Grammar is so lovely that even if it were useless, one would irresistibly explore it, as one explores chess, or architecture, or the spiral geometries of shells. It is a sort of magic aesthetic lens through which we can view the delicate structures of ideas. As scientists marvel at the silicate skeletal frames that support and form living organisms, through grammar we view the delicate relationships that give form to the phenomena of the mind. If this comparison strikes you as idealistic and metaphorical, please consider it further. These relationships do exist, and they are beautiful.

If only language were simple...

Imagine the simplest language. The universe is complicated, and life is complex, so a language must have enough words and structures to make ideas, but what would the simplest language be like?

It could not have many *kinds* of words; that would not be simple. What if we had only two main kinds of words and a few logic words to let us combine the main words, relate them, modify them, and shorten them? This is hard to imagine, but let us try.

As for shaping words into ideas, what if ideas had only two sides? You cannot get simpler than a binary (two-part) structure. An idea could be about one main word, and the other main word would be about the first. That would be the simplest structure: one main word about another. Minor logic and support words could finish the job.

Sometimes things act in systems, so we would need words to join together and act as a unified group, just like life. That would help us describe systems and the little sub-systems inside them.

We would also want the flexibility to use ideas for different reasons, such as to state, or ask, or command, or exclaim. We would want to combine ideas into double or triple ideas when one idea was connected or related to another; after all, we want our simple language to mimic the real phenomena it describes. When things are connected in the world, we want our ideas about them to be connected in the same way.

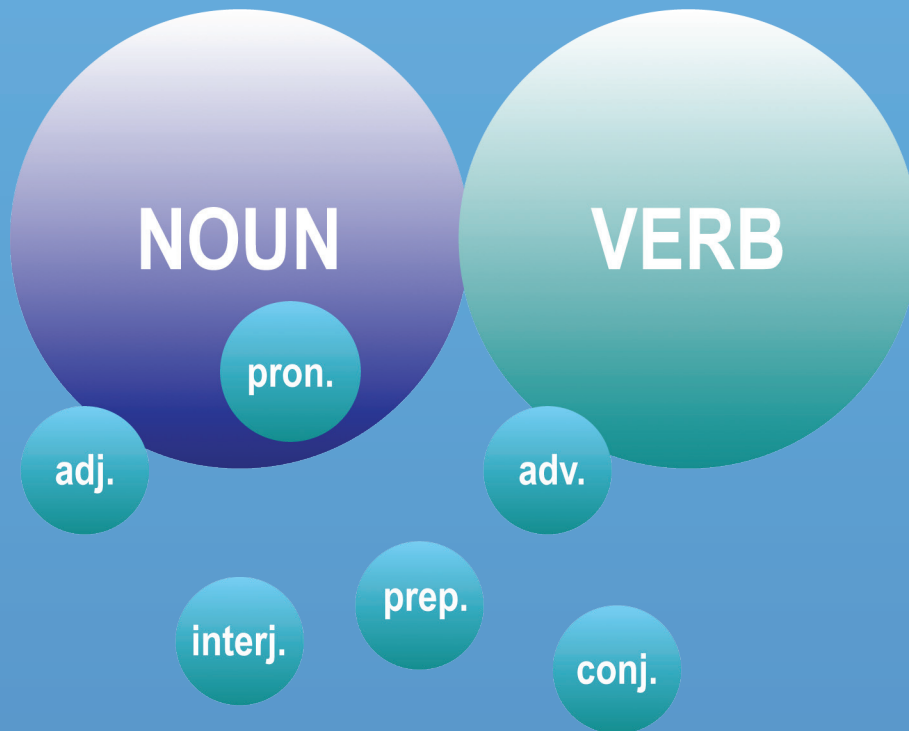
Finally, we would want to write the language, not just speak it, so we would need little marks for starts, and stops, and pauses, and marks for logic and emotion. These would have to be few, small, and easy to write.

If we could make a language that simple, we could express life and what we perceive in our universe. Imagine...two main kinds of words, two sides of ideas, some good ways to give them details and relationships...that would be perfect.

Let us imagine one more thing. What if this simple language were the one we already have, but no one noticed it? What if we were so involved in our language that we never really realized how simple and logical and beautiful it is? What if we then discovered a way to think about language, a way that would show us these things?

Grammar is that way of thinking about language.

LEVEL ONE





The Eight Parts of Speech

There are billions of objects, events, and processes in the world, so you would expect to need thousands of kinds of words to name them all. The truth is the opposite. Our language solves the problem of the world’s complexity with a strategy of word simplicity. We have only two main kinds of words and six minor kinds of words for elaboration and flexibility. It is genius.

A **noun** is the name of a person, place, or thing.

Noun (n.): The first main kind of word in English is the **noun**. The word *noun* comes from the Latin *nomen*, name, and that is what a noun does; it names. A noun is the name of a person, place, or thing, such as *Caesar*, *Shakespeare*, *Rome*, *Albuquerque*, *river*, *shadow*, *integrity*, or *magniloquence*. A noun can be the name of a process, such as the *beginning*. **Proper** nouns (*Charlotte*, *Melville*) are capitalized, and **common** nouns (*benediction*) are not. **Concrete** nouns (*mantel*) are names of objects, and **abstract** nouns (*charisma*, *alacrity*) are names of ideas. When we call someone by name, the person’s name is called the **noun of direct address** (*Barrymore*, I presume). A noun that names a group, such as *herd*, is known as a **collective** noun. Nouns are **singular** (sing.) if they describe individual things or **plural** (pl.) if they describe multiple things: *dragonfly/dragonflies*.

In Walt Whitman’s sentence from his poem in *Leaves of Grass*, “O Captain! my captain! rise up and hear the bells,” *Captain* is a **noun of direct address**, and the subject of the verb *rise* is understood to be the second person pronoun *you* because the sentence is imperative.

In William Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*, Katherine calls Petruchio “a mad-brain rudesby full of spleen.” Few of us would like to be named by the noun *rudesby*.

Noun sound: Words often have sounds that echo what they name; nouns such as *bang*, *crash*, *trickle*, *drip*, *fizz*, and *crunch*—some of which also can be used as verbs—have an audible relationship to their objects.

Nouns from Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island*: In his 1881 masterpiece *Treasure Island*, Robert Louis Stevenson used many nouns, especially nautical nouns, such as *forecastle*, *palisade*, *doldrums*, *hummock*, *miscreant*, *doubloon*, *buccaneer*, *capstan*, *quay*, *sward*, *gunwale*, *lancet*, *rogue*, *bowsprit*, *hawser*, *slough*, and *truculence* to give an exotic sense of adventure and romance to his sea tale.



Visage

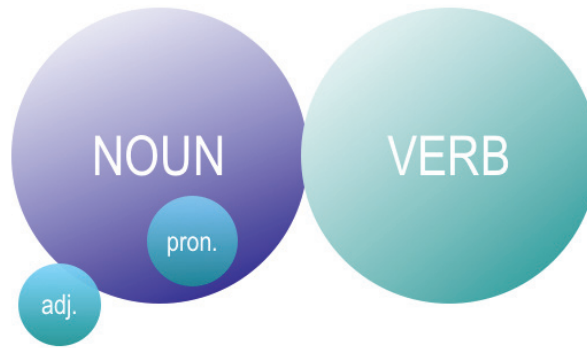
A Classic Noun: *Visage*. The common noun *visage*, which indicates the face or the expression on the face, is a classic noun that has been in literary use for centuries. Chaucer, for example, used *visage* in his immortal *Canterbury Tales*, written in 1385; he wrote that “This olde man gan loke in his visage” and referred to “Many fair shap [shape] and many a fair visage.” We even see “Of his visage children were aferd.” The changes in spelling during five centuries are dramatic. Shakespeare used *visage* in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* to describe how Phoebe doth behold “Her silver visage in the watery glass.” In *Romeo and Juliet*, we read, “Give me a case to put my visage in,” referring to a mask. In modern literature *visage* continues to have an important role; Joseph Heller, in his 1955 *Catch-22*, described “the sheer force of his solemn, domineering visage,” and Robert Penn Warren, in his 1946 *All the King’s Men*, wrote that “Mr. Patton’s granite visage seemed to lean toward me like a monument about to fall.”

A Four-Level Analysis: Frequently in *The Magic Lens* you will see a four-level analysis of a sentence from a famous work of literature. Some of the analysis will be in gray, with focus elements highlighted in black or purple. Even though we have not studied some of the levels or terms yet, this analysis will give you a preview of them. As we continue, more of the analysis will make sense. In the four-level analysis below, you can see that at the parts of speech level, *Americans* and *summer* are nouns, while at the parts of sentence level, each noun plays a different role. *Americans* is the subject of the sentence, and *summer* is a direct object. We will learn what a direct object is soon.

From Martin Luther King, Jr.’s *Why We Can’t Wait*:



| | Americans | awaited | a | quiet | summer. |
|-------------------|---|----------------|----------|--------------|----------------|
| Parts of Speech | n. | v. | adj. | adj. | n. |
| Parts of Sentence | subj. | AVP | | | D.O. |
| Phrases | no phrases | | | | |
| Clauses | -----one independent clause----- a simple declarative sentence | | | | |



A **verb** shows action or being or links a subject to a subject complement.

A scholarly paradox: In order to explain verbs (the Latin *verbum* means word), we must use words that we will not define until later in the text. Your study process must be active and circular. You can read ahead to look up a term, and you can review this section later for deeper understanding. In this introduction we cannot learn everything about verbs; the subject is too vast, and even grammarians differ in their terminology, but we can learn a great deal.

Verb (v.): Sentences are not about nothing. Each sentence is about its subject, and the word for that subject will be a noun or a pronoun, but how does the sentence say something about the noun or pronoun? The verb does that. The **verb** is the main word about the noun; the verb tells what the noun is doing, or that it exists, or what it is equal to. Most verbs show actions or equations. If the verb is an **action** verb, then it might show the noun's action on a direct object: *Coleridge **dreamt** the poem*. An action verb might show simple action not on a direct object: *Coleridge **dreamt** deeply*. If the verb is **linking**, then it might link the noun to a subject complement: *Plato **was** a philosopher*. Again, most verbs show **actions or equations**. The noun does something, or it equals something.

Mia **saw** her. Mia **is** she.

Linking verbs link. This is one of the most important concepts in grammar. Action verbs show the subject acting: *Monet **painted** the picture*. In contrast, linking verbs link; they say that two things are the same; they make equations: *Monet **is** an artist*. In the sentence "Monet has a garden," is *has* an action verb or a linking verb? Well, do you mean that Monet *is* a garden? No? Then the verb is not linking. **If it does not link, it is not linking.** When the verb links, it creates an equation between two terms, and the linking verb is the equals sign.





To be and the tricky ones: The most common linking verb is the verb *to be*: *I am a poet. Ovid was a storyteller.* There are other linking verbs, though, that sound at first like action verbs, including *become, grow, seem, sound, smell, and taste.*

- Action verb:** We smelled the blossom.
- Linking verb:** The dog smells clean.
- Action verb:** Lynn grew strawberries.
- Linking verb:** Lynn grew excited.

Linking verbs can link adjectives to pronouns: One of the most important functions of a linking verb is to link an adjective to a pronoun. If we have an adjective such as *torpid* (sluggish), we easily can modify a noun: *a torpid assistant*, but how do we modify a pronoun? We cannot say *the torpid he*. The linking verb solves the problem: *He was torpid as he sorted the documents.*

What is a being verb? A being verb is a third type of verb, more rare than action or linking verbs, that **expresses pure existence—being**—as when Hamlet said, “To be, or not to be, that is the question.” When the philosopher Descartes (day-CART) said, “I think; therefore I *am*,” he meant “I think; therefore I *exist*.” So the *am* in Descartes’s sentence is a true being verb. A more common form of being verb comes in a sentence such as “Once, long ago, there *was* a fortress.” In that sentence, *was* is a being verb; the verb means that a fortress existed. Do not confuse linking verbs and being verbs; the two functions are not the same. A being verb is not a type of linking verb. Most of the verbs you encounter will be either action or linking, showing that the subject does something or that the subject equals something.

- Action verbs express action.**
- Linking verbs express equation.**
- Being verbs express existence.**

Sometimes the equation in a linking verb is implied, especially in conversation. If someone asks “Who is ready to go?” and someone answers “I am,” that *am* is not a being verb. It is a linking verb, with the equation understood; it means “I am ready to go.” Linking verbs link equations, and being verbs express existence. Study these closely because you cannot memorize lists of examples; you have to recognize functions.



- Action verb:** Lou saw an artifact.
Action verb: Lou has an artifact.
Action verb: Lou tasted a sandwich.
Linking verb: Lou was an archaeologist.
Linking verb: The sandwich tasted good.
Being verb: There was an artifact.

To keep verbs straight, always consider what the verb is doing. Is it showing the subject acting or receiving action? Is it linking the subject to another word in a grammar equation? Is it expressing pure existence, asserting the presence of something?

Verbs are *tense*.

Verb tense: In *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote, “So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.” True, and we can tell it by the verbs. Verbs show us the poignant temporality of human existence. As human beings we experience a moving current of time, borne forward always, awake or asleep, unable to halt, to slow down, or to return. Time flows past us, from the future to the past, like an unstoppable river. We see the present that is, we remember the past that was, and we wonder about the future that will be. Time is so powerful that we put it in every sentence by expressing each verb in a **tense**. Verb tenses locate ideas in time. We use six basic tenses—and some other forms of these that we will examine—to indicate time. The six tenses include three ordinary tenses and three perfect tenses, which are based on the four principal parts of the verb. Some writers prefer to use the word *aspects* for the perfect tenses rather than to call them *tenses*.

Six Verb Tenses

1. Present
2. Past
3. Future
4. Present perfect
5. Past perfect
6. Future perfect

Examples

- I see.
I saw.
I will see.
I have seen.
I had seen.
I will have seen.



Four principal parts of the verb: Verb tenses are based on four primary forms that each verb possesses. These four primary forms are called the verb's **principal parts**:

the **infinitive**: to do (do), to go (go), to play (play), to ponder (ponder)

the **present participle**: doing, going, playing, pondering

the **past**: did, went, played, pondered

the **past participle**: done, gone, played, pondered

Auxiliary or helping verbs: Auxiliary verbs combine with main verbs to express tense, mood, voice, or condition. In a **simple tense**, the verb stands alone as a single word: *Julie temporized*. In a **compound tense**, the principal part is supplemented by an **auxiliary** or **helping verb** to construct the tense: *Julie has temporized* or *Julie will have temporized*. The auxiliary verbs fall into three categories: the **primary**, the **modal**, and the **marginal**.

Primary auxiliary verbs: *be, do, have*

These verbs also can be main verbs, used by themselves. They are used to make compound tenses and to create emphatic forms.

I **am** talking.

I **do** swim quickly.

I **have** not capitulated.

Modal auxiliary verbs: *can/could, may/might, must, shall/should, will/would*

These helping verbs are sometimes called *defective* because they are auxiliary only; they cannot be main verbs and have no infinitive forms. For example, there is no *to might* or *he mights today*. These verbs help create subjunctive and conditional forms.

I **can** enumerate the details.

I **might** vociferate if she insists.

I **must** rectify the problem.

I **should** acquiesce.

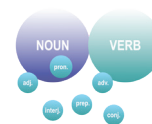
I **would** mediate.

Marginal auxiliary verbs: *dare, need, ought to, used to*

When used as auxiliary verbs, these enhance the meaning of main verbs.

I **dare** not censure their statements.

I **need** not elucidate the reasons.



Verbs, like pronouns, have **person** and **number**:

PRESENT

singular

First person: I equivocate
Second person: You equivocate
Third person: He, she, it equivocates;
they equivocate

plural

We equivocate
You equivocate
They equivocate

PAST

singular

First person: I equivocated
Second person: You equivocated
Third person: He, she, they, it equivocated

plural

We equivocated
You equivocated
They equivocated

FUTURE

singular

First person: I will (shall) equivocate
Second person: You will equivocate
Third person: He, she, they, it will equivocate

plural

We will (shall) equivocate
You will equivocate
They will equivocate

PRESENT PERFECT

singular

First person: I have equivocated
Second person: You have equivocated
Third person: He, she, they, it has equivocated

plural

We have equivocated
You have equivocated
They have equivocated

PAST PERFECT

singular

First person: I had equivocated
Second person: You had equivocated
Third person: He, she, they, it had equivocated

plural

We had equivocated
You had equivocated
They had equivocated

FUTURE PERFECT

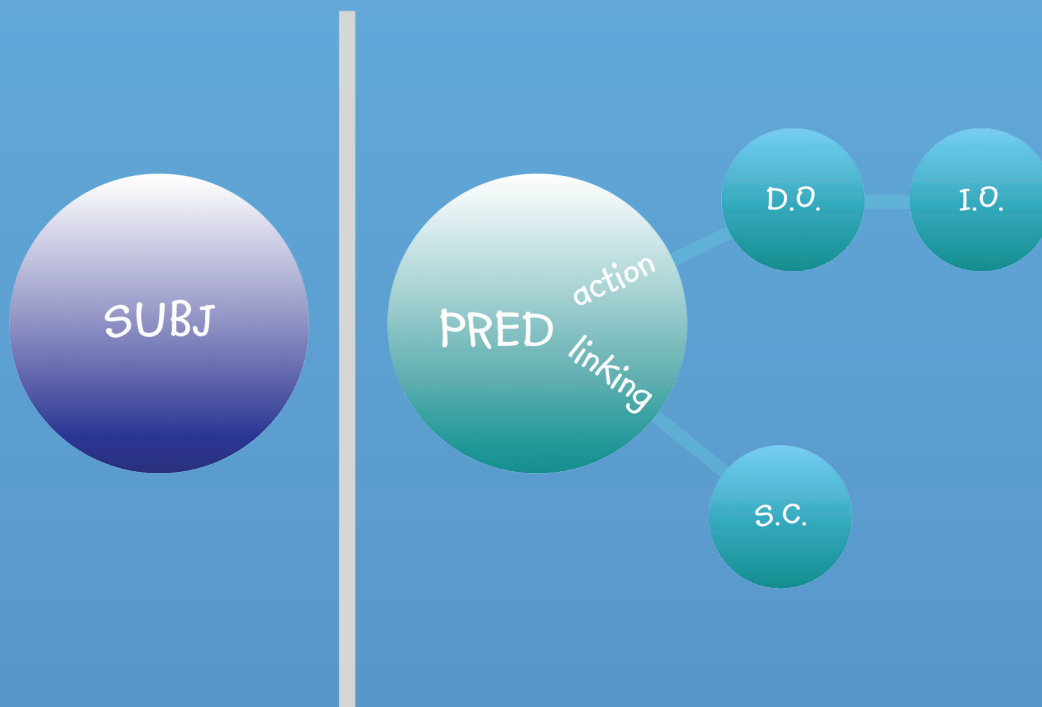
singular

First person: I will (shall) have equivocated
Second person: You will have equivocated
Third person: He, she, they, it will have equivocated

plural

We will (shall) have equivocated
You will have equivocated
They will have equivocated

LEVEL TWO





The Parts of Sentence

Sentences do not occur in nature.

Words alone do not make a language. If I say “Bloom she pavement really hopping,” we know the words, but the words communicate nothing. Language is not random words; it is words arranged in a system of meaning. When words form meaning, we call that a **sentence**. A sentence is a group of words that contains a subject and its predicate and makes a complete thought. The word *sentence* comes from the Latin *sententia*, meaning way of thinking or opinion.

Sentences are *binary*; a sentence is a two-part thought. It is a group of words that contains a predicate about a subject, and in this group of words, the thought has been completed. In other words, a sentence is a finished idea. *Ebenezer shuddered* is a sentence, but *If Ebenezer shuddered* is not a sentence because we are still waiting for the thought to be completed. If Ebenezer shuddered, then what? Later we will reword this to say that a dependent clause is not a sentence.

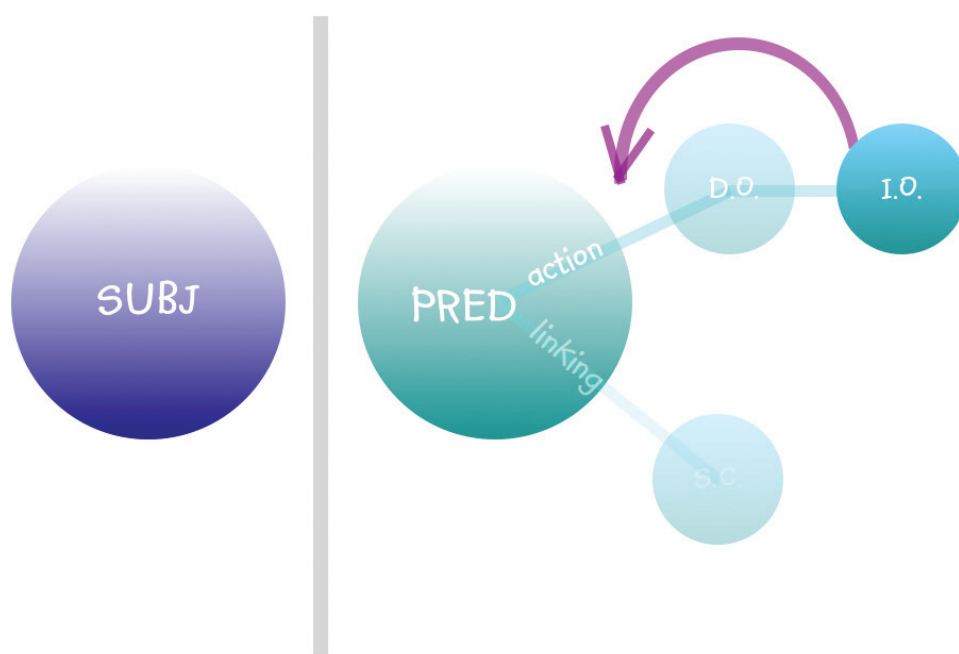
Parts of Sentence: A sentence has main terms, and it has minor terms. The meaning flows through the main terms. We call these main terms the **parts of sentence**. When we study the parts of the sentence, we are studying the structure of thought itself. Sentences do not occur in nature; they are our thoughts expressed.

Hidden in the sentence is a thought’s secret pattern, and understanding our thought pattern gives us insight into the nature of clarity. In fact, understanding how sentences are thoughts can give us insight into several different levels of clarity, including clarity of **sentence**, clarity of **paragraph**, and clarity of **thesis**. What is this secret pattern? It is an elegant one. In order to say anything clearly, we must say two things. First, we must say **what we are talking about**, and second, we must say **what we are saying about it**. Each sentence must have these two things.

subject — **predicate**
what we are talking about — **what we are saying about it**



Clarity is binary. Being clear means expressing two things. The person to whom we are talking or writing needs to know both the **subject** and the **predicate**, and if either is absent, unclear, or otherwise disrupted, then we fail to communicate. The sentence is not an extra-human phenomenon of the world. It is not a natural phenomenon like rocks or wind. It is like the mind's footprint. It is made by the mind, shaped in mind-shape. It gets its form from the mind itself. In the sentence the mind extends itself out to the world, like an amoeba extending a pseudopod. The sentence is the mind—in language. So we can see the sentence both as a model of how the mind expresses its ideas to itself, and we also can see the sentence as a model of how we should write and speak if we want to be understood by someone else. The main terms of a sentence—the parts of sentence—are the **subject**, the **simple predicate**, the **direct object**, the **indirect object**, and the **subject complement**.



two





From William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, act IV, scene iii:

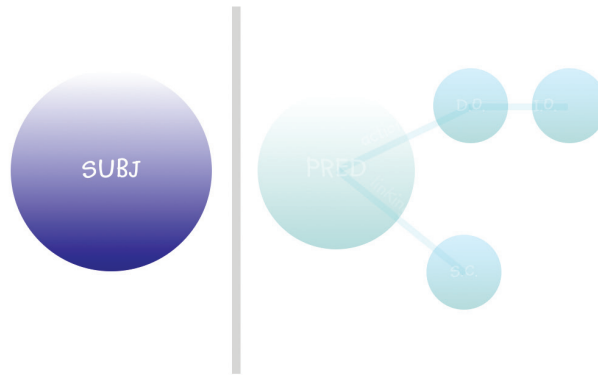
| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|------------|--------------|------------------------|------------|---------------|
| | Cassius | is | awear | of | the | world. |
| Parts of Speech | n. | v. | adj. | prep. | adj. | n. |
| Parts of Sentence | subj. | LVP | S.C. | | | |
| Phrases | | | | -----prep. phrase----- | | |
| Clauses | -----one independent clause----- a simple declarative sentence | | | | | |

This sentence from *Julius Caesar* is a two-part thought. The first part is the subject, the proper noun *Cassius*. The complete predicate gives us five words about the subject. The simple predicate is the linking verb *is*, and from the predicate we learn that Cassius is awear of the world. It is an equation based on the linking verb: Cassius = awear. In this chapter we will learn that in this sentence, *awear* is a subject complement.

Verbisection:

- Regular or irregular: irregular
- Action, linking, or being: linking
- Tense: present
- Person: third
- Number: singular
- Mood: indicative
- Transitive or intransitive: n/a
- Voice: n/a

sides



The **subject** is the noun or pronoun that the sentence is about.

Subject (subj.): The **simple subject** of the sentence is the noun or pronoun that the sentence is about. *Dickinson wrote poetry.* The **complete subject** includes the simple subject and all of its modifiers. **Subject pronouns** (*I, you, he, she, they, it, we, you, they*) can be sentence subjects, but **object pronouns** cannot; you cannot say *Him and her are friends*. Remember the pronoun rule: **A subject is a subject, and an object is an object.** *She and I took the same route home.* **Indefinite pronouns** are always singular subjects: *Everyone has a chance to win.*

Compound subject: A compound subject is a double subject. More than one noun or pronoun is used as a double subject of the same verb: ***Fish and turtles** are in the pond.* ***Hérons and cranes** waded among the reeds.* A compound subject joined by the coordinating conjunction *and* is considered plural and must take a plural verb: *Shelley **and** Byron **are** traveling.* A compound subject joined by the coordinating conjunction *or* is singular: *Shelley **or** Byron **is** traveling.* *He **or** she **has** a dog,* but *he **and** she **have** a dog.* Notice how logical this is. If Pollock and Krasner painted pictures, then two artists painted, but if Pollock or Krasner painted *Night Creatures*, then only one artist painted it. *And* is a plural conjunction, and *or* is a singular conjunction. Grammar is logical.

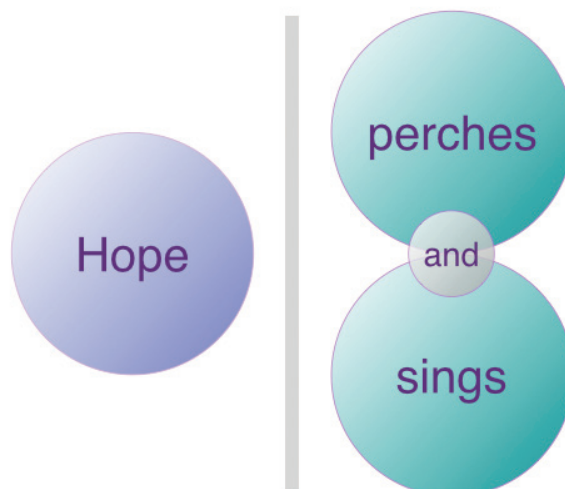
Punctuating compounds: We do not put a comma before a coordinating conjunction that joins two parts of speech. It is *Fish and turtles are in the pond*, **not** *Fish, and turtles are in the pond*. In other words, we do not break these compounds with commas; we want the two words connected, not separated.



The **predicate** is the verb and other words that are about the subject.

Predicate: The **predicate** is the side of the sentence that says something about the subject. The **simple predicate** is the verb: *Thoreau **went** to see his mother*. The **complete predicate** is everything that is said about the subject: *Thoreau **went to the cabin near the pond and lived simply***. When we mention the predicate, we usually will mean the simple predicate.

Compound verb: The subject of a sentence may take a compound verb as its predicate. In her poem about hope, Emily Dickinson’s famous declarative complex sentence contains a compound verb in the dependent clause: “‘Hope’ is the thing with feathers— / that **perches** in the soul— / **And sings** the tune without the words...” The subject *hope* has *perches* and *sings* as its compound verb. Notice that there is no comma in the compound verb.



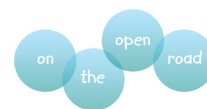
LEVEL THREE

in the old times

like a big gate

reading a good book

to paint the fence



LEVEL THREE

Phrases

A phrase is a **group of words**
that does not contain
a subject and its predicate
and that acts
as a **single part of speech**.

Phrase: A phrase is like a flight of birds; it is one thing made of some things. It is a part of speech made of some words. A phrase is not a complete idea because it is a group of words that has no subject/predicate set and that acts as a **single part of speech**—it behaves like one word.

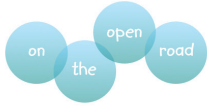
We might use a simple adjective in a sentence, or we might use a prepositional phrase instead, or we might use a participial phrase instead. The prepositional and participial phrases give us ways to make the adjective idea more elaborate, more developed.

**of the people,
by the people,
for the people**

Phrases are vital to an understanding of grammar. If you do not understand phrases, you do not understand parts of speech or parts of sentence either.

The difference between phrases and clauses: Both phrases and clauses are groups of words, but a clause contains both a subject and its predicate, and a phrase does not. *I walked* is a clause, but *in the woods* is only a phrase. Phrases are *inside* clauses; they are part of clauses.

**Clauses have subjects and predicates.
Phrases do not.**



A prepositional phrase is a group of words beginning with a preposition and acting as a modifier.

Prepositional phrase: A **prepositional phrase** begins with a preposition (in the PRE position) and usually concludes with the **object of the preposition**. The preposition shows the relationship between its object and another word in the sentence; the relationship can be of space, time, direction, similarity, possession, exclusion, or many others. If I say *the tree in the woods*, the preposition *in* shows a spatial relationship between its object *tree* and the noun *woods*. Prepositional phrases behave as **modifiers**—that is, they act like big adjectives or big adverbs. In the sentence *The tree in the woods blossomed*, the prepositional phrase *in the woods* acts as an adjective to modify the noun *tree*.

The object of the preposition is an object. Object pronouns can be objects of preposition, but subject pronouns cannot. **A subject is a subject, and an object is an object.** It is correct to say “This is a letter for you and me,” but it is wrong to say “This is a letter for you and I.” Notice the object pronouns in the following correct prepositional phrases:

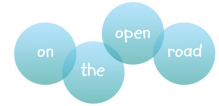
This award is for him and me.

He and I talked with you and him.

I asked a question about her and us.

There is no subject of preposition. It is not unusual for someone to make the mistake of using subject pronouns as objects of prepositions, especially when the object of preposition is compound. So someone who would never say “These apples are for I” will mysteriously and ridiculously say “These apples are for you and I.” We should always say *for me*. “These apples are for you and me” is correct grammar. An object is an object, period. Subject pronouns may not be used as objects of prepositions, compounds notwithstanding.





Prepositional phrases as adjectives: Prepositional phrases that modify nouns or pronouns are placed immediately after the noun or pronoun they modify. Otherwise, the phrase will be understood to modify the verb. Think through the logic of the following sentence: *In the ocean the whale dived toward the fish in the school*; the phrase *in the ocean* modifies *dived*. In “Hokku Poems,” Richard Wright wrote, “With a twitching nose / A dog reads a telegram / On a wet tree trunk.”

In the ocean the whale dived toward the fish in the school.
With a twitching nose / A dog reads a telegram / On a wet tree trunk.

These sentences are typical. The introductory prepositional phrase modifies the verb and so acts as an adverb, and the prepositional phrase following a noun modifies the noun. There are cases in which a prepositional phrase follows a noun but still modifies the verb anyway, so be alert to that possibility:

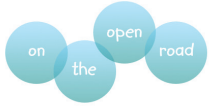
Gollum bit Sam with surprising force.

Punctuating prepositional phrases: We generally do not put a comma after a single short introductory prepositional phrase, but we do put a comma after a long (usually more than four words) introductory prepositional phrase or after multiple introductory prepositional phrases. We always put a comma if not doing so would be misleading.

From the beginning Caesar trusted Brutus.
As Rome’s true leader, Caesar was ingenious.
From the start of his political career, Caesar trusted Brutus.

Avoid splitting the subject and verb: The clearest sentences often have the verb next to the subject, so it often is advisable to avoid putting a prepositional phrase between the two. A prepositional phrase that intervenes between subject and verb usually results in a subject/verb disagreement, in which the verb agrees with the object of preposition instead of the subject.

Wrong: The group of ancient columns were vandalized.
Right: The group of ancient columns was vandalized.
Better: Barbarians vandalized the ancient columns.



In four-level analysis we will identify all phrases on line three, but it is also helpful to see a visual representation of how phrases work in sentences. We will use the MCT sentence model. Notice how prepositional phrases never include any parts of sentence; they are separated in the same way that other modifiers are. That is because prepositional phrases are only modifiers; they are multi-word adjectives or adverbs.

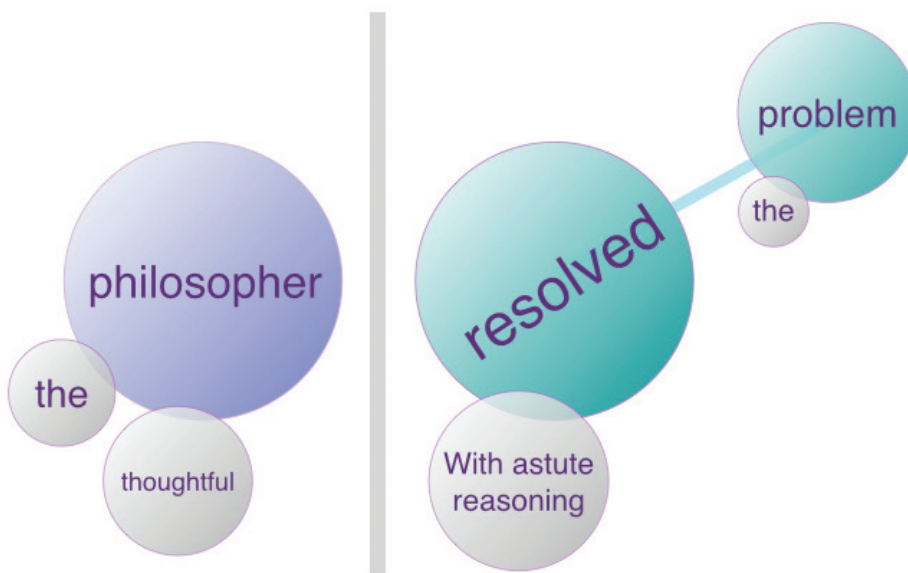
With astute reasoning the thoughtful philosopher resolved the problem.

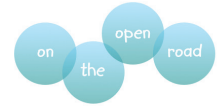
prep. adj. n. adj. adj. n. v. adj. n.

subj. AVP D.O.

-----prep. phrase-----

Here the introductory prepositional phrase acts as an adverb to modify the verb. It is a group of three words that does a one-word job. We use no comma after *reasoning* because the phrase is a short, single phrase. Notice that *reasoning* is a noun and is the object of the preposition *with*, and *with* shows the relationship between its object *reasoning* and the other word in the sentence, *resolved*. The phrase acts as an adverb modifying a verb.





In Greece Homer wrote a poem of epic proportions.

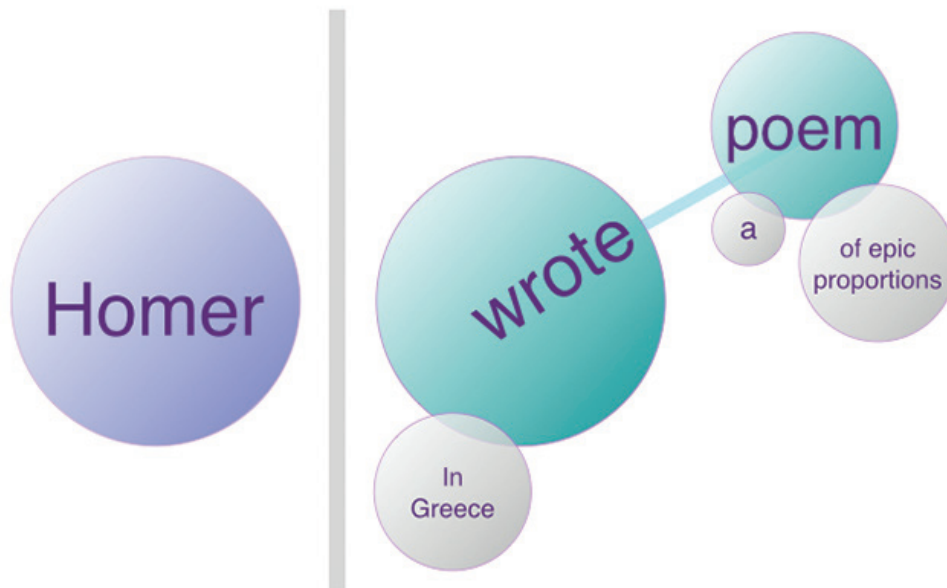
prep. n. n. v. adj. n. prep. adj. n.

subj. AVP D.O.

----prep. phrase----

-----prep. phrase-----

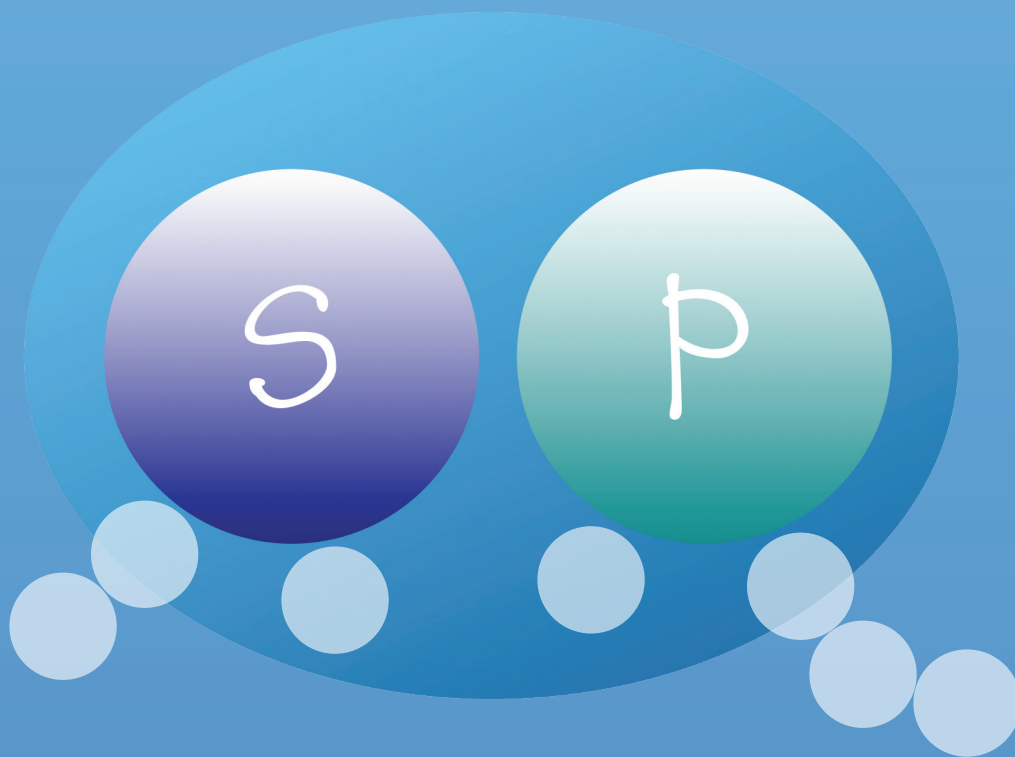
Many sentences have more than one prepositional phrase. Here an introductory phrase modifies the verb, and another phrase acts as an adjective to modify the direct object.



Remember, the object of preposition is never also a direct object or other part of sentence. If a noun is the object of preposition, then that is all it is.



LEVEL FOUR





Clauses

A clause is a group of words that contains a subject and its predicate.

Clauses have subjects and predicates. The word *clause* comes from the same root as the words *claustrophobia*, *enclosure*, and *close*. The idea is that a clause is a closing: The **subject** opens the topic, and the **predicate** closes it; the subject asks, and the predicate answers. A clause is a group of words that contains a subject and its predicate, and this one-two structure opens and closes an idea. Every clause has this subject/predicate set as its nucleus.

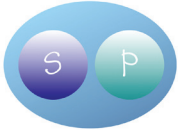
The clause includes not only the subject and the verb, but all of the modifiers and phrases that stick to them. A sentence might be only one clause, or it might contain several clauses, each with its own subject and predicate. In the sentence below, the clause is *My old **dog** now **has** small fleas*. The whole sentence is an independent clause.



Clauses can be **independent**, making sense by themselves, or they can be **dependent** and need to be connected to an independent clause in order to make sense. Some dependent clauses act like big adverbs; others act like adjectives or nouns.

Independent: **Damon went to the store.**

Dependent: **When Damon went to the store...**



Based on clauses, there are four **sentence structures**: **simple**, **compound**, **complex**, and **compound-complex**. Let **I** stand for independent, **D** stand for dependent, and **cc** stand for coordinating conjunction.

FOUR SENTENCE STRUCTURES

SIMPLE: **A one-clause sentence**

I *A rogue elephant crashed through the fence.*

COMPOUND: **A sentence with two or more independent clauses**

I,ccI *The rogue elephant crashed through the fence, and we ran to the compound for safety.*

I;I *The elephant had escaped; we feared the worst.*

COMPLEX: **A sentence with an independent clause joined to a dependent clause. The dependent clause often begins with a subordinating conjunction (*if, as, since, when, because, and many others*).**

ID **A complex sentence with the independent clause first.**
We do not put a comma between the clauses in this case.
He was eccentric because he had lived alone for so long.

D,I **A complex sentence with the dependent clause first.**
There must be a comma after the introductory dependent clause.
Because he had lived alone for so long, he was eccentric.

COMPOUND-COMPLEX: **Combines compound and complex structures**

Joe and I drove to the dock and met the sailors who were to take us out on the expedition when suddenly the wind kicked up, and the sky turned black.