

Blue Area

Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPaG)

Definitions of words and phrases



Clause	Clauses are the building blocks of a sentence . They are groups of words that contain a subject and a verb . They can be ' main ' or ' subordinate '.
Complex sentence	Formed by joining a main clause with a subordinate clause using a subordinating conjunction . They can also be called multi-clause sentences . The main clause can stand alone but the subordinate or dependent clause cannot. For example, 'I burned dinner when I was on the phone'.
Consonant	Any letter of the alphabet other than the vowels (a, e, i, o, u).
Direct speech	A sentence where the exact words spoken are represented, and shown in speech marks (also known as inverted commas). ("Tidy your room, please," said Mum).
Formal speech	A type of speech or writing used in formal, 'serious' texts and situations. Children in primary school start to be taught the difference between the language we use when speaking informally (for example, to our friends) and the language we may use for a formal text, such as a letter of complaint.
Inverted commas	Punctuation marks used to demarcate direct speech in a sentence. Also known as speech marks, but in the 2014 National Curriculum children are taught the term inverted commas instead.
Main clause	The leading clause in a sentence which indicates the main subject and action of the sentence. It stands alone without any additional clauses . For example, 'Even though the weather is bad, <u>I will still go for a walk</u> '.
Paragraph	A distinct section of a piece of writing, which usually has a single theme. It is indicated by starting a new line or indenting the start of the first sentence.
Preposition	A linking word in a sentence, used to show where things are in time or space. For example, 'under', 'after', 'next', 'behind'.
Reported speech	See indirect speech .
Personal pronoun	A pronoun which replaces a person, place or thing. For example, 'I', 'you', 'he', 'she', 'we', 'they', 'it', 'me', 'him', 'her', 'us', 'them'.
Prepositional phrase	A phrase which contains a preposition . For example, 'under the carpet', 'behind the door', 'after school'.
Pronoun	Any word which can be used to replace a noun. See personal pronoun , possessive pronoun .
Proper noun	A noun which names a particular person, place or thing. For example, 'John', 'London', 'France', 'Monday', 'December'.



Abstract noun	A feeling or concept which cannot be touched, such as love, happiness, education.
Adverbial phrase	A phrase built around an adverb – for example 'as quickly as possible', 'very rudely'.
Article	Words which tell us if a noun is general or specific. 'The' is called the 'definite article' and refers to specific nouns: 'The man's hat is blue'. The 'indefinite articles' are 'a' and 'an', referring to general nouns: 'A cow eats grass'. See determiner .
Common noun	Describes a class of objects (e.g. dog, man, day) which do not have a capital letter (e.g. Rover, John, Tuesday). See also proper nouns .
Concrete noun	Something you can touch. For example, 'bed', 'pencil', 'cat'. Can be common nouns , or proper nouns that need a capital letter . For example, 'Mr Jones', 'Blackpool Tower'.
Determiner	A word that introduces a noun and identifies it in detail. This may be a definite or indefinite article (a, an, the), a demonstrative (this, that), possessive (your, my), a quantifier (some, many) or a number (six, ten, half).
Fronted adverbial	Words or phrases used at the beginning of a sentence , used like adverbs to describe the action that follows. For example, ' <u>With a happy smile</u> , she skipped into the room'.
Imperative verb	A verb that stands alone without a subject noun or pronoun in a command .
Imperative article	See article .
Phrase	A small group of words that does not contain a verb .
Possessive pronoun	A pronoun which is used to show ownership. Some can be used on their own ('mine', 'yours', 'his', 'hers', 'ours', 'theirs'), whilst others need to be attached to a noun ('my', 'your', 'her', 'our', 'their', 'whose').
Root word	A basic word with no prefix or suffix added to it. Adding prefixes and suffixes can change the meaning of a root word.
Simple sentence	Has a subject and one verb . See also compound sentence and complex sentence .
Speech marks	Punctuation marks used to demarcate direct speech in a sentence. See also inverted commas .
Subject	The subject of a sentence is the thing or person carrying out the main action. For example, ' <u>The cow</u> ate the grass'.
Subordinate clause	A clause that cannot stand alone as a complete sentence, but is linked to a main clause using a subordinating conjunction . It does not express a complete thought, and if read on its own it requires additional information. For example, 'I take my dog to the park every day, even though <u>sometimes it is raining</u> '. Subordinate clauses contain a subject noun and a verb.
Vowel	The letters a, e, i, o and u.
Word family	A group of words which may share a common root word or morphology . For example, 'happy', 'unhappy', 'happiness', 'happily', 'unhappiness', 'unhappily'.