

# Grammar Terms Explained

**In the 2014 National Curriculum children are expected to understand and use these terms:**

**Year 1** - letter, capital letter, word, singular, plural, sentence, punctuation, full stop, question mark, exclamation mark

**Year 2** - noun, noun phrase, statement, question, exclamation, command, compound, suffix, adjective, adverb, verb, tense (past, present), apostrophe, comma

**Year 3** - preposition conjunction, word family, prefix, clause, subordinate clause, direct speech, consonant, consonant letter vowel, vowel letter, inverted commas (or 'speech marks')

**Year 4** - determiner, pronoun, possessive pronoun, adverbial

**Year 5** - modal verb, relative pronoun, relative clause, parenthesis, bracket, dash, cohesion, ambiguity

**Year 6** - subject, object, active, passive, synonym, antonym, ellipsis, hyphen, colon, semi-colon, bullet points

**Please find below examples of these terms:**

**Adjective** Adjectives give us more information about nouns.

*For example: A tall giraffe. The weather grew cold.*

**Adverb** Most adverbs, as their name suggests, tell us more about verbs. Adverbs like these are often formed by adding '-ly' to an adjective. *For example: The troll ate ravenously. The adverb 'ravenously' tells you how the troll was eating.*

A few adverbs modify adjectives. *For example: The map is very old. The adverb 'very' tells you how old it is.*

**Apostrophe** eg ' Apostrophes have two uses:

- to indicate a missing letter or letters in a shortened word. *For example: didn't (did not); we'd (we would).*
- to show what someone or something owns or possesses. There is no apostrophe in ordinary plurals like tomatoes and videos. *For example: the extra-terrestrial's toenails (the toenails of the extra-terrestrial)*

When the noun is plural and already ends in s, you add an apostrophe by itself. *For example: the cities' cathedrals; in three weeks' time.*

When a person's name ends in s, you add an apostrophe followed by s if you normally say an extra s in speaking. But you just add an apostrophe by itself when you do not normally say the s in speaking. *For example: St Thomas's Hospital; Achilles' armour.*

**Clause** A clause is a part of a sentence that has its own verb.

**Main clause** A sentence can contain one or more main clauses, linked by a conjunction such as and, but, or, or yet, or by a semicolon. *For example: We approached cautiously; the lioness was beginning to stir.*

**Subordinate clause** A subordinate clause begins with a subordinating conjunction such as because, if, or when, and it can come before or after the main clause. *For example: Because they eat aphids, ladybirds are useful in the garden.*

**Relative clause** A relative clause explains or describes something that has just been mentioned, and is introduced by that, which, who, whom, whose, when, or where. A relative clause can either restrict meaning: *For example: Of all Tolkien's books, the one which I prefer is The Hobbit.*

Or it can simply add further information, in which case you put a comma before it: *For example: The book, which Tolkien wrote for his children, was an instant success.*

**Comma** eg , Commas are used:

- to mark a pause in a sentence, especially to separate a subordinate clause from the main clause. *For example: When the howling stopped, we ventured out from the cave.*
- to separate items in a list or series. *For example: I've packed a bikini, flippers, snorkel, and a periscope.*
- in pairs before and after the name of someone who is being introduced or described. *For example: The author, Roald Dahl, once lived here.*

- to mark a pause in a compound sentence. *For example: The film is rated 15, but it's not that scary.*

**Command** A command or exclamation is a sentence ending with an exclamation mark. *For example: Come and see the ice beginning to thaw!*

**Conjunction** Conjunctions are used to join words, phrases, or clauses in a sentence. *For example: and, but, for, or, neither, nor, yet, although, because, if, until, unless, when, where, while, whereas.*

**Coordinating conjunctions** Coordinating conjunctions join words or clauses which are of equal importance in a sentence. They form compound sentences. *For example: and, but, for, or, neither, nor, yet (Would you prefer tea and biscuits, or coffee and cake?)*

**Subordinating conjunctions** Subordinating conjunctions are used to link a main and a dependent clause. They are used to form complex sentences. *For example: although, because, if, until, unless, when, where, while, whereas (Mira felt brave because she had her lucky pebble.)*

**Connective** Connectives are used to link ideas in a piece of writing. They often occur at the start of a sentence and connect it with a previous sentence or paragraph. *For example: moreover, nevertheless, finally, furthermore, and, thus*

*(Nevertheless, he still remains popular with his millions of fans and continues to have hit records all over the world.)*

**Consonant** Every letter in the English alphabet that is not a vowel.

**Ellipsis** **eg** ... An ellipsis is used to show that one or more words have been missed out or that a sentence is not finished. *For example: "No! Don't tell Dad about the ..."*

**Exclamation mark** **eg** ! You use an exclamation mark to indicate shouting, surprise, or excitement in direct speech. *For example: 'Stop! Don't drink! The goblet is poisoned!'*

It can also be used to express surprise, alarm, or excitement in a narrative. *For example: The sun was coming up. She must hurry! Soon the spell would wear off!*

**Full stop** **eg** . A full stop shows where a sentence ends, when the sentence is neither a question nor an exclamation. *For example: Our story begins in 1914, on the eve of the First World War.*

Full stops go within quotation marks in direct speech. *For example: He said, 'I'll meet you outside the cinema.'* Full stops go within parentheses, when these surround a complete sentence. *For example: The waiter arrived with a plate of toast. (I had ordered waffles.)*

**Homophone** A noun with the same sound as another. *For example: son and sun*

**Hyphen eg** - Hyphens connect two or more words which make up a compound noun or adjective. *For example: close-up; an ultra-huge sandwich.*

**Inverted commas eg ' ' ' '** Inverted commas occur in pairs and can surround a single word or phrase, or a longer piece of text. *For example: 'Look!' said a voice behind me. 'Look at the sky!'*

Inverted commas are also known as speech marks, quotation marks, or (informally) quotes. Pairs of quotation marks can be single ('...') or double ("..."), but are never mixed.

**Mnemonics** Memory joggers such as a rhyme, a phrase or a shape. For example, seeing a dinosaur in the shape of a letter d to help your child to associate the dinosaur with the letter and sound d.

**Noun** Nouns are used to name people, places, or things and tell you who or what a sentence is about

**Common noun** Common nouns name people or things in general. Common nouns only begin with a capital letter when they start a sentence. For example: dancer, lizard, sandwich, television.

**Proper noun** Proper nouns give the name of a specific person, place or thing.

Proper nouns always begin with a capital letter. *For example: Max, Antarctica, Hallowe'en, Friday.*

**Collective noun** Collective nouns name groups of people or things. *For example: a team of athletes, a herd of sheep, a swarm of bees.*

**Abstract noun** An abstract noun is a thing that cannot be seen or touched, such as an idea, a quality or a feeling. *For example: happiness, truth, friendship.*

**Phonemes** The smallest unit of sounds in a word represented by letters/ groups of letters.

**Pronoun** Pronouns are used to replace a noun in a sentence or clause, and help to avoid having to repeat words.

**Personal pronouns** Personal pronouns replace the name of a person or thing.

**When the pronoun is the subject of the clause:** *For example: I, you, he, she, it, we, they (Zoe and Bill are coming to the concert. She's got a ticket, but he hasn't.)*

**When the pronoun is the object:** *For example: me, you, him, her, it, us, them (The guards were following us and we were unable to shake them off.)*

**Reflexive pronouns** Reflexive pronouns refer back to the thing the clause is about.

*For example: myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves (Most baby birds are unable to feed themselves. I wanted to see for myself what all the fuss was about.)*

**Interrogative pronouns** Interrogative pronouns are used to form questions. *For*

*example: what, who, whom, whose (What is happening? Who wants some ice cream? Whose is this?)*

**Punctuation** Punctuation is the use of special marks to make a piece of writing easier to read and understand. Punctuation marks show divisions and connections between sentences, clauses, or individual words.

**Question mark** eg ? Question marks are used to mark a sentence that is a question. Question marks usually come at the end of a sentence. *For example: Are there wild animals in this wood?*

**Question** A question is a sentence which ends with a question mark. *For example: When would the ice begin to thaw?*

**Sentence** A sentence is a group of words that contains a verb. It should make sense on its own. In writing, a sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark. It can contain just one clause, or several clauses joined by conjunctions or punctuation.



**Simple sentence** A simple sentence consists of one main clause. *For example: The cat is sleeping.*

**Compound sentence** A compound sentence consists of two or more main clauses joined by conjunctions such as and or but. *For example: The cat is sleeping but the dog is awake.*

**Complex sentence** A complex sentence contains a main clause and at least one other clause. The two clauses are joined by conjunctions such as although

**Semicolon** eg ; You use a semicolon to mark a break in a sentence that is longer, or more important, than a break made with a comma: *For example: The castle was desolate; no one had lived there for three centuries or more.*

Semicolons can separate a series of connected clauses introduced by a colon. *For example: There were three clues: there was mud on the carpet; the door had been forced; and the air in the room smelled of fish.*

A single semicolon can also separate two contrasting or balancing clauses. *For example: You bring cups and plates; I'll bring juice and sandwiches*

**Tense** The form of a verb that shows when something happens in the past, present and future.

- **Present tense** *For example: I am walking.*
- **Past tense** *For example: I have walked.*
- **Future Tense** *For example: I will walk.*

**Verb** A verb can describe an action or process (for example: dive, chew, heal, thaw), a feeling or state of mind (for example: worry, think, know, believe), or a state (for example: be, remain). A sentence usually contains at least one verb.

**Vowels** The letters a, e, i, o, u in the English alphabet.

(Source: [www.oxfordowl.co.uk](http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk))