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A sentence is a group of words put together in a complete, meaningful way. It expresses a thought, statement, question, wish, command, suggestion, or idea. We use sentences every day when we're writing and speaking. What's more, a sentence combines words in a grammatically correct way. There are lots things to understand and of rules to follow when making a sentence, from punctuation, to word order, to making sure you have all of the right parts. This article will cover everything you need to know about strong sentences!2. Everyday Examples of SentencesSentences serve all kinds of purposes and share all kinds of information. They are the main form we use to communicate through writing and speaking, so we use them every day, like in the examples below.Some sentences share information, like something that happened during the day:My mom cooked pancakes for breakfast.A sentence may express an opinion or desire, like something you like or dislike:I love syrup on my pancakes.It may share a general fact:Syrup comes from maple trees.Or, it might ask a question:Do you like syrup on your pancakes?3. Main Parts of a SentenceAll complete sentences have a subject and a predicate. When a subject and a predicate are together, they make a clause. So, since all sentences have a subject and a predicate, all sentences have a clause.a. Subject A subject is the main thing a sentence is about. In a sentence, all verbs need a subject; it's the person or thing that is doing something.b. Simple SubjectA simple subject is the main word that tells what a sentence is about:The big dog went to the county fair.c. Compound SubjectWhen two or more subjects in a sentence use the same verb, it makes a compound subject:The big dog and the small cat went to the county fair.d. Complete SubjectA complete subject includes all of the words that tell what a sentence is about:The big dog and the small cat went to the county fair.e. PredicateA predicate tells what the subject does, and always needs a verb. Often the predicate is just a verb.f. Simple predicateThe simple predicate is the sentence's main verb or verb phrase, and nothing else.The dog went to the county fair.The simple predicate is "went," which is the verb that says what the dog is doing.g. Compound Predicate A compound predicate includes two or more verbs that have the same subject and are connected by a conjunction, like "and." It can include words besides the verbs, but doesn't include the conjunction.The dog went to the county fair, and then ate popcorn.Here, the compound predicate is went to the county fair and then ate popcorn. Compound predicates are important because they keep us from writing short, boring sentences. For example:The dog went to the county fair. Then he ate popcorn.Vs.The dog went to the county fair, and then he ate popcorn.The second example using the compound predicate is a much stronger sentence.h. Complete PredicateA complete predicate includes all of the verbs and other details about it in the sentence:The dog went to the county fair.The complete predicate of the sentence is underlined. As you see, it includes not only the verb "went," but "to the county fair" as well, because those words all tell about what is happening in the sentence.i. ClauseA clause is a set of words containing a subject and a predicate. An easy way to remember this is"clause = subject + predicate."j. Independent ClauseAn independent clause can exist as a sentence on its own.The dog ran.k. Dependent ClauseA dependent clause has a subject and a predicate but can't exist as a sentence on its own:The dog smelled popcorn, which was popping at the county fair.In the second part of the sentence, there is a subject (county fair) and a predicate (popping), but the words don't give enough information to be a complete sentence. It only gives extra information—we need to know that "Sparky smelled popcorn" to understand "popping at the county fair." Alone, a dependent clause makes a fragment sentence (see VII). "Which was popping at the county fair" is a fragment sentence.4. Sentence StructuresA sentence's "structure" is the main form it should follow in order for it to make sense and express the right idea. When it comes to making sure your sentence is clear and complete, having the right sentence structure is very important.a. Simple SentenceA simple sentence has only one subject and one predicate—in other words, only one clause. Here are three simple sentences:The dog ran.He ran all the way to the county fair.He ate hot popcorn.b. Compound SentenceA compound sentence has more than one subject or predicate. It uses a conjunction like "and" to combine two or more complete sentences into one compound sentence. A conjunction, like the word "and" connects words, phrases and clauses. For example, you can combine the three sentences above to make one compound sentence:The dog ran all the way to the county fair, and then he ate some popcorn.This is a compound sentence because it has one subject, "dog," but two predicates, "ran" and "ate."c. Complex sentenceA complex sentence has at least one independent clause and one dependent clause.The dog smelled popcorn, which was popping at the county fair."The dog smelled popcorn" is an independent clause; "which was popping at the county fair" is a dependent clause.d. Compound-complex sentenceA compound-complex sentence has two or more independent clauses and at least one dependent clause—so, it combines two complete sentences and one incomplete sentence. Here is an example:The dog smelled popcorn (independent clause)+which was popping at the county fair (dependent clause)+so (conjunction)+he ran all the way there (independent clause)=The dog smelled popcorn, which was popping at the county fair, so, he ran all the way there.The result of combining the three clauses and the conjunction is a compound-complex sentence.5. How to Write a SentenceAside from having the parts listed earlier, two things are very important for writing sentences: word order and punctuation.a. Word orderWord order is important: it's what makes your sentences make sense. The most common word order is subject + verb + object.For example:The fox (subject) + eats (verb) + pancakes (object).When writing a sentence, make sure the verb comes after the subject, and the object comes after the verb. Otherwise, it won't make sense, like here:Eats pancakes the fox. (verb + object + subject)Pancakes the fox eats. (object + subject + verb)b. PunctuationIn a sentence, punctuation can be as important as the words you use! Using the wrong marks at the wrong time can make a sentence confusing or even change its meaning. Here are a few key ways we use punctuation:Use a period (.) to end a normal sentence.Use a question mark (?) at the end of all sentences that ask a question.Use an exclamation mark (!) at the end of a sentence that expresses strong emotions.Use a comma (,) to show a pause in the sentence, to make lists, or to separate thoughts. We use commas very often in sentences.Use quotation marks ("") to quote a person or source (like a newspaper), or to show character dialogue.6. Common Mistakes with SentencesThere are a lot of rules to remember about sentences, so sometimes it's easy to make a mistake. Along from knowing your grammar rules and sentences structures, it's important to include the right amount of information in a sentence. If you include too much or too little, it can lead to two very common types of problem sentences: run-on sentences and fragment sentences. Being able to recognize them can help you avoid them in your own writing.a. Run-on SentenceIn simple terms, a run-on sentence is a sentence that is too long. Sometimes a writer doesn't use the right punctuation, so the sentence seems like it "runs on" for too long. For example:The fox really liked pancakes and he ate them every day for breakfast but he couldn't eat them without syrup and butter. But, with the right punctuation, this can be a normal compound sentence:The fox really liked pancakes: he ate them every day for breakfast; but he couldn't eat them without syrup and butter!Run-on sentences also happen when you try to put too many ideas into one sentence, like this:The fox was great at hiding, and no human had ever seen him, also he really liked pancakes, and he ate them every day for breakfast, but he couldn't eat them without syrup and butter.We can break up to run-on sentence by separating the main ideas and putting them into their own sentences. There are two main ideas here: the fox was great at hiding, and he liked pancakes. Knowing that, here are two new sentences:The fox was great at hiding: no human had ever seen him. He also really liked pancakes: he ate them every day for breakfast; but he couldn't eat them without syrup and butter!As you can see, the new sentences are much easier to read and make more sense.b. Fragment (incomplete) SentenceA fragment is a small piece of something. So, a fragment sentence is just a piece of a sentence: it is incomplete because it is missing a subject, a predicate, or another necessary word.This fragment sentence is missing an object:The fox ate for breakfast.We need an object, like "pancakes," to complete this sentence.This fragment sentence is missing a predicate:He couldn't without syrup and butter.It needs a verb, like "eat," and an object, like "pancakes," to complete it.Finally, this sentence doesn't have a subject:Ate breakfast.It needs a subject, like "the fox," to make it a complete sentence. A noun phrase is a group of words that functions in a sentence as a subject, object, or prepositional object. It includes a noun, which is a person, place, or thing, and may also include modifiers such as adjectives or determiners like 'a', 'the', or 'some'. For example, in the sentence "The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog," "the quick brown fox" and "the lazy dog" are both noun phrases. They provide more detail than just using a noun alone and are essential for adding information and variety to writing. A noun phrase consists of a noun—the name of a person, place, thing, or idea—and any modifiers that describe or provide more information about the noun. Modifiers can include adjectives, additional nouns, or determiners like articles ("the", "a") and quantifiers ("many", "few"). For example, in the noun phrase "the quick brown fox," "the," "quick," and "brown" are all modifying the noun "fox." Noun phrases can function in various roles within a sentence, such as the subject, object, or complement, making them versatile and essential components of English grammar. Simple Noun Phrase Description: Contains only a noun or a pronoun, without any modifiers. Example: "Birds" in the sentence "Birds chirp early in the morning." Proper Noun Phrase Description: Refers to specific names of people, places, or things that are always capitalized. Example: "Mount Everest" in the sentence "Mount Everest is the highest peak in the world." Compound Noun Phrase Description: Features nouns made up of more than one word, often connected by a hyphen or space. Example: "Coffee table" in the sentence "Please put the books on the coffee table." Prepositional Noun Phrase Description: Begins with a preposition followed by a noun phrase, adding context such as location or time. Example: "Under the bridge" in the sentence "They found shelter under the bridge." Appositive Noun Phrase Description: Provides additional information or clarification about another noun next to it in the sentence. Example: "A great athlete" in the sentence "Usain Bolt, a great athlete, has won multiple Olympic medals." Infinitive Noun Phrase Description: Starts with an infinitive form of a verb and functions as a noun. Example: "To swim" in the sentence "Her favorite activity is to swim." Dogs bark at night. A delicious cake was served at the party. The blue car parked outside is mine. Several books lay scattered on the floor. My brother's old school bag is in the attic. Mount Everest attracts many climbers. Los Angeles is known for its entertainment industry. Jennifer Aniston is a popular actress. The Atlantic Ocean is colder than the Pacific. The President of the United States resides in the White House. A red and gold scarf was found in the cafe. Team-building exercises are essential for workplace harmony. My grandmother's recipe book contains many traditional dishes. The park near my house is large and peaceful. The chair with the broken leg should be repaired. A girl with a red hat stood there smiling. Birds chirping in the morning sound lovely. The idea of traveling around the world is exciting. The oldest tree in our neighborhood was cut down. Running marathons is a hobby for some. The book on the top shelf is too high to reach. The student with the highest grades won the scholarship. Driving a car requires attention and skill. To learn Spanish before visiting Spain is useful. Climbing mountains can be both challenging and rewarding. Sitting by the fireplace on a cold evening is cozy. Watching the stars at night is a calming activity. The movie starring Tom Hanks was a box office hit. A gift from her mother was wrapped beautifully. Playing video games is a popular pastime. The fastest animal on land is the cheetah. A big, old, haunted mansion stands at the hill's crest. Eating healthy food is important for maintaining good health. Noun phrases are versatile and can be used in various ways to enhance the complexity and specificity of sentences. Noun phrases can act as the subject, performing or being associated with the action of the verb. Use noun phrases as the direct object of an action verb or the object of a prepositional phrase to indicate the receiver of the action. Employ noun phrases as subject complements following linking verbs to describe or provide additional information about the subject. Appositives are noun phrases that rename or provide extra details about a noun they accompany, adding descriptive depth or clarifying the noun's identity. Noun phrases can modify other nouns, functioning like adjectives to specify the type of the noun under discussion. With linking verbs, noun phrases can rename the subject, offering further identification or clarification. Start Strong: Begin sentences with noun phrases to introduce subjects clearly. Balance Detail: Use modifiers sparingly to maintain clarity without overloading your sentences. Link with Care: Use transition words like "furthermore," "moreover," and "consequently" to connect ideas smoothly. Vary Your Structure: Alternate between simple and complex noun phrases to keep your writing engaging. Enhance with Appositives: Add explanatory details using appositive noun phrases within sentences. Focus on Function: Utilize noun phrases as subjects, objects, and complements to diversify sentence structures. Check Alignment: Ensure noun phrases and verbs align in number and tense for grammatical consistency. Use Infinitives for Variety: Employ infinitive phrases as noun phrases to express purposes or intentions. Look for a group of words with a noun or pronoun as the core and modifiers like adjectives or determiners. A noun phrase is a small group of words containing a noun and its helpers, like "the blue car." Introduce noun phrases by identifying nouns and gradually adding modifiers like adjectives and articles. Noun phrases do not contain verbs; they focus on nouns and modifiers like adjectives or determiners. Yes, sentences can have multiple noun phrases, acting as different parts like the subject and object. A noun phrase might need a comma if it's non-essential information or part of a list. Yes, a noun phrase can have a conjunction to link words or other phrases within it. Yes, prepositions can be part of noun phrases, linking them to other words in a sentence. An example of a noun phrase is "the quickly running fox," where "fox" is the main noun. The typical order is determiner, adjectives, and the noun as the core of the phrase. Add Tone Friendly Formal Casual Instructive Professional Empathetic Humorous Serious Optimistic Neutral 10 Examples of Public speaking 20 Examples of Gas lighting home▸sitemap▸A-Z grammar terms ▸noun phrase A noun phrase is a group of two or more words headed by a noun that includes modifiers. In these examples of noun phrases, the noun is shaded. All the other words are modifiers. the dog (In this example, "the" is a modifier.) a cat (Here, "a" is a modifier.) a group of them ("A" and "of them" are modifiers.) the man with her ("The" and "with her" are modifiers.) Table of Contents Examples of Noun Phrases The Function of Noun Phrases More Examples of Noun Phrases Video Lesson Why Noun Phrases Are Important Test Time! Noun Clauses vs Noun Phrases A noun phrase plays the role of a noun. In a noun phrase, the modifiers can come before or after the noun. Note: A noun phrase can also be headed by a pronoun. For example: the dog with fleas (This is a noun phrase headed by a noun.) the one with fleas (This is a noun phrase headed by a pronoun.) In normal writing, nouns nearly always feature in noun phrases. It is rare to find a noun functioning by itself (i.e., without any modifiers) in a sentence. Man proposes, but God disposes. (German canon Thomas a Kempis) (This example features two nouns without any modifiers. That's rare. In other words, there are no noun phrases in this example.) In real life, it is far more common for nouns to feature in noun phrases, i..e, to be accompanied by modifiers. Here is a list of noun phrases. In this list, every noun phrase consists of a head noun (highlighted) and at least one modifier. People: the soldier, my cousin, dopey Alan, the lawyer with the big nose Animals: that aardvark, one rat, a shark, funny Mickey Places: the house in the corner, inner London, dirty factory, no shelter Things: this table, our London Bridge, the sharp chisel, that nitrogen, last month, an inch, her cooking Ideas: utter confusion, some kindness, your faith, the Theory of Relativity, a joy So, a noun with any sort of modifier (even it's just "a" or "the") is a noun phrase. Like any noun, a noun phrase can function as a subject, an object, or a complement within a sentence. In each example below, the noun phrase is in bold and the head noun is highlighted. Singing in the bath relaxes me. (Here, the noun phrase is the subject of the verb "relaxes.") I know the back streets. (Here, the noun phrase is the direct object of the verb "know.") She was the devil in disguise. (Here, the noun phrase is a subject complement following the linking verb "was.") As most nouns feature in noun phrases, let's look quickly at the definition for "phrase": Definition of "Phrase" A phrase has at least two words and functions as one part of speech. It follows therefore that a noun phrase functions as a noun in a sentence. We can test this because we know that a noun can be replaced by a pronoun (e.g., he, she, it, them). Looking at the examples above, we can replace each noun phrase with a pronoun. It relaxes me. I know them. She was him. Here are some real-life examples of noun phrases as subjects, objects, and complements: This man has a nice smile, but he's got iron teeth. (Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko on Mikhail Gorbachev) ("This man" is the subject of the verb "has." The phrase "a nice smile" is the direct object of "has." The noun phrase "iron teeth" is the direct object of the verb "got." Here's the "pronoun test": He has one, but he's got them.) I never learned from a man who agreed with me. (Science-fiction writer Robert Heinlein) (The noun phrase "a man who agreed with me" is the object of the preposition "from." Here's the "pronoun test": I never learned from him.) Every man of courage is a man of his word. (French dramatist Pierre Corneille) ("Every man of courage" is the subject of the verb "is." The noun phrase "a man of his word" is a subject complement following the linking verb "is." Here's the "pronoun test": He is one.) It can get complicated. It's not unusual for nouns and noun phrases to be embedded within noun phrases. Looking at the last example, "courage" and "word" are both nouns, but they are not the head nouns of the phrases. They are both objects of the preposition "of," sitting in prepositional phrases that modify the head nouns. Read more about prepositional phrases. Noun phrases are extremely common. Remember that a noun with any sort of modifier (including just a number or an article) is a noun phrase. Here are some more examples of noun phrases: The best defense against the atom bomb is not to be there when it goes off. (Anon) (In this example, there is a noun phrase within a noun phrase. The noun phrase "the atom bomb" is the object of the preposition "against." The prepositional phrase "against the atom bomb" modifies "defense.") I don't have a bank account, because I don't know my mother's maiden name. (Paula Poundstone) (In this example, both noun phrases are direct objects.) The best car safety device is a rear-view mirror with a cop in it. (Dudley Moore, 1935-2002) (In this example, the first noun phrase is the subject, and the second is a subject complement.) Only two things are infinite, the universe and human stupidity, and I'm not sure about the former. (Physicist Albert Einstein, 1879-1955) The last thing to say about noun phrases is that they can be headed by pronouns as well as nouns, and they can be quite long. Anybody who wants the presidency so much that he'll spend two years organizing and campaigning for it is not to be trusted with the office. (Journalist David Broder) (Here, "anybody" is a pronoun. The rest of the noun phrase is an adjective clause modifying the head "noun." Here's the "pronoun test": He is not to be trusted with the office.) Here is a video summarizing this lesson on noun phrases. video lesson Are you a visual learner? Do you prefer video to text? Here is a list of all our grammar videos. Why Noun Phrases Are Important Most native English speakers can form noun phrases without giving the grammar a second thought. So, if the truth be told, understanding how they function isn't particularly useful unless you're required to teach them or to compare them with similar structures in a foreign language you're learning. That said though, there is a common issue associated with noun phrases. The Spitfire's 9-yard belt of bullets give us the term "the full nine yards." (The head noun in this noun phrase is "belt." All the other words in the noun phrase are modifiers. As "belt" is singular, the verb "give" is wrong. It should be "gives.") The Spitfire's 9-yard belt of bullets gives us the term "the full nine yards." Do not be tricked into agreeing the verb with the nearest noun (here, "bullets"). When a noun phrase is the subject of a verb, the head noun governs the verb. Read more about subject-verb agreement. When a noun phrase is the subject of a verb, don't let the modifiers divert your eye from the head noun as it must govern the verb. Not all grammarians agree on the definitions of clauses and phrases. For some, the term phrase covers everything. In other words, for them, a clause is a type of phrase, and a single word is just a short phrase. Here at Grammar Monster, we go with the following: Single Word. A single word is not a phrase. Phrase. A phrase plays the role of one part of speech and has at least two words. Clause. A clause plays the role of one part of speech and has a subject and a verb. (Note: On occasion, the subject may be implied.) It is a little more complicated than that though. Look at this example: Anybody who wants the presidency so much that he will spend two years organizing and campaigning for it is not to be trusted with the office. (American journalist David Broder) In this example, the bolded text (a noun phrase) contains two subject-verb pairings (i.e., "who" is the subject of "wants," and "he" is the subject of "will spend.") So, surely, the bolded text must be a noun clause not a noun phrase? Well, no. It's a noun phrase. The text "who wants the presidency so much that he will spend two years organizing and campaigning for it" is functioning as an adjective modifying anybody. In other words, those subjects and verbs feature in an adjective clause. Get it? The bolded text is a noun phrase that contains an adjective clause. That doesn't make it a noun clause. If you have a view on this, please tell us using the contact form below. Was something wrong with this page? Use #gm to find us quicker. Create a QR code for this, or any, page. XYouTubeFacebookmailing listgrammar forum Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format for any purpose, even commercially. Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms. 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When building simple sentences, writers know to use a subject and a verb to create a clause. Independent clauses contain a subject and a verb and create a complete thought, while dependent clauses contain a subject and a verb without creating a complete thought. Like clauses, phrases are also a combination of two or more words in a sentence; however, unlike clauses, phrases do not contain both a subject and a verb. There are many types of phrases, but they can be divided into three main categories: noun phrases, verb phrases, and modifying phrases. In this post, we will practice identifying these three categories of phrases and using each of them correctly in sentences. When you're ready, test yourself with a quiz and practice with our high-quality, standards-aligned questions here. Phrases are a combination of two or more words that can take the role of a noun, a verb, or a modifier in a sentence. Phrases are different from clauses because while dependent and independent clauses both contain a subject and a verb, phrases do not. For example: The bright red ball bounced directly into a muddy puddle. In the example above, there are two noun phrases. Each noun phrase above consists of a noun, an article, and one or two adjectives that modify the noun. Neither of these phrases contain a verb, so they cannot be considered clauses. Here is an example of a clause below: The bright red ball that slipped from my hands bounced directly into a muddy puddle. Do you see how the underlined clause in the above sentence contains both a noun or pronoun, that, and a verb, slipped? This dependent clause modifies which red ball landed in the puddle and is not considered a noun phrase. Phrases can be divided into three main categories: noun phrases, verb phrases, and modifying phrases. Noun phrases consist of a noun and all of its modifiers. Modifiers can include adjectives, articles, participles, or possessive nouns and pronouns, just to name a few. Noun phrases can function as any noun in the sentence, whether as subjects, objects, or subject complements. Noun phrases can be short or long depending on how much detail the writer wishes to include about a certain person, place, thing, or idea. Don't let length fool you into thinking these are clauses! For example: The setting sun glowing with colors of red, purple, and orange fascinated us this evening. Can you believe that the underlined phrase above is all one noun phrase? Let's take it apart: The setting sun includes an article, an adjective, and the main noun of the phrase.Glowing is a participle, or a verb acting like an adjective.With colors and of red, purple, and orange are both prepositional phrases that modify the noun. Sometimes, noun phrases can appear as appositive phrases, a phrase placed after a noun to provide additional information. Here is another example of a much shorter appositive noun phrase: Julie, my older sister, came to visit me the other day. In the sentence above, both "Julie" and "my older sister" are nouns that could equally stand as the subject of the sentence. However, "Julie" is the subject of the sentence, while "my older sister" functions as an appositive phrase to make sure that her readers know who "Julie" is. Additionally, when appositive phrases are separated from the rest of the sentence by a pair of commas, this means that they are non-essential to understanding the sentence. This means that if you take away the appositive phrase, the sentence will still make sense. Other times, words that are typically categorized as verbs become nouns when they are used in a gerund phrase. Gerund phrases include a verb ending in -ing, an object, and modifiers. For example: Walking on the beach is one of my favorite activities. In this sentence, even though walking is usually categorized as a verb, in this sentence, it is being used as a gerund phrase, and it is the subject of the sentence. Verb phrases consist of the main verb and its auxiliaries, or helping verbs. Unlike adjectives and noun phrases, adverbs that modify the verb are not considered part of the verb phrase. For example: The turtle was running quite quickly considering the nature of his species. In the sentence above, the verb phrase consists of only the main verb (running) and any helping verbs or auxiliaries (was). There are many types of phrases that all act as different types of modifiers. Most of these phrases modify single words in sentences; however, one type of phrase modifies the entire sentence! Here are the different types of modifying or describing phrases: Prepositional phrases consist of a preposition, its object, and any articles or modifiers. As a unit, prepositional phrases can be used to modify nouns or verbs by acting like adjectives or adverbs respectively. For example: Bambi frolicked in the meadow with Thumper. The prepositional phrase in the sentence above is acting like an adverb by modifying the verb and answering where Bambi and Thumper frolicked. Here is another example: The princess with long golden hair was trapped in a tower by a dragon. In the sentence above, the prepositional phrase with long golden hair modifies the noun, princess, by describing her outward appearance. Participle Phrases consist of a present or past participle (a verb ending in -ing or -ed), an object, and any modifiers. These phrases act like adjectives and always modify nouns. It is very easy to confuse gerund phrases with participle phrases because they look exactly the same! However, it's important to remember that while participle phrases modify nouns, gerund phrases can actually replace nouns altogether! For example: Present Participle Phrase: Gasping for breath, the dachshund barely made it home from his ten foot walk. In the sentence above, the participle phrase gasping for breath describes how the dog felt after his "long" walk. Past Participle Phrase: Perched menacingly on the porch railing, the cat watched the neighbor's dog. In the sentence above, the participle phrase perched menacingly on the porch railing describes the body language and intentions of the cat. Infinitive phrases are made up of an infinitive (the "to" form of a verb), an object, and any modifiers. Infinitive phrases can function as adjectives, adverbs, or nouns. For example: Adjective Infinitive Phrase: My favorite movie to watch is Little Women. In this example, the infinitive phrase to watch modifies the noun, movie and functions as an adjective. Adverb Infinitive Phrase: He studied all night to avoid failing his math test the next day. In this sentence, the infinitive phrase, to avoid failing his math test the next day modifies the verb studied by telling us why he studied. Noun Infinitive Phrase: They wanted to visit New Orleans during Jazz Fest. In this sentence, the infinitive phrase to visit New Orleans during Jazz Fest acts as a noun because it answers what "they wanted". Absolute phrases contain a noun, a participle, and any modifiers and/or objects. These phrases are tricky for several reasons: First, they look deceptively similar to independent clauses since they do technically contain a noun and a form of a verb. However, when you try to make an absolute phrase stand on its own, it does not make sense. Secondly, absolute phrases are tricky because we could mistake them for dependent clauses. They are not dependent clauses because they do not meet the structural requirements of dependent clauses. Dependent clauses must start with either a subordinating conjunction, a relative pronoun, or an interrogative pronoun or expletive. If none of these are present, then it cannot be a dependent clause. Thirdly, absolute phrases are sometimes hard to spot because they describe or modify an entire independent clause instead of a single word. This makes them different from participle, infinitive, and prepositional phrases. Here is an example: Holding onto the rigging for dear life, I barely survived the storm that we encountered at sea. In the example above, the absolute phrase modifies the entire independent clause by explaining how "I barely survived the storm". Return to the Table of Contents Here are some important tips to help you understand Phrases: For example: The dependent clause "Whenever I go to the beach" contains a subordinating conjunction, a subject, and a verb. However, the phrase "to go to the beach soon" does not contain any of the above. Instead, it is made up of an infinitive phrase acting like a noun direct object, a prepositional phrase, and an adverb. To make this a clause, we would need to add a subject and verb. For example: I love to trail run on the weekends. In this sentence, the infinitive phrase acts like a noun and replaces the direct object of the verb, love. Here is another example: I love to run in the woods to calm my mind. In this sentence, the prepositional phrase replaces the adverb by describing where the speaker "loves to run". For example: Palms sweaty, he passed the baton carefully to the next runner. In the sentence above, the participle phrase modifies the subject, he by describing his physical state. Here is another example: Her imagination running wildly, she rapidly turned the pages of the novel as quickly as she read them. In the sentence above, the absolute phrase her imagination running wildly modifies the entire sentence by describing the overall experience of the reader and explaining why she turned the pages so quickly. Return to the Table of Contents Now that you understand how phrases function in sentences, review the anchor chart below and complete the review to fully understand how to use and recognize phrases. Refer to the graphic below to learn the different types of Phrases: This list, obviously, does not include all possible phrases; however, it is meant to be used as a guide while identifying different types of phrases. Now that you know some common phrases, test your ability to find these in the sentences below. Select the noun phrase(s) in the sentences below. Remember, noun phrases consist of the main noun, articles, and modifiers. 1. The girl with red hair clutched the bright copper key. In this sentence, there are two noun phrases! The first noun phrase is the subject of the sentence: the girl with red hair. The second noun phrase is the direct object, the bright copper key. 2. The forest smelled like fir, goldenrod, and rich soil. In this sentence, there are two noun phrases. The first noun phrase in this sentence is the subject, the forest. The second noun phrase is in the last prepositional phrase, fir, goldenrod, and rich soil. Select the verb phrase(s) in the sentences below. Remember, verb phrases consist only of the main verb and a helping or auxiliary verb. 3. A ferocious-looking dog was barking repeatedly at us while we were walking yesterday. In this sentence, there are two verb phrases. The first is was barking, and the second is were walking. 4. Your package will be shipped first thing in the morning. In this sentence, the verb phrase is will be shipped. Select the participle phrase(s) in the sentences below. Remember, particle phrases modify nouns by acting like adjectives. 5. Waving rapidly, the two red flags warned swimmers not to enter the water. In this sentence, waving rapidly is the participle phrase that modifies the subject, the two red flags. 6. Students confused by the assignment were asked to stay after class for extra help. In this sentence, confused by the assignment is the participle phrase that modifies the subject, students. Pro tip: Remember, phrases are always made up of two or more words, but do not contain both a subject and a verb. Different types of phrases have different functions; for example, while one phrase may modify a word in a sentence, another phrase may replace that word altogether. For additional practice, check out our Phrases practice content on Albert. Return to the Table of Contents Feeling confident in your understanding of Phrases? Take this short six-question quiz to see what you've learned: 1. Can a gerund phrase replace any noun in a sentence? Answer: YesCorrect Explanation: That's right! Gerund phrases can replace any noun in a sentence, from subjects to objects to subject complements.Incorrect Explanation: Sorry, that's not right! Remember, gerund phrases can replace any noun in a sentence, from subjects to objects to subject complements. 2. Do infinitive phrases modify or replace adjectives, adverbs, and nouns? Answer: ReplaceCorrect Explanation: That's right! Infinitive phrases replace adjectives, adverbs, and nouns instead of modifying them.Incorrect Explanation: Sorry, that's not right! Remember, infinitive phrases replace adjectives, adverbs, and nouns instead of modify them. Participle and prepositional phrases are modifiers. 3. In this sentence, is the infinitive phrase, "to sleep" replacing a noun, adverb, or adjective? I want to go to sleep before midnight tonight. Answer: AdverbCorrect Explanation: That's right! The infinitive phrase, to sleep answers where the speaker "wants to go", and is therefore replacing an adverb in this sentence.Incorrect Explanation: Sorry, that's not right! Remember, infinitive phrases that answer questions such as how, why, when, and where replace adverbs in sentences because they modify the verb. 4. In this sentence, is the underlined phrase a participle phrase or an absolute phrase? Her fur a tangled mess, the poodle reluctantly agreed to a bath. Answer: AbsoluteCorrect Explanation: That's right! In this sentence, the phrase her fur a tangled mess is absolute because it modifies the entire independent clause instead of just one word. The absolute clause answers why the poodle agreed to a bath.Incorrect Explanation: Sorry, that's not right! Remember, absolute phrases modify entire clauses while participle phrases only modify one noun. 5. In this sentence, is the underlined phrase a participle phrase or an absolute phrase? Muscles flexed, he swiftly took down his opponent on the wrestling mat. Answer: ParticipleCorrect Explanation: That's right! In this sentence, the phrase muscles flexed is participial because it acts like an adjective by modifying the noun, he.Incorrect Explanation: Sorry, that's not right! Remember, absolute phrases modify entire clauses while participle phrases only modify one noun. 6. In this sentence, what type of phrase is underlined? We were going to ride our bikes this afternoon, but it started raining. Answer: Verb phraseCorrect Explanation: That's right! The underlined phrase, were going is a verb phrase that combines the main verb with an auxiliary or helping verb.Incorrect Explanation: Sorry, that's not right! Remember, verb phrases consist of the main verb and any auxiliary or helping verbs. For additional practice with phrases, check out our practice on Albert: Identifying Phrases. Return to the Table of Contents For many students, phrases often come across as intimidating and even confusing. With so many varieties and functions of phrases, it is easy to understand our students' hesitation to tackle this specific grammatical concept. When approaching teaching phrases for the first time, consult the Common Core English Language Progressive Skills Chart to first identity where you students stand in their grammatical understanding, but also how to best help your students reach a point where they can comfortably get to know phrases and even practice using them in their writing. For specific standards on the different types of phrases, check out the Common Core State Standards website. Albert's Identifying Phrases Practice is a helpful tool for students who are still getting familiar with these different types of phrases. Once students have this down, they can move on to practicing with each type of phrase individually. When ready, teachers can assign pre-made assessments and quizzes to check students' overall understanding. Phrases can be divided into three main categories: noun phrases, verb phrases, and modifiers. Noun phrases are made up of a noun and all its modifiers. These phrases can replace any noun in a sentence. Verb phrases are made up of the main verb and its auxiliaries. Unlike adjectives, adverbs that modify the verb are not considered part of a verb phrase. There are many other types of phrases that act as different types of modifiers. Prepositional phrases, participle phrases, infinitive phrases, and absolute phrases are just a few! Be sure to check out our grammar course for more phrase practice. You can also access over 3,400 high-quality questions that address nearly every grammatical concept. Albert has hundreds of grammar practice questions with detailed explanations to help you master concepts. Save teacher time with premium standards-aligned student practice for every department. In a single platform, Albert elevates the quality of content, simplifies data-driven differentiation, and improves exam performance for grades 5-12.Talk to Us home▸sitemap▸A-Z grammar terms ▸prepositional phrase A prepositional phrase is a phrase that includes: a preposition the object of the preposition any modifiers Here is an example of a prepositional phrase (shaded): The witch sat on her broom. ("On her broom" is a prepositional phrase. "On" is the preposition, "broom" is the object of the preposition, and "her" is a modifier.) Table of Contents More Examples of Prepositional Phrases Video Lesson Harder Examples of Prepositional Phrases The Function of Prepositional Phrases Prepositional Phrases As Adjectives Prepositional Phrases As Adverbs Real-Life Examples of Prepositional Phrases Why Prepositional Phrases Are Important Test Time! In each example, the prepositional phrase is shaded and the preposition is bold. A singer with passion A town near London Keep in time. He acts without thinking. Here is a 9-minute video summarizing this lesson on prepositional phrases. video lesson Are you a visual learner? Do you prefer video to text? Here is a list of all our grammar videos. Harder Examples of Prepositional Phrases It is a little bit more complicated than shown above because the noun can be anything that plays the role of a noun. For example: It's a present from her. (Remember that the "noun" can be a pronoun.) She stole it from the man across the street. (Here, the noun is a noun phrase.) It's obvious from what he said. (Here, the noun is a noun clause.) The noun that follows the preposition (i.e., everything that's shaded but not bolded in the examples) is called the object of a preposition. There will often be modifiers in the object of the preposition making it a noun phrase. For example: I sat with Simba. (There are no modifiers in this example.) I sat with the wonderful Simba. (With the modifiers "the" and "wonderful," the object of the preposition is now a noun phrase.) Here is another example: He beat Lee without trying. (There are no modifiers in this example. The object of the preposition is a noun. In this case, it's a gerund.) He beat Lee without overly trying. (With the modifier "overly," the object of the preposition is a noun phrase.) The Function of Prepositional Phrases Prepositional phrases function as either adjectives modifying nouns or adverbs modifying verbs. For example: Prepositional phrases functioning as adjectives that modify nouns: Do you mean that boy in the corner? I know the policeman with the radio. (In these two examples, the prepositional phrases are functioning as adjectives. They are modifying nouns ("that boy" and "the policeman"). As they are multi-word adjectives, these prepositional phrases are a type of adjectival phrase.) Prepositional phrases functioning as adverbs that modify verbs: I live near the stadium. She speaks with notable enthusiasm. (In these two examples, the prepositional phrases are functioning as adverbs. They are modifying verbs ("live" and "speaks"). As they are multi-word adverbs, these prepositional phrases are a type of adverbial phrase). Here are some more prepositional phrases functioning as adjectives: Please buy the scarf with dots. (The prepositional phrase describes the noun "scarf." We could have written "dotted scarf," which proves that "with dots" is functioning as an adjective.) The man on the radio has a boring voice. (The prepositional phrase describes the noun "man.") Give me one of the brown ones. (The prepositional phrase describes the pronoun "one.") Here are some more prepositional phrases functioning as adverbs: Lee raised his small mackerel with utmost pride. (The prepositional phrase modifies the verb "raised." It is an adverb of manner; i.e., it tells us how he raised it. We could have written "proudly raised," which proves that "with utmost pride" is functioning as an adverb.) Before the war, Chris played football for Barnstoneworth United. (The prepositional phrase modifies the verb "played." It is an adverb of time; i.e., it tells us when he played.) Dawn is tired from the hike. (The prepositional phrase modifies the verb "is." It is an adverb of reason; i.e., it tells us why she is tired.) Lee lives in that fridge. (The prepositional phrase modifies the verb "lives." It is an adverb of place; i.e., it tells us where he lives.) In these real-life examples, the prepositional phrases are functioning as adjectives: The best defence against the atom bomb is not to be there when it goes off. (The 1949 British Army Journal) In 1938, Time Magazine chose Adolf Hitler for man of the year. Red sky at night, shepherds' delight. Blue sky at night, day. These prepositional phrases are functioning as adverbs: I used to work in a fire-hydrant factory. You couldn't park near the place. (Comedian Steven Wright) Never ruin an apology with an excuse. (American Founding Father Benjamin Franklin) This is not a novel to be tossed aside lightly. It should be thrown with great force. (Satirist Dorothy Parker) In the example below, the first prepositional phrase functions as an adjective while the second functions as an adverb: A mathematical formula for happiness: reality divided by expectations. There were two ways to be happy: improve your reality or lower your expectations. (Author Jodi Picoult) It can get quite complicated. For example: A raisin dropped in a glass of fresh champagne will bounce up and down continuously from the bottom of the glass to the top. (Here, "in a glass of fresh champagne" is a prepositional phrase functioning as an adverb that includes a prepositional phrase ("of fresh champagne") functioning as an adjective. Similarly, "from the bottom of the glass to the top" is functioning as an adverb and also includes a prepositional phrase ("of the glass") functioning as an adjective.) There are three good reasons to care about prepositional phrases. Be careful when a prepositional phrase precedes a verb. A box of knives were found at the scene. (Here, the subject is not "knives." It is "box." Therefore, the verb should be singular and not plural. This should read "A box of knives was found at the scene.") A combination of factors were the cause of the crash. ("Combination" is singular. The subject is not "factors.") Bernard Shaw hasn't an en