

Advice for Parents

Jargon busters

Grammar glossary



Key:

Words in **bold** are examples.

Words underlined are terms you can look up in this glossary.

Words in *italics* are important to the definition.

Term

Definition

Adjective

Adjectives tell you more about a noun (for example: '**the red dress**').

Adverb

Adverbs are generally defined as words that can tell you more about what happens in a sentence by adding to the meaning of the verb. They can answer the questions 'how?' ('**happily**'), 'when?' ('**always**') or 'where?' ('**here**'). However, adverbs have many other functions.

For instance, adverbs of degree, such as '**very**' or '**extremely**', answer the question 'how much?' They can tell you more about an adjective ('**very happy**') or another adverb ('**extremely quickly**').

Adverbs such as '**possibly**', '**probably**' and '**maybe**' express degrees of possibility. Like modal verbs, they are often used to avoid being too definite when making a point. They help to 'cover' the speaker/writer by suggesting that you cannot be sure of a fact, or there may be some exceptions to the point being made.

For example: '**CO2 emissions are probably a major cause of global warming.**'

Adverbs such as '**also**', '**however**' and '**therefore**' are frequently used to make cohesive links between sentences. They usually come at or near the beginning of a new sentence. In informal speech and writing we often use coordinating conjunctions, such as '**and**', '**but**' and '**so**', instead of these more formal-sounding adverbs.

Adverbial

A phrase that acts like an adverb is known as an adverbial. A fronted adverbial is one that comes at the start of a sentence.

Agreement

A grammatical link between two or more words in a sentence to show that they go together. For example, agreement of person ('**I hurt my knee.**') or of gender ('**She lost her bag.**') or of number ('**He is happy.**'; '**We are happy.**')

Ambiguity

Ambiguity is where there is a doubtful or double meaning, or where the meaning is not clear. Sometimes this is intentional, but often it is not. Ambiguity can be caused by inadequate or incorrect punctuation.

Antonym

Antonyms are words that are opposite in meaning, such as '**hot**' and '**cold**'.

Apostrophe	The apostrophe is a <u>punctuation mark</u> that is used to show either that letters have been missed out (for example: 'I've', 'can't'), or possession (for example: 'the dog's tail'; 'the dogs' tails').
Auxiliary verb	The auxiliary verbs are 'be', 'have' and 'do' and the modal verbs. They can be used to make questions and negative statements. In addition: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'be' is used in the progressive and passive • 'have' is used in the perfect • 'do' is used to form questions and negative statements if no other auxiliary verb is present.
Bullet point	Bullet points organise information into a list, with each bullet point starting on a new line. In some cases, the printed dot is known as a bullet and the word or sentence following it is sometimes known as the point .
Brackets	Brackets are <u>punctuation marks</u> that keep words cordoned off from the rest of the <u>sentence</u> . The enclosed words add extra information to, but are not essential to, the meaning of the sentence.
Clause	A <u>clause</u> is a group of words that can be used either as a whole <u>sentence</u> or as an important part of a sentence. It is built around a <u>verb</u> .
Cohesion	Cohesion refers to the devices used to structure and order a text or <u>sentence</u> and give it meaning. Grammatical cohesive devices include <u>conjunctions</u> and <u>prepositions</u> , which make links within and between sentences; <u>adverbials</u> , which act like signposts in a text, indicating, for example, time and sequence; <u>nouns</u> , <u>noun phrases</u> and <u>pronouns</u> , which refer backwards and forwards between sentences. For example: 'Katy knocked on <i>the door</i> . Her mum opened <i>it</i> .'
Colon	Colons are a form of <u>punctuation</u> used to precede and introduce a list, quotation, example or explanation. They are also used at the end of a lead-in <u>phrase</u> or lead-in <u>sentence</u> and indicate the meaning 'as follows'. Note: if the words 'as follows' are included explicitly, the correct following punctuation is a <u>full stop</u> rather than a colon.
Collective noun	A collective noun is a singular <u>noun</u> that refers to a group of people or things, for example: 'a herd of cows '.
Comma	A comma is a <u>punctuation mark</u> that separates parts of a <u>sentence</u> or items in a list. We often read it as a short pause.
Command	A command is a <u>sentence</u> that tells someone to do something. For example: 'Sit down.'; 'Open the door.'; 'Please tell me your name.'
Common noun	Common nouns are the names given to general categories, such as 'girl', 'city', 'dog' and 'car'.

- Comparative** Comparative adjectives and adverbs are used when we are comparing something to something else. The regular comparative form has the word 'more' before it or an '-est' ending. Look out for irregular forms, for example: **good, better best; bad, worse, worst.**
- Complement** When a clause is built around the verb 'to be', it is not an SVO (subject-verb-object) clause. Instead of an object, it may have a complement. The complement refers back to the subject and tells us more about it. For example: in the sentence '**I am happy**', 'I' is the subject, 'am' is the verb and '**happy**' is the complement.
- Compound word** A compound word is formed when two words are joined together to make a new word. For example: '**playground**', '**ice-cream**' and '**airport**'.
- Conjunction** A conjunction is a linking word. It can link two words, two phrases or two clauses together.
Co-ordinating conjunctions, such as '**and**', '**so**', '**but**', and '**or**', link words, phrases or two main clauses.
Subordinating conjunctions, such as '**because**', and '**when**', introduce subordinate clauses.
- Co-ordination** Co-ordination is when two words, phrases, or main clauses are linked as an equal pair by a co-ordinating conjunction, such as '**and**', '**so**', '**but**', and '**or**'. For example: '**Max likes football and Andy likes tennis**'; '**Arun was hungry so his mum made him some dinner**'.
- Connective** 'Connective' is an informal (non-grammatical) name for any word that helps make connections between different parts of a text. Prepositions, conjunctions and adverbs can all act as connectives, showing the links between phrases, clauses and whole sentences.
- Dash** A dash is a punctuation mark that shows a sharp break in a sentence.
- Determiner** A determiner is a word that 'homes in on' a noun (for example: '**the book**', '**a book**', '**this book**', '**your book**'). It usually comes at the beginning of a noun phrase.
- Dialect** A dialect is the use of words or grammar belonging to a particular country, part of a country, or way of life.
- Direct speech** In direct speech, the words that someone has said are reported exactly and are written down within speech marks (inverted commas).
- Ellipsis** An ellipsis is the leaving out of a word or phrase where the remaining text still makes sense in light of the context.
 Sometimes, words are replaced with shorter alternatives. For example, '**James knew the way home better than Alice did**' is much shorter than '**James knew the way home better than Alice knew the way home**'.
 Sometimes the missing words are not replaced at all. For example, if someone holding a bunch of grapes asks, '**Want some?**', the fact that it is the *grapes* being offered can be understood from the context.

Ellipsis is also the name for the punctuation mark (...) used to indicate missing words.

- Exclamation mark** An exclamation mark is a punctuation mark (!) used at the end of a sentence, in place of a full stop, to express heightened emotion, emphasis, expression and/or volume. It is also sometimes used as a sign for danger.
- Formal language** Formal language is a type of language that is appropriate for formal purposes and settings. It features Standard English rather than slang or dialect, and uses more precise or polite vocabulary. Formal language also avoids contractions (such as 'don't') and personal remarks or opinions.
- Fronted adverbial** A fronted adverbial is an adverbial that comes at the start of a sentence.
- Full stop** Full stops (.) show the end of a complete sentence. They chunk up texts into units of meaning.
- Hyphen** A hyphen is a punctuation mark (-) which joins words, or parts of words, together to clarify meaning.
For example: '**mother-in-law**' and '**re-cover**'.
Hyphens are also used to show that a word has been broken in two because it won't fit on the end of a line.
- Inverted comma** Inverted commas are punctuation marks that show exactly what someone has said. They are also known as speech marks or quotation marks. They can be double ("") or single ('); with children it is usually best to use double inverted commas.
- Irregular verb** To form the past tense of a regular verb, we add -ed. Irregular past tenses are formed in other ways, for example: '**think/thought**'; '**grow/grew**'. These changes to the form of the verb are called inflections.
- Main clause** A main clause is a clause that could be used as a sentence on its own.
- Modal verb** Modal verbs come before the main verb to suggest degrees of possibility, ability or obligation.
- Non-standard English** Standard English is the English that we speak and write in school and in formal situations. In informal situations, people sometimes use other, non-standard, forms. There are many non-standard forms of verbs.
- Noun** A noun is a name of a person, place, animal or thing.
Common nouns are the names given to general categories, such as '**girl**', '**city**', '**dog**' and '**car**'. Proper nouns are the specific names of people, places, animals and things, such as '**Beth**', '**Edinburgh**', '**Lassie**' and '**Mercedes**'.
Concrete nouns name items we can see and touch, while abstract nouns name things that exist only in our minds, such as '**beauty**', '**truth**' and '**justice**'.
Nouns are an important element in a clause, because they are used to name the subject or object of the verb. For example, in the phrase '**Max ate chips**', '**ate**' is the verb, '**Max**' is the subject and '**chips**' is the object. See also noun phrase and pronoun.

- Noun phrase** A noun phrase is a phrase built around a noun, for example, 'girl'. It usually contains a determiner ('**the girl**'), and may also include adjectives ('**the little dark-haired girl**'), further noun phrases ('**the little dark-haired girl with the dirty knees**') or even a relative clause ('**the little dark-haired girl with the dirty knees who's playing in the garden**').
- Object** The object of a sentence is normally a noun, pronoun or noun phrase that comes straight after the verb. It shows what the verb is 'acting upon'.
For example: '**Suzie buttered the bread**'.
- Parenthesis** A parenthesis is a word, phrase or clause that has been inserted into a sentence as an explanation, aside or afterthought. It is usually marked off by brackets, commas or dashes. You can take it out and the sentence will still make complete sense.
For example: '**The wolf – a huge, slavering beast – prowled around the field**'.
- Passive** The sentence '**The cat was chased by the dog**' is in the passive voice. '**The cat**' is the subject of the sentence and it is having something done to it.
- Past tense** See tense.
- Perfect form** The perfect form of a verb involves the auxiliary verb 'have'. It is used to indicate the state of the verb's subject. For example, '**John has eaten his dinner**' suggests that John is, at present, full of dinner.
The two most common forms of the perfect are present perfect, for example, '**The pirates have laid a trap**', and past perfect, '**The pirates had laid a trap**'.
- Person** The person of a text is determined by its pronouns according to whether they indicate the speaker (1st person, for example: '**I**', '**me**'); the listener (2nd person, for example: '**you**'); or a third party (3rd person, for example: '**she**', '**he**', '**her**', '**him**', '**it**').
- Personal pronoun** Personal pronouns are used in place of the names of the people or things in sentences. For example: '**I**', '**you**', '**he**', '**she**', '**it**', '**we**', '**they**', '**me**', '**him**', '**her**', '**us**', and '**them**'.
- Phrase** A phrase is a group of words working together as part of a sentence. In a noun phrase, the noun is the most important word.
- Possessive pronoun** A possessive pronoun is a pronoun that shows ownership. For example: '**my**', '**mine**', '**his**', '**hers**', '**theirs**'.
- Prefix** A prefix is a group of letters we can add to the beginning of the word in order to change it into another word. For example: '**un-**', '**super-**', '**mini-**'.
- Preposition** A preposition is a grammatical word that makes links between parts of a sentence. Prepositions may be used to link a noun, noun phrase or pronoun to some other word, or words, in a sentence.
It usually comes at the beginning of a phrase. For example: '**up the street**'; '**round the bend**'; '**with a big smile**'; '**after lunch**'; '**after that**'. These phrases are often adverbial.

Present tense	See <u>tense</u> .
Progressive form	The progressive form of the <u>verb</u> marks actions in progress. For example: ' were relaxing ' – past, ' are relaxing ' – present.
Pronoun	A pronoun is a word that stands in for a <u>noun</u> or <u>noun phrase</u> . The most common type of pronoun is the <u>personal pronoun</u> , but many other words can also be used as pronouns, for example: ' this ', ' that ', ' who ' and ' which '. Pronouns can be singular (for example: ' I ', ' she ') or plural (for example: 'we', 'they').
Proper noun	Proper nouns are the specific names of people, places, animals and things, for example: ' Beth ', ' Edinburgh ', ' Lassie ' and ' Mercedes '.
Punctuation	Punctuation is a set of conventions used by writers to help readers make sense of a text. It includes spacing conventions such as spaces between words and a new line for a new paragraph. It also includes <u>punctuation marks</u> .
Punctuation mark	Punctuation marks are a set of marks that tell us how to read a piece of writing so that the meaning is clear.
Question mark	A question mark (?) is a special type of <u>full stop</u> , showing that a <u>sentence</u> is a question. It tells the reader that the sentence should be read in a 'questioning' voice.
Regular verb	To form the past <u>tense</u> of a regular <u>verb</u> , we add -ed. <u>Irregular</u> past tenses are formed in other ways, for example ' think/thought '; ' grow/grew '. These changes to the form of the verb are called <u>inflections</u> .
Relative clause	A relative clause is a type of <u>subordinate clause</u> , introduced by a <u>relative pronoun</u> . For example: ' Flora, who was an explorer, set off for the jungle '.
Relative pronoun	A relative pronoun, such as ' who ', ' whose ', ' which ', ' that ', ' where ' and ' when ', is a word that opens a <u>subordinate clause</u> by referring back to the <u>noun</u> or <u>noun phrase</u> which precedes it. The clause adds extra detail and therefore has an adjectival function.
Semi-colon	Semi-colons are a form of <u>punctuation</u> used to separate two <u>main clauses</u> in a sentence. They are also used to separate items in a list if any of the items already contain punctuation (such as a <u>comma</u>).
Sentence	A sentence is a group of words working together to make sense.
Slang	Slang or colloquial language is casual language that is not <u>Standard English</u> . It is often specific to a geographical area, social group or time period.
Speech marks	Speech marks are <u>punctuation marks</u> that show that what someone has said is being reported exactly. They are also known as <u>inverted commas</u> or quotation marks. They can be double (") or single ('); with children it is usually best to use double speech marks.

- Standard English** Standard English is the English that we speak and write in school and in formal situations. In informal situations, people sometimes use other, non-standard, forms. There are many non-standard forms of verbs.
- Statement** A 'straightforward' sentence (one that isn't an exclamation, question or command) is a statement.
- Subject** The subject of a clause tells us what the clause is going to be about, and usually carries out any action expressed by the verb. Most subjects are nouns, noun phrases or pronouns. For example: '**Luke is sleeping**'; '**The boy with red hair is sleeping**'; '**He is sleeping**'.
- Subjunctive** The subjunctive form of a verb is used to create a mood of uncertainty. It refers to something that isn't actually happening. For example: '**I insist that he go at once!**' or '**I would eat a sandwich if I were hungry**'.
- Subordinate clause** A subordinate clause is any clause that could not be used as a sentence on its own. For example: '**We went for a picnic because it was a nice day.**' '**Unfortunately we left the sandwiches, which Dad had made the night before, on the kitchen table.**'
- Subordination** Subordination is when a subordinate clause is joined to a main clause by a subordinating conjunction such as '**because**', and '**when**'. The subordinate clause depends on the main clause to make sense.
For example: '**Max ate a sandwich because he was hungry.**'
- Suffix** A suffix is a letter or letters added at the end of a word to turn it into a different word. For example: '**-ed**' is added to the end of the word '**look**' to make the new word '**looked**'.
- Superlative** When something is superlative we think of it as being higher or greater in quality than anything else. The superlative form of an adjective or adverb usually has the word 'most' before it or an '-est' ending. Look out for irregular forms, for example: **good, better, best, bad, worse, worst**.
- SV, SVO, SVC** All clauses have a subject and a verb, for example '**Max eats**'. These are SV clauses. Some clauses have an object, for example '**Max eats cake**'. These are SVO clauses. Where the clause involves the verb 'to be', it has a complement instead of an object, for example '**Max is hungry**'. These are SVC clauses.
In English, the subject, verb and object/complement always appear in this order. However, adverbial detail can be added in various places.
For example: '**Max eats cake every Tuesday**' or '**Every Tuesday, Max eats cake**'.
- Synonym** Synonyms are words that have similar meanings, for example: '**tiny**' and '**minuscule**'.
- Tag phrases** A tag phrase is a group of words tagged on to an informal sentence.
For example: '**John's coming to school today, isn't he?**'; '**Mind you, it's getting late.**'

- Tense** All verbs can be changed between the simple present and past tense. Usually the tense of a verb is signalled by changing the ending. For example: present – ‘**play**’//‘**plays**’; past – ‘**played**’. However, some verbs are irregular. For example: present – ‘**go**’//‘**goes**’; past – ‘went’.
- English doesn't have a future tense because there is no way of changing verbs to convey the future, so auxiliary verbs must be added instead.
- Verb** A verb is the word that indicates what is happening in a clause or a sentence. It's the most important word class because without verbs nothing could happen.
- Verb inflection** A verb inflection is a change to the form of a verb, for example: ‘**walk/walked**’; ‘**do/did**’; ‘**go/went**’.
- Word** A word is a unit of language consisting of a group of sounds or letters which are attributed, and can communicate, meaning. In writing, a word has a space on each side of it. In very slow speech, a word has silence on each side of it.
- Word class** Words work together to make sense, and we classify them according to the jobs they do in a sentence. There are eight classes that words can belong to: verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions, pronouns and determiners.

Reading glossary

Here's a quick guide to some of the names and terms used in the world of education.

Attainment targets

National targets that set out the standards which children should be attaining at various stages in their education.

Book Bands

Book Bands for Guided Reading is a handbook that helps teachers select books at the right level for young children to read. Many schools now level their books according to 'Book Bands'.

Children will progress up through the bands, which are colour coded as follows:

Band 1 – Pink

Band 2 – Red

Band 3 – Yellow

Band 4 – Blue

Band 5 – Green

Band 6 – Orange

Band 7 – Turquoise

Band 8 – Purple

Band 9 – Gold

Band 10 – White

Comprehension

Comprehension is the ability to understand what is being read. Sometimes this happens at a simple, surface level; sometimes it involves forming a deeper understanding.

Context

The context of a book is what it is about. This will include the subject, the setting, the characters, the time, the theme and the type of writing.

Decoding

Working out what words mean – cracking the code!

Department for Education (DfE)

The Government department responsible for education.

Early Learning Goals

A nationally agreed set of key learning achievements for the Foundation Stage (see below).

Environmental print

Printed words that appear in the environment – including road signs, labels, posters, adverts, shop signs etc.

Foundation Stage

The first level of education for children between the ages of 3 and 5. This can be in a range of environments including nurseries, playgroups and the Reception class of primary school.

Genre

Stories are often categorised according to different styles or genre, for example, mystery, science fiction, adventure, humour, traditional tales.

Guided reading

In guided reading, the teacher works with a small group of about six children. The children are grouped according to reading ability. The teacher chooses a book at the right level for the children and offers ideas and prompts to help each child read successfully.

High-frequency words (also called 'sight words' and 'key words')

A set of essential words that children need to recognise on sight, for example, 'and', 'the', 'my', 'said', 'she', 'is', 'from'.

Independent reading

Reading that children do without the support of the teacher.

Key Stages

The different stages of education outlined by the National Curriculum (England only):

Key Stage 1 – children aged 5–7

Key Stage 2 – children aged 7–11

Key Stage 3 – children aged 11–14

Key Stage 4 – children aged 14–16

Key words (also called 'sight words' and 'high-frequency words')

A set of essential words that children need to recognise on sight, for example, 'and', 'the', 'my', 'said', 'she', 'is', 'from'.

Literacy

The ability to communicate with others through reading, writing, speaking and listening.

National Curriculum

A framework for teaching a broad range of subjects across all Key Stages (England only).

OfSTED (Office for Standards in Education)

The Government department responsible for assessing and monitoring education standards.

OfSTED inspectors regularly visit schools to assess the quality of teaching and offer guidance on areas for improvement.

Phoneme

The smallest unit of sound in a word.

Phonemic awareness

An awareness of the sounds (phonemes) that make up words.

Phonics

The 'science' of word sounds. The teaching of phonics helps children to understand the relationship between written letters and spoken sounds.

SATs – Standard Attainment Tests

National tests in the core subjects of English (reading, writing and spelling), maths and science.

The tests are taken at the end of Key Stage 1 (English and maths only) and again at the end of Key Stage 2 (English, maths and science).

Sentence level work

Teaching that focuses on grammar and punctuation.

Shared reading

Shared reading involves a whole class in reading and exploring a book, or part of a book, together with the teacher. Most schools use enlarged texts or 'big books' for this purpose.

Sight words (also called highfrequency words and key words)

A set of essential words that children need to recognise on sight – e.g. and the my said she is from

Special Eduactional Needs (SEN)

A range of special circumstances that can affect children's ability to learn or to participate in learning.

Text level work

Teaching that looks at a whole text and focuses on composition and comprehension.

Text types

A term used, particularly in reference to nonfiction, to describe different forms of writing – e.g. explanations, instructions, reports, biographies, dictionaries.

Word level work

Teaching that focuses on word sounds and spellings.

