

Grammar Terms

(Ron Jones, MS, ACSM Health/Fitness Instructor, Corporate Wellcoach)



Adjective: (ADJ) A word *used to modify a noun* or a word or word group used as a noun.

- ▶ She rode her white horse this morning.

Adverb: (ADV) A word used to *modify a verb*, an adjective, another verb, or a whole sentence.

- ▶ If you travel south, you will hit a bad storm. (“south” modifies the verb “travel”)

Clause: A group of *related words containing a subject and predicate*. An **independent clause** can stand by itself as a sentence; a **dependent (or subordinate) clause** cannot stand by itself.

- Independent (Main) Clause: We can go to the movies.
- Dependent (Subordinate) Clause: We can go if Julie gets back on time.
 - ▶ We can go to the movies if Julie gets back on time.
(independent) (dependent)
 - ▶ If Julie gets back on time, we can go to the movies.
(dependent) (independent)

Conjunction: (C) A word that *joins words or groups of words*.

- ▶ Fruits and vegetables are healthy foods. (joins words)
- ▶ My friends asked me to come and lift weights with them. (joins phrases)

Coordinating Conjunction: A word that *connects other words or word groups* of equal grammatical rank.

- ▶ The lights went out, but the doctors and nurses continued working on the patients.

Correlative Adverbs: A special group of adverbs that *always travel in pairs*.

- ▶ Neither Alex, nor Veronica, went to the movies.
- ▶ Either you pay for the tickets, or I will not go to the movies.

Comma Splice: A sentence error in which two main clauses are separated by a comma with no coordinating conjunction.

- ▶ The book was long, it contained useful information. (comma splice—A comma cannot be used to separate two independent clauses unless a coordinating conjunction is present.)
- ▶ The book was long, but it contained useful information. (revised—“But” is a coordinating conjunction introducing the independent clause.)
- ▶ The book was long; it contained useful information. (revised—The semi-colon separates the two independent clauses.)

Conjunctive Adverb: An adverb that *relates two main clauses* in a sentence.

- ▶ We had hoped to go to the game together; however, Marcos stayed home because he was tired.

Fragment: A sentence error in which a group of words is set off as a sentence even though it begins with a subordinating word or lacks a subject or a predicate or both.

- ▶ She wasn't in shape for the race. Which she had hoped to win. (“Which” is a relative pronoun that makes the clause dependent or subordinate and the second sentence fragmented.)
- ▶ She wasn't in shape for the race, which she had hoped to win. (revised—“Which” introduces the independent clause.)

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Noun: (N) A word that names a *person, place, thing, quality, or idea*. **Common Nouns** are words like: women, team, game, and house. **Proper Nouns** are words like: Disneyland, Los Angeles, Sarah, and Robert. Proper nouns **must always** be capitalized!

- ▶ The women on the team went to Disneyland after the big game.

Phrase: A group of related words that *lacks a subject or a predicate or both* and that acts as a single part of speech.

- ▶ She said the movie has started. (verb phrase)

Predicate: The part of a sentence *other than the subject*.

- ▶ Juan lost his book on the way to school.

Preposition: (PRE) A word that *links a noun, a pronoun, or a word or word group* acting as a noun to the rest of the sentence.

- ▶ If Theresa does not hear from her friends before the game, she will not go to the dance.

Pronoun: (PRO) A word *used in place of a noun or noun phrase*.

- ▶ Who said I wanted to stay home? (“Who” is an example of a relative pronoun.)

Sentence: A complete unit of thought, consisting of at least a subject and a predicate that are not introduced by a subordinating word. *Note: Every sentence *must have an action* (or state of being). Sentences are classified by structure in four ways:

1. **Simple Sentence:** Contains only *one main clause*. (I’m leaving.)
2. **Compound Sentence:** Contains *at least two main clauses*. (I’d like to stay, but I’m leaving.)
3. **Complex Sentence:** Contains *one main clause and at least one subordinate clause*. (If you let me go now, you’ll be sorry.)
4. **Compound-Complex Sentence:** Contains *at least two main clauses and at least one subordinate clause*. (I’m leaving because you want me to, but I’d rather stay.)

Subject: (SUB) The noun, or word group acting as a noun, *that performs the action* expressed in the predicate of a sentence or clause. *To find a subject: ask who or what before the verb.

- ▶ Juan lost his book on the way to school.

Subordinate Clause: It is just like a main clause *except that it begins with a subordinating word*. The subordinating word (called a subordinating conjunction) expresses particular relationships between the clauses they introduce and the main clauses to which they are attached.

- ▶ The sky darkened. (This is a main, or independent, clause which can stand alone as a sentence.)
- ▶ when the sky darkened (“When” is the subordinating conjunction that introduces the main clause.)

Subordinating Conjunction: A word that *begins a subordinate (or dependent) clause* and links it to a main clause. It shows a logical relationship between ideas.

- ▶ The laborers sing while they work.

Verb: (V) A word or group of words *indicating action* or state of being of a subject.

- ▶ Fred ran for president. (“Ran” is the *main verb*.)
- ▶ Fred was elected president of the car club. (“Was elected” is an example of a *verb group*.)

Reference: Fowler, H. Ramsey, and Jane E. Aaron. The Little, Brown Handbook. 5th ed. New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 1995.

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