

Basic English Grammar Rules

Some of the most basic and important English grammar rules relate directly to sentence structure. These rules specify that:

- A singular subject needs a singular predicate.
- A sentence needs to express a complete thought.

Another term for a sentence is an independent clause:

- Clauses, like any sentence, have a subject and predicate too. If a group of words does not have a subject and predicate, it is a phrase.
- If a clause can stand alone and make a complete thought, then it is independent and can be called a sentence.
- If clauses do not express a complete thought, they are called dependent clauses. An example of a dependent clause, which is not a sentence, is "when I finish my work." A dependent clause needs an independent clause to make it whole.

Subjects and Predicates

Basic to any language is the sentence, which expresses a complete thought and consists of a subject and a predicate.

- The **subject** is the star of the sentence; the person, animal, or thing that is the focus of it.
- The **predicate** will tell the action that the subject is taking or tell something about the subject.

Basic Parts of Speech

Once you have a general idea of the basic grammar rules for sentence structure, it is also helpful to learn about the parts of speech:

- A **noun** names a person, animal, place, thing, quality, idea, activity, or feeling. A noun can be singular, plural, or possessive.
- A **pronoun** is a word that takes the place of a noun, like "I", "you", or "they."
- A **verb** shows action and can be a main verb or a helping verb, like "were" or "has." Verbs also indicate tense and sometimes change their form to show past, present, or future tense. Linking verbs link the subject to the rest of the sentence and examples are: "appear" and "seem."
- An **adjective** modifies a noun or a pronoun. It adds meaning by telling which one, what kind, or describing it in other ways.
- An **adverb** will modify a verb and tell more about it, like how much, when, where, why, or how.
- A **preposition** shows a relationship between nouns or pronouns. It is often used with a noun to show location, like "beside," "in," or "on". It can also show time, direction, motion, manner, reason, or possession.

- **Conjunctions** connect two words, phrases, or clauses. Common conjunctions are "and", "but", and "or."

Mention needs to be made about other types of words that are considered by some to be parts of speech.

- One of them is the **interjection**. It shows emotion and examples are "hurray", "uh-oh", and "alas."
- **Articles** are very useful little words. Indefinite articles are "a" and "an" and "the" is a definite article.

Punctuation

To fully understand basic grammar rules, you also need to look at punctuation rules.

- **Capitalization** is important. All sentences must start with a capital, or upper-case, letter. Titles of people, books, magazines, movies, specific places, etc. are capitalized. Organizations and compass points are capitalized.
- Every sentence needs a **punctuation mark** at the end of it. These include a period, exclamation mark, or question mark.
- **Colons** are used to separate a sentence from a list of items, to introduce a long, direct quote, or between two sentences (or clauses) when the second one explains the first.
- **Semicolons** can take the place of a conjunction and are placed before introductory words like "therefore" or "however." They are also used to separate a list of things if there are commas within each unit.
- There are a lot of rules for **commas**. The basic ones are that commas separate things in a series and go wherever there is a pause in the sentence. They surround the name of a person being addressed, separate the day of the month from the year in a date, and separate a town from the state.
- **Parentheses** enclose things that clarify or numbers and letters that are part of a list.
- **Apostrophes** are used in contractions to take the place of one or more letters and also to show possession. An apostrophe and "s" is added if the noun is singular and an apostrophe alone is added if the noun is plural.