

Grammar

There has been a lot of discussion recently about literacy, so we thought it would be a good opportunity to look at the elements of grammar. Grammar is there to give us a set of rules for written and spoken English. Due to a lack of understanding of the rules or through carelessness some people make language errors. Such errors can lead to misunderstanding and a failure in communication. It helps to understand why errors are made if you make sure you know the names and the use of the various parts of speech.

Noun – a word used as a name of a person, thing or idea. The noun is the subject of the sentence, without a noun the sentence will not be complete.

- The **woman** is going to **Hong Kong**. The **Principal** is giving some **money** to charity.

Pronoun – a word used in place of a noun, to avoid repeating the noun.

- **We** hurried. **They** are pleased. I need **it** now. **He** will go tomorrow.
- When using pronouns we need to ensure that they refer to the correct noun, to avoid any ambiguity, for example: If the baby goat doesn't thrive on fresh milk, then boil it.

Collective noun – a word used in the singular to express many individuals.

- **Furniture, Committee, Children.**

Adjective – a word that says more about a noun, qualifying or describing it.

- An **efficient** secretary. A **fast** typist. A **fair** manager.

Verb – a word around which the whole sentence revolves, which either shows what condition something is in, or which shows what is happening:

- My feet **ache**. I will **open** the door. **Listen** to me. Please **carry** this.
- Some verbs are easier to identify than others. When a clear action is taking place, the verb is obvious. The commuter **walked** to the station. He **sang** happily.
- However, sometimes the action is more passive and so more difficult to spot. They **have** two cats. I **am** hungry. ('am' comes from the verb 'to be' and the 'action' is the state of being.)

Adverb – a word which is to a verb what an adjective is to a noun. It modifies or describes a verb, describing how/when/where/why the action (in the verb) is happening.

- She talked **logically**. I walk **slowly**. I saw it **clearly**.

Participle – a verb form which can be used as an adjective to qualify a noun

- The **laughing** policeman. The **speaking** clock. The **hard-working** student.

Conjunction – a word which links other words (or groups of words) together:

- **And. But. So. Then.**

Preposition – a word used in front of a noun or pronoun to show its connection to another word.

- She left the book **at** work. Thank you for your letter **regarding** our overdue account.
- Conjunctions and prepositions, because of their function, should not appear at the end of a sentence.

The first rule of English language is sentence structure. A sentence is a group of words containing a complete expression of a thought or idea. For a sentence to make sense it should contain a **subject** and a **verb**. The **verb** is the part of the sentence which indicates what someone or something is doing – very often it is the word that shows action.

Grammar is there to help not hinder, it is a set of rules to assist us and make sense of what we write. Make sure that whatever you write makes sense!

