Sprachpraxis Language Terminology

Syntactic form and function

Anglistik und Amerikanistik · *Sprachpraxis* · Saarland University

Using this guide

This guide explains the terminology used in the department's *Sprachpraxis* section and the Language in Use examinations. It helps you identify what a word, phrase, or clause **is** and what it **does in a particular structure**.

Two questions to ask

Form: What kind of unit is it? For example, is it a noun, a noun phrase, or a relative clause?

Function: What role does it have here? For example, is it a subject, a direct object, or a postmodifier?

[The new students] arrived. / We welcomed [the new students].

In both examples, *the new students* is a noun phrase (NP). Its function is subject in the first sentence and direct object in the second.

How the guide is organised

Part 1 Form introduces word classes, phrase types, and clause types. **Part 2 Function** explains their roles within clauses and phrases. The reference sheets bring form and function together in tables and worked analyses.

Start with How square brackets work and Abbreviations and analytical levels. Use the Contents or Term index to find a particular topic.

Reading the examples

Italics identify words, phrases, and sentences being discussed as language examples. Ordinary type gives the explanation. Square brackets mark constituents: units analysed together. Single quotation marks introduce a meaning or paraphrase.

An asterisk before an example marks it as ungrammatical in the intended reading. Explanations and grammatical labels are not part of the example sentence.

Which conventions should you use?

Our principal reference is Peter Fenn and Götz Schwab's *Introducing English Syntax* (2018). For departmental analysis tasks, follow the conventions in this guide wherever they differ from the textbook or another grammar.

Further practice is available through the departmental Form and Function tutor. Use this guide to check the terminology and constituent boundaries in its answers.

Open the Form and Function tutor guide

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The entries below are clickable. The Term index also provides an alphabetical route to key terms.

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How square brackets work

Square brackets show the beginning and end of a **constituent**: a word, phrase, or clause analysed as a unit. Brackets identify its boundaries; a separate label gives its form or function.

Example	What the brackets show
[The very old house] collapsed.	The complete NP is the subject. Its head is *house*.
She is [very proud [of her work]].	The outer AdjP is SC. The inner PP is an adjective complement.
[I know [that Kim left]].	The outer main clause includes the subordinate clause. The inner clause is DO.
[Kim left] and [Pat stayed].	The coordinator *and* stands outside the two coordinated clauses.
[Kim left [because she was tired]].	The subordinator *because* belongs inside its subordinate clause.

Nested and adjacent brackets

Nested brackets show that one constituent contains another. In *[the students [who passed]]*, the relative clause belongs inside the NP. Keep the full outer NP when assigning its function.

Adjacent brackets show separate constituents: *[Kim] [read] [the report]*. Examples may bracket only the constituent relevant to the explanation; the other words still have an analysis.

Discontinuous constituents

A constituent can be interrupted by other material. Its separated parts still belong together.

She [has] certainly [arrived]. / She [turned] the light [off].

In the first example, *has … arrived* is P and *certainly* is a separate A. In the second, *turned … off* is P and *the light* is DO. The dots appear only in explanatory labels; write the example sentence in full.

Labels and other symbols

[the students] = NP gives its form; *[the students]* = subject gives its function. Keep commentary outside constituent brackets.

Round brackets in explanations add information or indicate optional material. An asterisk marks ungrammaticality, as in **She turned off it*. An arrow shows a correspondence between examples, rather than a transformation that always applies mechanically.

Abbreviations and analytical levels

Keep word class, phrase or clause type, and function separate. **Parts of speech** means word classes; it does not include phrase and clause types.

Form abbreviation	Meaning	Function abbreviation	Meaning
NP	Noun phrase	S	Subject
VP	Verb phrase	P	Predicator
AdjP	Adjective phrase	DO	Direct object
AdvP	Adverb phrase	IO	Indirect object
PP	Prepositional phrase	PO	Prepositional object
LV	Lexical verb	SC	Subject complement
aux	Auxiliary verb	OC	Object complement
		A	Adverbial
		L	Linker

The two halves of the table are independent lists, not form–function pairings. *NP/S* is shorthand for ‘NP functioning as subject’. This guide uses PP rather than the alternative abbreviation PrepP.

Work from the whole constituent inwards

[The students [who passed the exam]] celebrated.

Constituent	Form	Function in its containing structure
The students who passed the exam	NP	Subject of the main clause
the	Determiner	Determinative within the NP
students	Noun	Head of the NP
who passed the exam	Finite relative clause	Postmodifier within the NP
who	Relative pronoun; one-word NP	Subject within the relative clause
passed	Finite LV; one-word VP	Predicator within the relative clause
the exam	NP	Direct object within the relative clause
celebrated	Finite LV; one-word VP	Predicator of the main clause

One word can form a phrase. In *She smiled*, *she* is a pronoun and an NP; *smiled* is a verb and a VP. Their clause-level functions are S and P.

Part 1 Form

Nouns

Noun

A word class whose members normally head noun phrases. Nouns can name people, places, things, events, properties, and abstract concepts.

[The students] discussed [the idea].

Students and *idea* are nouns. Each heads a larger NP.

Types and uses of nouns

These classifications can overlap. For example, *idea* is a common, countable, abstract noun.

Term	Explanation	Examples
Countable noun	Allows counting uses with singular and plural forms.	*one idea / three ideas*
Uncountable noun	Normally has no plural or indefinite article in the relevant meaning.	*research / rice*
Plural noun	A noun in a plural form; this describes number.	*cars / children*
Abstract noun	Refers to a concept, quality, or state.	*freedom / hope / truth*
Common noun	Names a class of entities rather than an individual by name.	*student / theory / galaxy*
Proper noun	Names an individual person, place, or other entity; normally capitalised.	*Sarah / England*
Compound noun	A lexical unit made from more than one element.	*toothpaste / bus stop / mother-in-law*

Further detail: Countability can change with meaning. A word may have both countable and uncountable uses; classify the use in the example you are analysing.

Compound words and internal analysis

Compounds can be written as one word, separate words, or hyphenated words. Spelling alone does not determine their internal syntactic analysis.

In *bus stop*, *bus* can be analysed as a noun functioning as premodifier and *stop* as the noun head. The complete expression is also a compound noun in a lexical description.

See Noun phrases for the structure of a complete NP and Functions inside phrases for its internal functions.

Pronouns

Pronoun

A word that commonly forms an NP by itself. It can refer to someone or something, point to something, or express indefinite reference.

[She] likes [him].

She and *him* are personal pronouns. Each is a one-word NP; their functions here are S and DO.

Type	Example
Personal	*[She] likes [him].*
Indefinite	*She told me [something].*
Possessive	*That pen is [mine], not [yours].*
Demonstrative	*[This] is useful.*
Reflexive	*I saw [myself] in the window.*
Reciprocal	*They helped [each other].*
Interrogative	*[Who] called? / [Which] do you prefer?*
Relative	*the student [who called] / the book [that I read]*
Nominal relative	*I kept [what she gave me].*

Pronoun or determiner?

Compare *[This] is useful* with *this book*. In the first, *this* is a pronoun forming an NP. In the second, it is a determiner within the NP *this book*.

Relative and nominal relative pronouns

In *the student [who called]*, *student* is the **antecedent**: the expression to which *who* relates. The relative pronoun also has a function inside its clause; here *who* is S.

In *I kept [what she gave me]*, *what* combines the meanings of an antecedent and a relative pronoun. It means approximately ‘the thing that’. Its clause is a nominal relative clause, not automatically a pseudo-cleft.

See Relative clauses and Nominal clauses and nominal relatives.

Remember: A pronoun does not have to replace a noun mentioned earlier. Identify its class and function in the actual sentence.

Determiners

Determiner

A word class that helps identify, quantify, or otherwise specify a noun's reference. Its usual function within an NP is **determinative**.

[Those students] arrived. / [My brother's car] is outside.

Those is a determiner functioning as determinative. *My brother's* is a genitive NP performing the same function. A function can therefore be realised by different forms.

Type	Example
Indefinite article	*a banana / an apple*
Definite article	*the banana*
Quantifier	*many students / little research / each student*
Possessive determiner	*my pen / your answer*
Demonstrative determiner	*this pen / those books*
Interrogative determiner	*which book? / what colour? / whose pen?*
Relative determiner	*the student [whose answer we discussed]*
Numeral used determinatively	*two books / the first chapter*

Keep class and function separate

Use **determiner** for the word class and **determinative** for the function. This distinction applies throughout the guide and the worked analyses.

Departmental convention: Fenn and Schwab use *determiner* for both class and function. Some other grammars use *determinative* as the class label. Follow the distinction stated here in departmental tasks.

Further detail on determiner order

In *all those students*, *all* occupies the predeterminer position and *those* the central determiner position. These positional distinctions are not normally tested in the Language in Use examinations. They should not replace the separate identification of form and function.

See Determinative function for the phrase-level analysis.

Adjectives

Adjective

A word class typically used to describe a property. An adjective can modify a noun or head a phrase in a predicative position.

Position	Example	Explanation
Attributive	*an American teacher*	*American* occurs before the noun.
Postpositive	*something useful*	*Useful* occurs after the word it describes.
Predicative	*The teacher is [American].*	The AdjP is SC.
Predicative	*We found the task [difficult].*	The AdjP is OC.

Gradable and ungradable adjectives

Gradable adjectives allow degrees of a property. Ungradable or extreme adjectives usually combine with different degree expressions.

> *slightly cold / very cold / absolutely freezing*

Slightly freezing is generally unsuitable for the intended literal extreme meaning. Context can change how an adjective is interpreted, so classify its use rather than relying only on the word in isolation.

Comparative adjective

Expresses a comparison, often between two participants or situations.

> *taller / more useful / better / She is [taller than I am].*

In the sentence, *taller* heads the full AdjP *taller than I am*. The following clause completes the comparison.

Superlative adjective

Expresses an extreme within a comparison set.

> *tallest / most useful / best / She is the [tallest] student in the group.*

The choice between comparative and superlative is not determined simply by counting the people explicitly mentioned in a sentence.

See Adjective phrases, Subject and object complements, and Comparison and degree constructions.

Adverbs

Adverb

A word class whose members can express meanings such as manner, time, place, frequency, degree, stance, or a link to earlier discourse. Many end in *-ly*, but others do not.

She spoke [quietly]. / They are [extremely] tired. / He arrived [very] late.

Quietly heads an AdvP functioning as A. *Extremely* and *very* are premodifiers inside larger phrases. **Adverb** is a word class; **adverbial** is a function.

Type	Meaning or use	Examples
Circumstance adverb	Time, place, manner, frequency, or degree.	*yesterday / here / carefully / often / very*
Stance adverb	The speaker's assessment or attitude.	*regrettably / fortunately*
Linking adverb	A relation to preceding discourse.	*however / moreover / therefore / nevertheless*
Relative adverb	Introduces a relative clause and has a function within it.	*where / when / why*

Relative adverbs

the place [where we met] / the day [when she arrived] / the reason [why he left]

Here *where*, *when*, and *why* are relative adverbs functioning as A inside their clauses. The clauses themselves postmodify the nouns.

These words can have other uses. For example, *when* is a conjunction/L in *Call me [when you arrive]*. See Nominal relatives for relative-adverb uses without an overt antecedent.

Classify the whole expression as well

No doubt can function as a stance adverbial, but it is a multi-word expression rather than a single adverb. Likewise, the whole *very quietly* can be an AdvP/A while *very* is its internal premodifier.

Departmental convention: Ordinary clause adverbials remain outside the narrow VP. In *She spoke quietly*, the VP is *spoke*, and *quietly* is a separate A.

See Adverbial functions and Adverb phrases.

Conjunctions and prepositions

Conjunction

A word that links coordinated units or introduces a subordinate clause. Its function is **linker (L)**.

Type	Example	How it works
Coordinating	*[Kim] and [Pat]*; *[Kim left] but [Pat stayed]*	Links units of equal syntactic status.
Subordinating	*[because she was tired]*; *[if it rains]*; *[that she resigned]*	Introduces a subordinate clause and belongs inside it.
Correlative	*either … or*; *neither … nor*; *both … and*; *not only … but also*	Paired expressions used in coordination.

Conjunctions can link words, phrases, or clauses. A subordinate clause can itself contain another subordinate clause; not every subordinate clause has an overt conjunction.

[Either Kim or Pat] will call. / [Both the teacher and the students] agreed.

The brackets enclose the complete coordinated subject in each example.

Departmental convention: The mnemonic FANBOYS does not match every grammar's classification. Following Fenn and Schwab, this guide treats *so* introducing a result clause as subordinating: *[It was late [so we left]]*.

Preposition

A word class whose members normally head PPs. A preposition takes a complement and can express relations such as place, time, cause, or association.

in [the garden] / after [lunch] / with [friends] / without [saying goodbye]

The complement is commonly an NP, but it can also be a clause. A complex preposition contains more than one word: *because of* in *because of bad weather*.

Selected prepositions in multi-word verbs receive the guide's special predicator analysis. Ordinary PPs are explained under Prepositional phrases.

Lexical verbs and auxiliaries

Lexical or full verb

Carries the main lexical meaning of a VP. It can describe an action, event, or state.

run / become / know / seem

In *She has finished*, *finished* is the lexical verb; *has* is an auxiliary.

Copular or linking verb

Links the subject to a subject complement that describes or identifies it.

She is [a teacher]. / He remained [silent].

Is and *remained* are copular lexical verbs here. Their following constituents are SCs. Common copular verbs include *be*, *seem*, and *become*.

Check the use: Some uses of *be* take a locative or temporal A instead: *She is [in the garden]*. A PP after *be* is not automatically SC.

Auxiliary verb

Combines with another verb to express grammatical meanings.

Auxiliary	Main uses	Examples
be	Progressive aspect; passive voice	*is working / was appointed*
have	Perfect aspect	*has finished*
do	Questions, negation, and emphasis	*Did she leave? / She did not leave. / She did leave.*

The same word can be lexical in another use. Compare auxiliary *has* in *She has left* with lexical *has* in *She has a car*.

Modal auxiliary

Expresses meanings such as possibility, necessity, prediction, or willingness. The core modals are *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *shall*, *should*, *will*, *would*, and *must*.

He [will be appointed]. / She [must leave].

Core modals are **finite** and have no infinitive or participle forms. The following verbs are non-finite. See Verb forms and finiteness.

Further detail: *Ought* is also commonly classed as a modal. Expressions such as *have to* and *be able to* have different grammatical patterns.

Verb forms and finiteness

Finite verb

Carries finiteness in a finite clause. It may show tense and agreement, but it need not have a visible ending.

They work. / She will leave. / She has been working.

Work, *will*, and *has* are finite in these examples. In a finite auxiliary sequence, only the first verb is finite.

Form	Examples	Finiteness in these uses
Present form	*works / work; is / are*	Finite
Past form	*worked / went / was*	Finite
Infinitive with *to*	*to work / to have finished*	Non-finite
Bare infinitive	*work* after *must*; *be* after *will*	Non-finite
-ing form	*working / being / having*	Non-finite
Past participle	*worked / gone / been / written*	Non-finite

Non-finite verb

An infinitive, an *-ing* form, or a past participle. Classify its form in context: *work* is finite in *They work* but a bare infinitive in *They must work*.

He [will be appointed].

Will is finite; *be* is a bare infinitive; *appointed* is a past participle. The whole sequence is one finite passive VP/P, not three clauses.

Non-finite VPs can also express perfect aspect, progressive aspect, or passive voice: *to have finished*, *to be working*, and *having been examined*.

Infinitival *to* and verbal *not*

Infinitival *to* is a marker inside the infinitival VP, not a preposition. Verbal *not* is the negator inside the VP.

[to leave] / [has not left]

Include these items in P at clause level. Compare infinitival *to* in *to leave* with the preposition *to* in *to London*.

Remember: A missing overt subject does not by itself make a clause non-finite. See Imperative clauses.

Tense and aspect

Tense and time

Tense is a grammatical category expressed through verb forms. Time is when a situation is understood to occur. The two are related, but they are not identical.

The train leaves tomorrow.

Leaves is present tense, although the sentence refers to future time. Present and past forms must be interpreted in their context rather than treated as simple labels for the time of every situation.

Perfect aspect

Formed with *have* + past participle. It relates a situation to a later reference time.

has left / had left / to have left

Have itself can be finite or non-finite. In *She has left*, *has* is finite; in *to have left*, *have* is a bare infinitive following the infinitival marker.

Progressive aspect

Formed with *be* + *-ing* form.

is leaving / was leaving / to be leaving

Again, *be* itself can be finite or non-finite. Perfect and progressive can combine: *has been working*.

Simple and non-progressive

In this guide, **simple** means neither perfect nor progressive.

Example	Aspect description
she works / she worked	Simple
she is working	Progressive
she has worked	Perfect; non-progressive
she has been working	Perfect and progressive

Use **non-progressive** when the contrast concerns progressive marking alone. For example, *had left* is perfect and non-progressive; it is not simple under this guide's convention.

Departmental convention: Fenn and Schwab treat perfect as tense and use *simple* in the sense 'non-progressive'. This guide treats perfect as aspect. Keep the two conventions separate when reading different sources.

Active and passive voice

Active voice

In a typical action clause, the subject denotes the agent: the participant carrying out the action. Active subjects can also have other meanings.

The dog bit the man. / She likes music. / The house has three bedrooms.

The subjects here denote an agent, an experiencer, and a possessor respectively. **Subject** is a grammatical function; these other labels describe semantic roles.

Passive voice

Normally formed with *be* + past participle. An object of the corresponding active clause becomes subject.

They appointed Kim. → *Kim was appointed.*

The whole *was appointed* is VP/P. The passive subject need not denote an affected person; its meaning depends on the verb and construction.

Short and long passives

A short or agentless passive omits an agent *by*-phrase. A long passive includes one.

Type	Example
Short passive	*Kim was appointed.*
Long passive	*Kim was appointed [by the committee].*

In this guide, the agent *by*-phrase is A.

Get-passive

Uses *get* + past participle: *She got promoted* or *We got robbed*. Get-passives are often informal and describe events affecting the subject. The event need not be negative.

Verbal passive or adjective?

The gate is closed.

On a verbal passive reading, *is closed* is VP/P. On an adjectival reading, *is* is P and *closed* is an AdjP/SC. Use the context and grammatical behaviour to establish the intended reading.

Pattern reminder: An active OC becomes SC in the corresponding passive: *They appointed Kim [chair]* → *Kim was appointed [chair]*. See Common clause patterns.

Verb patterns and catenatives

Classify the verb use

A verb can occur in more than one pattern. Compare *She opened the door* with *The door opened*. The first use is transitive; the second is intransitive.

Verb use	Pattern illustrated	Example
Intransitive	No object	*[She] [slept].*
Monotransitive	One object	*[She] [read] [the report].*
Ditransitive	IO + DO	*[She] [gave] [Kim] [the report].*
Complex transitive	DO + OC	*[They] [found] [the report] [useful].*
Copular	SC	*[The report] [seems] [useful].*

PO and transitivity: This guide uses PO for the object associated with a selected preposition in P. A PO pattern is an object-taking pattern: *She relies on her colleagues* is not intransitive simply because its object is labelled PO. The clause-pattern sheet shows the PO variants explicitly.

Catenative verb

Takes a non-finite subordinate clause as a complement. Catenative constructions contain separate VPs and clauses, unlike an auxiliary sequence within one VP.

She [has finished]. / She [hopes] [to finish].

The first has one VP. The second has main-clause P *hopes* and an infinitive clause functioning as DO.

Example	Function of the non-finite clause
She hopes [to finish today].	DO
They forced him [to leave].	OC; *him* is DO
She told him [to leave].	DO; *him* is IO in the textbook-based pattern used here

Complement or purpose adverbial?

She stopped [working] has a non-finite complement/DO. In *She stopped [to rest]*, the infinitive expresses the purpose of stopping and is A. A verb followed by a non-finite clause is not automatically catenative.

Further detail: Some verbs permit an infinitive or an *-ing* clause, with or without a change in meaning: *begin to work / begin working*; *remember to lock the door / remember locking the door*. Analyse the actual pattern.

Multi-word verbs

Multi-word verb

A lexical verb combined with an adverbial particle, a selected preposition, or both. The selected components belong to the narrow VP/P in this guide.

Type	Example	Clause-level analysis
Transitive phrasal	*She turned the light off.*	*turned … off* = P; *the light* = DO
Intransitive phrasal	*The plane took off.*	*took off* = P; no object
Prepositional	*She relied on her colleagues.*	*relied on* = P; *her colleagues* = PO
Phrasal-prepositional	*She put up with the noise.*	*put up with* = P; *the noise* = PO

Phrasal verb

Contains a particle, as in *look up*, *turn off*, and *take off*. Phrasal verbs can be transitive or intransitive. In separable transitive uses, the object can occur on either side of the particle.

> *She looked up the word. / She looked the word up. / She looked it up.*

A personal-pronoun object goes before the particle in this pattern: **She looked up it*. Not every phrasal verb permits particle shift.

Prepositional and phrasal-prepositional verbs

A prepositional verb has a selected preposition: *rely on*, *wait for*, *listen to*. A phrasal-prepositional verb also has a particle: *look forward to*, *put up with*, *come up with*.

Complex prepositional patterns

An additional object occurs before the selected preposition. The later constituent is not invariably PO.

Example	P	Other functions
She asked Jill for help.	*asked … for*	*Jill* = IO; *help* = PO
They mistook me for a singer.	*mistook … for*	*me* = DO; *a singer* = OC
They treated the incident as murder.	*treated … as*	*the incident* = DO; *murder* = OC

Particle shift differs from preposition stranding. Compare *She relied heavily on them* and *Who does she rely on?* with ungrammatical **She relied her colleagues on*. The selected relationship remains when other words intervene or the object is fronted.

Check the combination: In *She walked [across the street]*, the PP is A. It is not automatically part of a multi-word verb. Established combinations such as *take care of* require analysis of the complete selected pattern. See PO and Prepositional complement.

Noun phrases and verb phrases

Phrase

A unit organised around a **head**: the word that determines its phrase type. A phrase can contain one word, several words, or an embedded clause.

[London] / [the new students] / [the students who passed]

All three are NPs. A phrase is not defined by the absence of a subject or finite verb: the third NP contains a finite relative clause.

Noun phrase (NP)

Normally headed by a noun or pronoun. It may contain determinatives, modifiers, and nominal complements.

[those new students [who arrived yesterday]]

Those is determinative, *new* premodifier, *students* head, and *who arrived yesterday* a relative-clause postmodifier. The **complete NP** receives its external function, such as S or DO.

In *[the claim [that she resigned]]*, the complete NP includes a nominal complement rather than a relative-clause postmodifier. See Nominal complement.

Verb phrase (VP)

This guide uses a narrow VP. It contains the lexical verb and any auxiliaries, verbal negation, infinitival marker, and selected multi-word-verb components. Its clause-level function is P.

[should have explained] / [has not arrived] / [to have finished] / [looked forward to]

Objects and ordinary adverbials remain outside the VP.

Example	Predicator	Separate constituent
Has she arrived?	*has … arrived*	*she* = S
She has certainly arrived.	*has … arrived*	*certainly* = A
She turned the light off.	*turned … off*	*the light* = DO

Understood material

An auxiliary can stand for a recoverable VP: *She can swim, but he cannot*. The overt *cannot* is VP/P in the second clause. Explain what is understood without inserting extra words into the sentence.

Head and head phrase: A head word is not the same as the complete phrase. Where a more detailed analysis uses *head phrase*, it groups a head with a close dependent before a further dependent is added. Ordinary tasks should identify the full phrase and its actual internal functions.

Adjective, adverb, and prepositional phrases

Adjective phrase (AdjP)

Has an adjective as head, with any modifiers or complements.

[very proud [of her work]] / [happy enough] / [eager [to help]]

The whole AdjP can be SC, OC, or a modifier within an NP. Its internal complement is not automatically its external function.

Adverb phrase (AdvP)

Has an adverb as head, with any modifiers or complements.

[quietly] / [very carefully] / [more quickly [than we expected]]

The whole AdvP often functions as A. Inside another phrase, it can function as a modifier.

Prepositional phrase (PP)

Has a preposition as head and a complement. It can also contain a modifier.

[in [the garden]] / [right outside [the station]]

In the second example, *right* is a premodifier, *outside* the head, and *the station* the prepositional complement.

PP	Form of the prepositional complement
on [the bench]	NP
without [saying goodbye]	-ing clause
about [whether she will come]	Finite interrogative clause
about [what to do next]	Infinitive interrogative clause
from [here]	AdvP in the traditional classification used here

Nesting inside a PP

[in [a street [with [no name]]]]

The outer PP contains the NP *a street with no name*. Within that NP, *with no name* is a PP/postmodifier; *no name* is the inner prepositional complement.

Further detail: *Whether* and *if* are not freely interchangeable after prepositions. Ordinary *to*-infinitives do not generally follow prepositions; interrogative infinitives such as *what to do next* have a distinct pattern.

For external functions, compare *She sat [on the bench]* (A), *She seems [in good health]* (SC), *proud [of her work]* (adjective complement), and *the house [on the corner]* (postmodifier).

Clauses and their relationships

Clause

A unit organised around a **predication**: something is said about a subject, which may be expressed or understood. Many clauses contain an overt subject and a finite VP, but other patterns occur.

Question	What to identify
How does it relate to another clause?	Main, subordinate, superordinate, or coordinated status
What verb structure does it have?	Finite, non-finite, or verbless
What grammatical clause type is it?	For example, declarative, interrogative, or imperative
What is its function here?	For example, S, DO, A, or postmodifier

Main clause

A clause that is not subordinate to another clause. Its complete span includes subordinate material within it.

Subordinate clause

A clause embedded in another clause or phrase. An overt conjunction or relative word is not always needed: *I think she left* and *I hope to leave* both contain subordinate clauses.

Superordinate clause

A clause containing another clause. One clause can be subordinate to a larger clause and superordinate to a smaller one.

[I know [that Pat believes [that Kim left]]].

The whole sentence is the main clause. *That Pat believes that Kim left* is subordinate to it and superordinate to *that Kim left*. Each clause has its own internal S and P.

Coordination

Links units of equal status. Coordinated clauses can be main clauses or subordinate clauses.

[Kim left] and [Pat stayed].

The two clauses here are coordinated main clauses. *Coordinated* does not itself mean *main*.

Remember: Do not define the main clause as only the words left after removing its subordinate clauses. Always keep the full containing span.

Clause types and circumstance clauses

Declarative clause

Typically used to make a statement. In ordinary declarative order, S precedes P.

She bought a car. / They are leaving tomorrow.

Clause type and communicative purpose are related, but they are not identical.

Interrogative clause

Typically used to ask a question. Yes–no interrogatives normally have subject–auxiliary inversion. Wh-interrogatives contain a wh-expression.

Have you finished? / Where are you going? / Who called?

Ordinary subject questions such as *Who called?* do not invert.

Embedded interrogatives normally retain subject-before-verb order: *I wonder [where she lives]*, not **I wonder where does she live*. In *I wonder [who called]*, *who* is already the subordinate subject.

Imperative clause

Typically used for commands, instructions, or advice. Its subject is usually understood as *you*, although an overt subject is possible.

Close the window. / Do not be late.

The absence of an overt subject is not a general test for non-finiteness.

Conditional clause

Expresses a condition. Common introducers include *if*, *unless*, *provided that*, and *as long as*.

[If it rains], we will stay inside. / We will stay inside [unless the weather improves].

Labels such as first, second, third, and mixed conditional describe familiar tense-and-meaning patterns. They are not extra levels of constituent structure.

Other circumstance clauses

Express relations such as time, reason, concession, purpose, or result.

[when she arrived] / [because she was tired] / [although it was late] / [to save time]

Check the actual function in the containing structure. A result clause inside an AdjP or AdvP can be a phrase-internal complement rather than clause-level A; see Comparison and degree constructions.

Finite, non-finite, and verbless clauses

Finite clause

Contains a finite verb. In *She has been working*, only *has* is finite, but the whole clause is finite.

Non-finite clause

Contains an infinitive, an *-ing* VP, or a past-participle VP. Its subject can be understood or expressed.

[to leave now] / [reading the report] / [warned about the danger]

Compare clauses with expressed subjects: *[for Kim to leave]* and *[Kim having left]*. Identify an understood subject from the construction; it is not automatically the main-clause subject.

Participle and -ing clauses

A participle clause is a type of non-finite clause. This guide uses **-ing clause** as an umbrella term for the book's verbal gerund and present-participle clauses.

Past-participle (-ed) clause includes irregular participles such as *written*, *seen*, and *given*. The label *-ed* is not a spelling test.

Example	Function of the bracketed clause
[Walking home], she saw an old friend.	A
[Warned about the storm], they stayed inside.	A
the students [waiting outside]	Postmodifier
the report [written yesterday]	Postmodifier
We kept them [waiting outside].	OC
She had her car [repaired].	OC

An *-ing* or past-participle verb within an auxiliary sequence does not create another clause: *is waiting* and *was repaired* are each one VP/P.

An action nominal is different: *the careful reading of the report* is an NP. Compare verbal *reading the report carefully*, which takes DO and an adverb, with the noun construction, which takes a determiner, adjective, and *of*-phrase.

Verbless clause

Has no overt verb but expresses a predication: *[Although tired], she continued*; *[Her hands in her pockets], she waited*. The first can be understood as 'although she was tired'.

Further detail: In *Kim ordered tea and Pat coffee*, the verb *ordered* is recoverable in the second coordinated clause. This is contextual ellipsis, not enough on its own to establish a verbless-clause analysis.

Relative clauses

Headed relative clause

A subordinate clause related to an overt **antecedent**, normally within an NP. The relative word has an internal function; the whole clause has an external function, usually postmodifier.

the students [who passed]

Students is the antecedent. *Who* is S of *passed*, and the relative clause postmodifies *students* within the NP.

Example	Relative word and class	Internal function
the student [who called]	*who*: relative pronoun	S
the book [which I read]	*which*: relative pronoun	DO
the book [that I read]	*that*: relative pronoun	DO
the student [whose answer we discussed]	*whose*: relative determiner	Determinative in *whose answer*; the whole NP is DO
the place [where we met]	*where*: relative adverb	A
the day [when she arrived]	*when*: relative adverb	A
the reason [why he left]	*why*: relative adverb	A

Defining and non-defining relatives

A defining or restrictive relative helps identify the referent: *The students [who passed] celebrated*. It normally has no separating commas.

A non-defining or non-restrictive relative adds information about an already identified referent: *My car, [which I bought last year], has broken down*. Following the textbook, both types are NP-internal postmodifiers in this guide.

Omission and prepositions

An object relative pronoun can be omitted in a suitable defining relative: *the book [I read]*. Record the understood object relationship without inserting an overt word.

Compare *the colleague [to whom I spoke]* with *the colleague [who I spoke to]*. In selected prepositional-verb patterns, keep the preposition in P: in *the colleague [who I rely on]*, *rely on* is P and *who* is PO.

Sentential relative

Relates to a preceding clause: *She forgot her passport, [which caused a delay]*. *Which* refers to that situation and is S within its own clause. The relative adds a supplementary comment on the preceding clause; it does not postmodify *passport*.

Remember: Relative pronouns and relative adverbs are not L here. Compare relative *that* above with conjunction/L *that* in *I know [that she left]*.

Nominal clauses and nominal relatives

Nominal clause

A subordinate clause used in a nominal or complement function. It can be finite or non-finite. State its form separately from its external function.

She believes [that he is right].

The bracketed constituent is a finite nominal clause functioning as DO.

External function	Example
S	*[That she resigned] surprised us.*
DO	*She believes [that he is right].*
IO	*Give [whoever asks] a copy.*
PO	*We agreed on [what to do next].*
SC	*The problem is [that we are late].*
OC	*They forced him [to leave].*
Nominal complement	*the fact [that she resigned]*
Adjective complement	*glad [that you came]*
Prepositional complement	*about [whether she will come]*

These possibilities depend on the clause subtype and construction. They do not mean that any nominal clause can fulfil every function. See Realisation tables and their linked restrictions.

Nominal relative clause

Combines an understood antecedent with a relative clause.

I kept [what she gave me].

This means approximately ‘I kept the thing that she gave me’. *What* is DO of *gave* internally; the whole clause is DO of *kept* externally. *Whoever*, *whatever*, and *whichever* can also introduce nominal relatives.

Nominal relative adverbs

Where, *when*, and corresponding *-ever* forms can be relative adverbs in nominal relatives.

Home is [where the heart is].

Where is A inside the clause, while the whole clause is SC. Compare *I wonder [where she lives]*, an embedded interrogative asking about a location.

See Cleft constructions for pseudo-clefts and it-clefts. A nominal relative by itself is not automatically a pseudo-cleft.

Part 2 Function

Subject, predicator, and predicate

Subject (S)

A clause constituent that typically comes before the finite verb in an ordinary declarative and is associated with subject–verb agreement where agreement is marked.

[The students] left. / [To leave now] would be a mistake.

The first subject is an NP; the second is an infinitive clause. Subject is a grammatical function, not another word for agent or topic.

Dummy subject

A non-referential subject, commonly *it* or existential *there*.

[It] is raining. / [There] are three problems.

Standard finite declaratives normally require a subject. Imperatives, non-finite clauses, ellipsis, and other special constructions need separate treatment; not every clause has an overt subject.

See Dummy subjects and objects for adjective constructions and the notional subject associated with existential *there*.

Predicator (P)

The function performed by the complete narrow VP.

She [has not finished] the report.

Has not finished is VP/P. It includes the auxiliary, verbal negation, and lexical verb.

Also include infinitival *to* and selected particles or prepositions where appropriate: *[to leave]*, *[turned … off]*, *[relied on]*. Ordinary objects and adverbials remain separate clause elements.

Predicate

A broad term for what is predicated of the subject. It normally includes P and its objects, complements, and relevant adverbials.

John believes that he will be appointed.

In this example, the predicate is *believes that he will be appointed*. The predicator is only *believes*.

Departmental convention: Predicate is an overview term, not an additional clause-element label in S–P–O analysis. It does not simply mean ‘all the words after the subject’ in every possible word order. The sentence-analysis master shows the distinction.

Direct, indirect, and prepositional objects

Direct object (DO)

An object licensed by a transitive verb: the verb allows a constituent of that type. A DO is commonly an NP or nominal clause.

She read [the report]. / I believe [that she is right].

A DO often follows P in a declarative and may correspond to the subject of a passive. These are useful indications, not tests that work without exception. A DO need not denote something affected by an action.

Indirect object (IO)

In the core double-object pattern, the constituent before DO, often denoting a recipient or beneficiary.

She gave [Kim] [a book].

Kim is IO and *a book* is DO.

Compare *She gave a book [to Kim]*. In this guide, the recipient PP *to Kim* is A; *Kim* is its prepositional complement. The same principle applies to recipient or beneficiary *for*-PPs.

Further detail: Context can allow an understood content object to remain unexpressed. In *Have you told the children?*, the guide allows IO for *the children* on that understood-content reading. This is a qualified extension of the textbook's stricter requirement for a following DO. Recipient meaning alone does not establish IO.

Prepositional object (PO)

The object associated with a selected preposition in a prepositional-verb construction. It usually follows the preposition, but it can occur earlier.

She [relies on] [her colleagues]. / Who does she rely on?

In the first example, *relies on* is P and *her colleagues* is PO. In the question, *who* is PO and the discontinuous P is *does … rely on*.

Keep the selected preposition in P. PO is the associated NP or clause, not the entire preposition-plus-dependent sequence.

Departmental convention: Fenn and Schwab include ordinary prepositional objects under DO. The department uses the more specific label PO. This still counts as an object-taking pattern for transitivity.

In complex patterns, check all the functions: *asked Jill for help* has IO *Jill* and PO *help*; *mistook me for a singer* has DO *me* and OC *a singer*. See Multi-word verbs.

Subject and object complements

Subject complement (SC)

Describes or identifies the subject in a predicative relationship.

This soup is [delicious]. / Sarah is [a good swimmer].

Delicious is an AdjP/SC; *a good swimmer* is an NP/SC. SC is not restricted to those two phrase types.

SC also occurs in passives corresponding to active OC constructions:

They appointed Kim [chair]. → Kim was appointed [chair].

Chair is OC in the active and SC in the passive. In the passive, the whole *was appointed* is P.

Object complement (OC)

Describes, identifies, or predicates something of the direct object.

They found the task [difficult]. / They appointed Kim [chair]. / They forced him [to leave].

The OCs here are an AdjP, an NP, and an infinitive clause. In each sentence, identify DO separately from OC.

Complete complement boundaries

She seems [very proud [of her work]].

The **complete AdjP** *very proud of her work* is SC. Inside it, *of her work* is an adjective complement. Inside that PP, *her work* is a prepositional complement.

Selected complex prepositional patterns

They [treated] the incident [as] [murder].

The discontinuous P is *treated … as*. *The incident* is DO and *murder* is OC. In *The incident [was treated as] [murder]*, *murder* is SC.

Departmental convention: Keep the selected *as* inside P in this construction, rather than including it in OC or SC.

Location and property

In *She is [in the garden]*, the PP expresses location and is A under this framework. In *She seems [in good health]*, it expresses a property and is SC. A PP's position after a verb does not decide its function by itself.

See Dummy subjects and objects for the full AdjPs in *It is easy to explain* and *We find it hard to explain*. The realisation tables give further forms of SC and OC.

Adverbials and linkers

Adverbial (A)

A clause element expressing circumstances, the speaker's stance, or a relation to other discourse. Adverbials can be AdvPs, NPs, PPs, clauses, and, in restricted constructions, AdjPs.

Type	Meaning	Example
Circumstance	Time, place, manner, frequency, reason, purpose, and related meanings.	*She arrived [last week]. / She spoke [with care].*
Stance	The speaker's assessment, attitude, or comment.	*[Regrettably], I cannot come. / [To be honest], I disliked it.*
Linking	A relation to preceding discourse.	*The task was difficult. [Nevertheless], we finished.*

The traditional labels **adjunct**, **disjunct**, and **conjunct** often correspond to circumstance, stance, and linking adverbials. Their exact uses differ between grammars.

Optional and compulsory adverbials

Many adverbials can be omitted. Particular verb uses require an A to complete the intended construction.

She put the book [on the table]. / He laid the book [on the chair].

These uses of *put* and *lay* require the location. The constituent remains A, even though it is compulsory, and it remains outside the narrow VP.

By contrast, *They live* has grammatical readings without an expressed location. Check the verb's intended use before judging an omission ungrammatical.

Position and scope

An A can occur initially, medially, or finally. Initial position does not make it clause-external: *Yesterday* is an ordinary time A in *Yesterday, she left*.

Scope means what an expression relates to in meaning. *To be honest* comments on making the statement; *regrettably* evaluates a situation. Establish scope from meaning and context, not position alone.

Linker (L)

The function of a conjunction. A subordinating conjunction is inside its clause; a coordinating conjunction joins its units.

I know [that she left]. / [Kim left] and [Pat stayed].

Relative pronouns and adverbs receive internal functions instead of L. A linking adverb such as *nevertheless* heads a linking adverbial; it is not a conjunction/L.

Choose the right level: In *She spoke [very quietly]*, the AdvP is A and *very* its premodifier. In *She is [very happy]*, the AdjP is SC, not A.

Functions inside phrases

Head

The word that determines a phrase's type and organises its dependents.

[the students] / [very proud] / [quite quietly] / [on the bench]

The heads are *students*, *proud*, *quietly*, and *on*. In a narrow VP, the lexical verb is the head where it is expressed; auxiliaries and markers belong to the verbal structure.

Determinative

Specifies a noun's reference or quantity. It is commonly realised by a determiner, but a genitive NP can perform this function too.

the house / my answer / two books / my brother's car

The, *my*, *two*, and *my brother's* are determinatives in these examples. Keep this function separate from the word class **determiner**.

Modifier

Adds descriptive, qualifying, or specifying information. A **premodifier** comes before its head or head phrase; a **postmodifier** comes after it.

Function	Examples
Premodifier	*a [new] book / a [student] newspaper / [very] happy / [quite] slowly / [right] outside the station*
Postmodifier	*the students [who passed] / a house [with a garden] / something [useful] / happy [enough]*

Modifiers can occur within NPs, AdjPs, AdvPs, and PPs. Ordinary clause adverbials are separate from the narrow VP in this guide.

Complement and modifier

A **complement** is a dependent that a particular head or construction allows or requires. The head helps determine the permitted type and form of that dependent. Modifiers are less tightly selected.

Both complements and modifiers can sometimes be omitted. Omissibility alone does not distinguish them. See Phrase complements for examples.

Apposition

Two nominal expressions identify the same referent.

my colleague, [a skilled translator]

The second NP is an appositive postmodifier inside the larger NP, following the textbook's analysis. This differs from a nominal complement supplying a noun's content, as in *the claim [that she resigned]*.

Phrase complements

Prepositional complement

The dependent of a preposition inside a PP. The complete PP has its own external function.

on [the bench] / without [saying goodbye] / about [whether she will come]

The complements here are an NP, an *-ing* clause, and a finite interrogative clause.

Constituent in *She is [proud [of [her work]]]*	Function
her work	Prepositional complement of *of*
of her work	Adjective complement of *proud*
proud of her work	SC in the clause

Selected preposition in P: In *She relies on her colleagues*, *relies on* is P and *her colleagues* is PO. Do not simultaneously treat *on her colleagues* as an ordinary PP constituent in that analysis.

Nominal complement

A dependent allowed by a noun, often supplying the content of a claim, fact, idea, intention, or decision. It belongs inside the complete NP.

the claim [that she resigned] / the intention [to leave]

Compare *the claim [that she rejected]*. Here the clause is a relative postmodifier and *that* is its DO. In *the claim [that she resigned]*, the clause supplies the claim's content; *that* is conjunction/L.

Adjective complement

A dependent allowed by an adjective or adjective construction.

proud [of her son] / eager [to help] / certain [that she is right]

The guide also uses adjective complement for the following clauses in *It is easy [to explain]*, *We find it hard [to explain]*, and *The book is easy [to read]*. Their complete AdjPs receive the clause-level functions. See Special constructions.

Adverb complement

A dependent allowed by an adverb or adverb construction.

more quickly [than we expected] / so quickly [that we could not follow]

The complete AdvP may be A while the clause inside it is an adverb complement.

Two uses of complement: The broad concept includes dependents allowed by verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions. It is wider than the named clause functions SC and OC. In *She put the book on the desk*, DO and compulsory A are allowed by the verb but remain outside P.

Comparison and degree constructions

Comparative phrase and clause

A following *than*- or *as*-expression completes a comparison. Its form depends on the words it contains.

Example	Form of the bracketed unit	Function
taller [than Kim]	PP; *than* is a preposition	Adjective complement
taller [than Kim is]	Comparative clause; *than* is a conjunction	Adjective complement
as tall [as Kim]	PP; second *as* is a preposition	Adjective complement
as tall [as Kim is]	Comparative clause; second *as* is a conjunction	Adjective complement

The first *as* in *as tall* is a degree adverb/premodifier. The same PP/clause distinction applies inside an AdvP: *more carefully [than I expected]* contains an adverb complement.

Comparative clauses often have recoverable omissions. Show the overt words and explain what is understood where necessary.

Post-head *enough*

In *happy enough* and *quickly enough*, *enough* is an adverb functioning as postmodifier.

[happy enough [to stay]] / [quickly enough [to catch the train]]

Enough is the postmodifier in both. The infinitive is an adjective complement in the first and an adverb complement in the second, allowed by the degree construction.

Result or consecutive clause

Expresses a result. A result clause can be part of an adjective or adverb phrase.

[so dark [that we could not see]] / [so quickly [that we could not follow]]

The clause is an adjective complement in the first example and an adverb complement in the second. Assign the complete AdjP or AdvP its external function separately.

Compare a clause-level result introduced by *so*: *[It was late [so we left]]*. In this guide, the result clause is A and *so* is conjunction/L.

Reference sheets and examples

Common clause patterns

These seven basic patterns use clause-level functions. P means predicator, not the word class verb. Each bracket encloses a complete constituent; optional adverbials can be added where appropriate.

Pattern	Verb use	Example
S P	Intransitive	*[David] [laughed].*
S P DO	Monotransitive	*[David] [shut] [the door].*
S P SC	Copular	*[David] [is] [tall].*
S P A	With compulsory A	*[David] [resides] [in Wales].*
S P IO DO	Ditransitive	*[David] [gave] [me] [a letter].*
S P DO OC	Complex transitive	*[David] [considered] [him] [reliable].*
S P DO A	With compulsory A	*[David] [put] [salt] [in the soup].*

A is compulsory in the illustrated S P A and S P DO A patterns. In *The students left yesterday*, *yesterday* is optional; the basic pattern is S P.

Patterns with selected prepositions in P

PO is the more specific departmental object label. These are variants of object-taking patterns, not intransitive uses simply because the label differs from DO.

Pattern	Example	Analysis
S P PO	*She relies on her colleagues.*	*relies on* = P; *her colleagues* = PO
S P IO PO	*She asked Jill for help.*	*asked … for* = P; *Jill* = IO; *help* = PO
S P DO OC	*They mistook me for a singer.*	*mistook … for* = P; *me* = DO; *a singer* = OC

Ergative alternation and passive counterparts

Ergative alternation links a transitive construction with an intransitive one: *David opened the window* → *The window opened*. The active object corresponds to the intransitive subject. This is not an extra basic pattern.

Passive: An active object can become passive S, and an active OC becomes SC in the corresponding passive: *They appointed Kim chair* → *Kim was appointed chair*.

Further detail: *The tickets sold easily* is a middle construction. The terms *ergative*, *unaccusative*, and *middle* are not interchangeable.

A pattern is not a word count: *She believes [that he will return]* has S P DO. Analyse the clause inside DO separately.

Forms that realise clause functions

Each entry concerns the **complete constituent's external function**. A clause inside an AdjP does not become SC simply because the whole AdjP is SC.

Key: ✓ = included realisation; † plus a number = restricted use with a linked note; — = not covered here. The symbols do not rank frequency, and a dash does not mean 'impossible in all English'.

Phrase realisations

Function	NP	VP	AdjP	AdvP	PP
Subject	✓	—	—	—	—
Predicator	—	✓	—	—	—
Direct object	✓	—	—	—	—
Indirect object	✓	—	—	—	—
Prepositional object	✓	—	—	—	—
Subject complement	✓	—	✓	†6	✓
Object complement	✓	—	✓	†6	✓
Adverbial	✓	—	†7	✓	✓

One-word phrases are included. A pronoun can form an NP, and a single verb can form a VP. Ordinary clause adverbials stay outside the narrow VP.

Clause realisations

Function	Finite clause	Infinitive clause	-ing clause	Past-participle clause	Verbless clause
Subject	✓	✓	✓	—	—
Predicator	—	—	—	—	—
Direct object	✓	✓	✓	—	—
Indirect object	†1	—	†2	—	—
Prepositional object	†3	†3	✓	—	—
Subject complement	✓	✓	✓	†5	—
Object complement	†1	✓	†4	✓	—
Adverbial	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

These columns identify **clause types**, not individual verb forms. In *[Reading a report] takes time*, the clause is S; its internal VP *reading* is P. *Has been reading* is one VP, not three clauses.

Linker is normally realised by a conjunction. Phrase-internal functions are explained in Functions inside phrases and Phrase complements. For exceptional realisations and the scope of this overview, see Further realisation notes.

Examples of phrase realisations

The brackets isolate the constituent identified in the Form and Function columns. These examples illustrate the unqualified phrase entries; restricted cases have separate notes.

Form	Function	Example
NP	Subject	*[The students] arrived.*
VP	Predicator	*She [will be appointed].*
NP	Direct object	*She read [the report].*
NP	Indirect object	*She gave [Kim] a book.*
NP	Prepositional object	*She relies on [her colleagues].*
NP	Subject complement	*Kim is [our chair].*
NP	Object complement	*They appointed Kim [chair].*
NP	Adverbial	*She arrived [last week].*
AdjP	Subject complement	*The task seems [very difficult].*
AdjP	Object complement	*We found the task [very difficult].*
PP	Subject complement	*She seems [in good health].*
PP	Object complement	*We considered him [out of his depth].*
AdvP	Adverbial	*She spoke [very quietly].*
PP	Adverbial	*She sat [on the bench].*

Check the whole phrase

She seems [very proud [of her work]].

The full SC is *very proud of her work*. *Of her work* is an adjective complement inside it; *her work* is a prepositional complement inside that PP.

Selected preposition or ordinary PP?

In *She relies on her colleagues*, *on* belongs to P and *her colleagues* is PO. In *She sat [on the bench]*, the whole PP is A and *the bench* its prepositional complement.

Examples of clause realisations

An infinitive clause can be S, DO, SC, OC, or A, depending on the construction. Always give its external function separately from its clause type.

Form	Function	Example
Finite clause	Subject	*[That she resigned] surprised us.*
Finite clause	Direct object	*I know [that she resigned].*
Finite clause	Subject complement	*The problem is [that we are late].*
Finite clause	Adverbial	*We left [because it was late].*
Infinitive clause	Subject	*[To leave now] would be a mistake.*
Infinitive clause	Direct object	*She hopes [to return soon].*
Infinitive clause	Subject complement	*Our aim is [to finish today].*
Infinitive clause	Object complement	*They forced him [to leave].*
Infinitive clause	Adverbial	*She left early [to catch the train].*
-ing clause	Subject	*[Reading novels] takes time.*
-ing clause	Direct object	*She enjoys [reading novels].*
-ing clause	Prepositional object	*We talked about [moving house].*
-ing clause	Subject complement	*Her favourite activity is [reading novels].*
-ing clause	Adverbial	*[Walking home], she saw an old friend.*
Past-participle clause	Object complement	*She had her car [repaired at the garage].*
Past-participle clause	Adverbial	*[Warned about the danger], she turned back.*
Verbless clause	Adverbial	*[Although tired], she continued.*

Separate clause or part of a VP?

In *She had her car [repaired at the garage]*, the past-participle clause is OC. In *Her car was repaired*, *was repaired* is one passive VP/P.

Likewise, *reading* heads a separate clause in *She enjoys [reading]* but belongs to one progressive VP in *She [is reading]*.

Restricted clause realisations

The numbered notes explain the corresponding † entries in the realisation tables. Read the example and restriction together.

Note 1 Finite clause as IO or OC

These entries principally concern nominal relatives.

Give [whoever asks] a copy. / The experience made her [what she is today].

The bracketed clause is IO in the first and OC in the second. These patterns do not permit arbitrary *that*-clauses in the same positions.

Note 2 -ing clause as IO

A rare pattern included in this teaching framework:

We gave [improving safety] top priority.

Improving safety is IO and *top priority* DO in the analysis used here.

Note 3 Finite or infinitive clause as PO

Use an interrogative or nominal relative allowed by the construction.

It depends on [whether she agrees]. / We agreed on [what to do next].

This does not allow an ordinary *to*-infinitive after the preposition: **We agreed on to leave*.

Note 4 -ing clause as OC

The OC analysis depends on the verb pattern.

We kept them [waiting outside].

Waiting outside is OC. Following the textbook, present-participle clauses after perception verbs are analysed differently: in *We saw them [waiting outside]*, the clause is A.

Note 5 Past-participle clause as SC

Apply the corresponding passive of an OC pattern.

We saw him [knocked down by a car]. → He was seen [knocked down by a car].

The past-participle clause is OC in the active and SC in the passive, following the textbook's OC-to-SC rule. A participial adjective such as *worried* can instead head an AdjP.

Further realisation notes

Note 6 AdvP as SC or OC

These are restricted predicative uses in the traditional word-class analysis adopted here.

The meeting is [over]. / They declared the meeting [over].

Over forms an AdvP/SC in the first and an AdvP/OC in the second. Other grammars classify some such words differently.

Note 7 AdjP as A

An optional predicative description can be A.

She drank her coffee [black].

Black describes the coffee during the event. This is distinct from the resultative OC in *They painted the door [black]*.

The limits of the overview

The tables cover the main patterns taught in this guide. A dash is not a universal prohibition.

[After lunch] would suit me.

This permits a PP in subject position even though the overview does not include a general PP-as-S entry.

No general past-participle DO entry

We want the package [delivered tomorrow].

The package is DO and *delivered tomorrow* is OC. The past-participle clause itself is not DO in this analysis.

Keep the analysis levels separate

It is [interesting [to compare the results]].

The clause *to compare the results* is an adjective complement. The complete AdjP is SC. The special construction does not create an additional form column in the realisation table.

See Dummy subjects and objects for the full analysis, and Forms that realise clause functions to return to the tables.

Dummy subjects and objects

Dummy *it* with an adjective construction

It is [interesting [to compare the results]].

It is dummy grammatical S. The complete AdjP *interesting to compare the results* is SC. The infinitive clause inside it is an adjective complement.

Dummy or anticipatory object

We find it [hard [to explain the difference]].

It is dummy DO. The complete AdjP *hard to explain the difference* is OC. The infinitive clause inside it is an adjective complement.

Example	Complete OC	Adjective complement within OC
We found it very hard to find a suitable candidate.	*very hard to find a suitable candidate*	*to find a suitable candidate*
She made it clear that she would resign.	*clear that she would resign*	*that she would resign*

Compare *We found [finding a suitable candidate] [very hard]*. Here the *-ing* clause itself is DO and *very hard* is OC.

Departmental convention: In the illustrated dummy-*it* adjective constructions, place the following clause inside the AdjP. Fenn and Schwab instead use logical or extraposed subject/object analyses for the postponed clauses.

Adjective construction with an understood object

The book is [easy [to read]].

The book is a genuine grammatical S. *Easy to read* is SC and *to read* its adjective complement. The book supplies the understood object of *read*; it is not a dummy subject.

Existential *there* and notional subject

There are [three problems].

There is grammatical dummy S. *Three problems* is the **notional subject**, also called logical subject: the constituent naming what exists or is present.

This construction-specific label does not introduce a second ordinary grammatical subject. Inversion and tags identify grammatical S: *Are there three problems?*; *There are three problems, aren't there?*

Notional subject does not mean 'the agent', 'the topic', or 'the focus of any sentence'. In particular, it is not the label for the focus of an it-cleft.

Clefts and the analysis procedure

Pseudo-cleft or wh-cleft

A construction containing a nominal relative clause and a focused constituent.

[What I need] is [a holiday].

The nominal relative clause is S and *a holiday* is SC. A nominal relative clause on its own does not make a sentence a pseudo-cleft.

It-cleft

Uses *it* + *be* to highlight an element.

It was [Mary [who bought the soup]].

It is S, *was* P, and the complete NP *Mary who bought the soup* SC. The relative clause is a postmodifier within that NP; *who* is its internal S. The sentence contains a main clause and a subordinate relative clause.

Cleft *it* is impersonal and does not receive the anticipatory-*it* analysis. The highlighted constituent is not a notional subject. Compare *It was [the soup [that Mary bought]]*: its focus corresponds to DO in *Mary bought the soup*.

A practical analysis procedure

1. Identify the full clause. Include subordinate material within its span. Find S and P, then its objects, predicative complements, and adverbials.

2. Check P carefully. Include auxiliaries, verbal *not*, infinitival *to*, particles, and selected prepositions. Keep ordinary adverbials separate, including when they interrupt P.

3. Give form and function separately. For example, *the students who passed* is NP/S. The function belongs to the complete constituent.

4. Work inwards. Analyse phrases and subordinate clauses at their own levels. Give relative words their internal functions. Distinguish a selected preposition in P from the head of a separate PP.

5. Check every word. Keep the complete overt sentence. Explain omitted or understood material without presenting it as an extra word in the example.

The next worked examples show these steps in practice: Sentence analysis master and Complex NP and discontinuous predicator.

Sentence analysis master

Forms above the sentence · Functions below the sentence

											Personal pronoun	Copular LV finite	Adjective comparative
								Personal pronoun	LV finite intransitive	Subord. conjunction	NP	VP	AdjP
			Personal pronoun	Modal aux finite	Passive aux non-finite bare infinitive	LV non-finite past participle passive use	Subord. conjunction	NP	VP	Subordinate finite temporal clause			
Proper noun	LV finite transitive	Subord. conjunction	NP	Finite passive VP			Subordinate finite conditional clause						
NP	VP												
		Subordinate finite nominal clause											
Main finite declarative clause and complete sentence													
John	***believes***	***that***	***he***	***will***	***be***	***appointed***	***if***	***he***	***applies***	***when***	***he***	***is***	***older.***
Subject	Predicate — overview term												
	Predicator	Direct object											
		Linker	Subject	Predicator			Circumstance adverbial						
							Linker	Subject	Predicator	Circumstance adverbial			
										Linker	Subject	Predicator	Subject complement

Reading the sentence analysis

John believes that he will be appointed if he applies when he is older.

Each horizontal span in the master diagram covers exactly the words belonging to that constituent. The complete outer clause contains its embedded clauses.

In the diagram, **LV** means lexical verb, **aux** means auxiliary, and **subord.** means subordinating.

Complete span	Clause form	External function
John believes that he will be appointed if he applies when he is older	Main finite declarative clause	Complete sentence
that he will be appointed if he applies when he is older	Subordinate finite nominal clause	DO of *believes*
if he applies when he is older	Subordinate finite conditional clause	Circumstance A within the nominal clause
when he is older	Subordinate finite temporal clause	Circumstance A within the conditional clause

Main clause

John is NP/S; *believes* is VP/P; the complete *that*-clause is DO. *John believes* alone is not the full main-clause span.

Nominal clause

That is conjunction/L; *he* is NP/S; *will be appointed* is one finite passive VP/P. The complete *if*-clause is A.

Within P, *will* is a finite modal auxiliary, *be* a non-finite passive auxiliary in the bare infinitive, and *appointed* a non-finite lexical past participle. *Appoint* is transitive in the corresponding active use.

Conditional clause

If is conjunction/L; *he* is NP/S; *applies* is VP/P. The complete *when*-clause is A. **On the reading shown**, the time clause is embedded within the condition.

Temporal clause

When is conjunction/L here, not a relative adverb. *He* is NP/S; *is* is a finite copular VP/P; *older* is a comparative adjective heading an AdjP/SC.

Phrase-internal functions

Each one-word phrase has its word as head. Within *will be appointed*, *appointed* is the lexical head and *will* and *be* are auxiliaries. The clause-level P label applies to the complete sequence.

Complex NP and discontinuous predicator

The students who arrived yesterday have already handed their work in.

The complete sentence is a main finite declarative clause. Its subject contains a relative clause, and its predicator is interrupted by an adverbial and an object.

Main-clause constituents

Constituent	Form	Function
The students who arrived yesterday	NP	S
have … handed … in	Discontinuous finite perfect VP	P
already	AdvP	Circumstance A
their work	NP	DO

The dots above are explanatory notation. The full sentence remains intact. The phrasal verb is *hand in*: *in* is a particle within P, and *their work* is DO.

Inside the subject NP

Constituent	Form	Function within the NP
The	Determiner	Determinative
students	Noun	Head
who arrived yesterday	Finite relative clause	Postmodifier

Inside the relative clause

Constituent	Form	Function within the relative clause
who	Relative pronoun; one-word NP	S
arrived	Finite intransitive LV; one-word VP	P
yesterday	AdvP	Circumstance A

Within the main VP, *have* is the finite perfect auxiliary and *handed* the lexical past participle. *Already* stays outside that VP despite occurring between its verbs.

Within the DO *their work*, *their* is a possessive determiner/determinative and *work* an uncountable noun/head. The one-word AdvPs *already* and *yesterday* each have the corresponding adverb as head.

Departmental conventions

Use these conventions throughout the guide and departmental analysis tasks. They make the choices of framework explicit when you consult other grammars.

Area	Convention in this guide
Determiner and determinative	Determiner is the word class; determinative is the function.
Verb phrase	Narrow VP, including auxiliaries, verbal negation, infinitival markers, and selected multi-word-verb components.
Prepositional object	A selected preposition belongs to P; its associated object is PO in the appropriate pattern, including when fronted.
Perfect and simple	Perfect is aspect. Simple means neither perfect nor progressive.
-ing clause	Umbrella term covering verbal gerund and present-participle clauses. Action nominals remain NPs.
Relative words	Relative pronouns and adverbs receive their own internal functions, not L.
Noun content clause	Nominal complement, distinguished from a relative-clause postmodifier.
Adjective constructions	Postponed clauses in the illustrated dummy-*it* constructions and the infinitive in *easy to read* are adjective complements.
Post-head *enough*	Postmodifier in *happy enough* and *quickly enough*.
Existential *there*	Grammatical dummy S, associated with a notional subject.
Appositive NP	Postmodifier within the larger NP.

Reading another grammar

A different label is not automatically an error. First establish whether the grammar uses a different classification or different constituent boundaries. For departmental answers, apply the choices specified here consistently.

The References identify the principal textbook and additional sources. The numbered realisation notes explain restricted cases that need special care.

References

Principal textbook

Fenn, Peter, and Götz Schwab. 2018. *Introducing English Syntax: A Basic Guide for Students of English*. Routledge.

The principal source for the structural-functional framework. Use the departmental conventions where this guide differs.

Additional references

Quirk, Randolph, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech, and Jan Svartvik. 1985. *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. Longman.

For object and complement patterns, see especially §§10.7 and 10.11.

Huddleston, Rodney, and Geoffrey K. Pullum. 2002. *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*. Cambridge University Press.

Provides alternative descriptive analyses. Its terminology and phrase boundaries are not interchangeable with the departmental conventions.

Huddleston, Rodney. Undated. *A Short Overview of English Syntax*.

Read the overview. The discussion of auxiliary verbs is useful for modal forms.

Eastwood, John. 1994. *Oxford Guide to English Grammar*. Oxford University Press.

See §125 for question-word infinitives, including those following prepositions.

Jaworska, Ewa. 1986. ‘Prepositional phrases as subjects and objects’. *Journal of Linguistics* 22(2), 355–374.

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Using the guide as a reference

Use the Contents for the main sections and the Term index for individual terms. The realisation tables summarise common form–function combinations; the analysis procedure explains how to work through a sentence.

Term index

Each term links to its main explanation. Related examples may also appear elsewhere in the guide.

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