

Grammar glossary

Adjective A word which is used to describe a *noun*, e.g. 'big', 'good', 'happy'. In the following sentence the words in bold are adjectives:

We can buy the **red** paint from the **local** supplier.

Adverb A word which is used to describe a *verb*, e.g. 'well', 'badly', 'slowly'. It can also be a word which is used with an *adjective*, e.g. 'very'. In the following sentence the words in bold are adverbs; the first is used with an adjective and the second with the verb 'finished':

I was **really** happy because they finished the job **quickly**.

Affix Something added to the beginning or end of a word to change its meaning. If it is added at the beginning of a word, it is called a prefix:

happy – **un**happy.

If it is added at the end, it is called a suffix:

use – **useful**, **useless**.

Article The words 'a', 'an' and 'the' are articles:

The shop next door has **a** new manager.

Often grammar books call 'a' and 'an' the 'indefinite articles' and 'the' the 'definite article'. Many grammar books also talk about the 'zero article'; this is used to explain sentences where no article is used:

I like tea.

Auxiliary verb A *verb* which helps the main verb to make the correct tense or form. In the following sentences the verbs in bold are auxiliary verbs and 'travel' is the main verb:

Does he travel a lot?

I **don't** travel a lot on business.

She **is** travelling on the 18:45 from Zurich.

They **have** travelled all over Asia researching markets.

Cardinal numbers See *Ordinal numbers*.

Contraction Usually a combination of two words formed by shortening one of the words and joining it to the other. When written down, the part of the word that is missing is replaced by an apostrophe. Sometimes both words are altered, as in 'won't' (will not), and sometimes the contraction was a single word to start with, e.g. 'can't' (cannot).

Contractions are used when speaking and in less formal writing. They are not usually used in formal business letters. Some of the most common contractions are listed below, but there are many more:

I am – I'm	we have – we've	she will – she'll
you are – you're	he has – he's	will not – won't
it is – it's	they had – they'd	I would – I'd
do not – don't	cannot – can't	there is – there's

Countable/uncountable nouns These are often called 'count' and 'mass' *nouns*. Countable nouns can be counted and use an **s** to make the plural:

one **car**; two **cars**; three **cars**.

Uncountable nouns cannot be counted and have no plural form, for example:

advice; **energy**.

Uncountable nouns also include abstract ideas, such as:

harm; **truth**.

Many dictionaries show whether a noun is countable or uncountable by using the letters C or U next to its entry.

Intonation The way our voices change pitch when we speak; it is how our voices rise and fall. It is the 'music' of the language.

Modal verb A type of *auxiliary verb* that adds ideas of possibility, obligation, ability, etc. In the following sentences the modal verbs are in bold:

They **can** supply 5,000 units.

We **will** refund your money immediately.

What **should** we do about the price increase?

They **might** accept a lower offer.

Here is a table of all the modal verbs in English:

can	could
have to	had to
may	might
must	
ought to	
shall	should
will	would

Noun A word used for a person, a place or a thing, e.g. 'doctor', 'shop', 'dog'. A noun can also be an idea, e.g. 'beauty'. In the following sentence the words in bold are all nouns:

The **manager** had an **accident** in his **car**.

Object In the following sentences the words in bold are the objects of each verb:

*John has started a new **job**.*

*Tomorrow we will open the new **store**.*

*The secretary posted the **letters** to the **client** yesterday.*

In the last sentence there are two objects: the first, **letters**, is often called a 'direct object', and the second, **client**, an 'indirect object'.

An indirect object is either the receiver of the direct object:

*She gave the report to **me**.*

or is affected by the activity in some other way:

*The secretary posted the letter for **me**.*

*He showed **her** the design.*

Ordinal numbers Numbers which are used to show the order of things:

1st – first 4th – fourth

2nd – second 10th – tenth

3rd – third 17th – seventeenth

Numbers such as one, two, ten (1, 2, 10), etc., are known as 'cardinal numbers'.

Phonetic alphabet An alphabet of sounds. Phonetic alphabets are used in dictionaries, and courses like this one, to show you how a word is pronounced. You learn how to use a phonetic alphabet to help you say new words during the course. The phonetic alphabet used in this course is one that is used in many good dictionaries. Below are three common words and their phonetic equivalents:

business /'bɪznɪs/

organisation /ɔ:ɡənə'zeɪʃn/

customer /'kʌstəmə(r)/

Phrasal verb In this course the term 'phrasal verb' is used to refer to a verb which when combined with a particular adverb and/or preposition has a particular meaning. Below are three phrasal verbs (in bold) and their meanings:

turn up means 'increase' (volume, heat, etc.);

look after means 'care for' (someone or something);

cut down on means 'reduce'.

The meaning of a phrasal verb may not be clear simply from looking at the parts which make it up, e.g. 'to turn down' can mean 'to refuse'. For this reason, phrasal verbs need special attention when learning vocabulary.

Prefix See *Affix*.

Preposition A word which tells us the place of something, or time of something, e.g. 'under', 'on', 'at', 'by'. In the following sentences the words in bold are prepositions:

*I'll meet you **at** eight. I'll write it **in** my diary.*

Pronoun A pronoun is a word which is used to replace a noun in a sentence. There are different types of pronoun, but you do not need to know all their names. In the following sentence the words in bold are all pronouns:

*He said **it** was from **her**, but **they** didn't believe **him**.*

This is shorter than saying, for example:

*Alex said **the message** was from **a famous actress**, but **his colleagues** didn't believe **Alex**.*

Relative pronoun A special pronoun used in a relative clause. In the following sentences the words in bold are relative pronouns:

*This is the book **which** is selling so well.*

*They don't make the part **that** we need.*

*She's the manager **who** used to work for our rival.*

*I used to work in Hong Kong, **where** I learnt Chinese.*

*He is the manager **whose** car was stolen.*

Stress There are two types of stress in English, 'word stress' and 'sentence stress'.

In a word containing more than one syllable, one syllable will be stressed more than the others; that is, it will be said more strongly. For example, in the word 'computer' the second syllable '-put-' is stressed more than the others.

In a sentence, not every word is stressed evenly: some words are stressed more than others. These are usually the words which contain the important information. In the following sentences the words in bold are stressed:

*Can I **order** some **plastic** boxes?*

***Sorry**, we **only** stock **metal** boxes.*

Subject In the following sentences the words in bold are the subjects of each verb:

***John** has started a new job.*

*Tomorrow **we** will open the new store.*

***The machines** are not working properly.*

***The secretary** posted the letters to the client yesterday.*

Suffix See *Affix*.

Syllable Syllables are ways of dividing words. They are the groups of sounds which make up a word. Some words are only one syllable long, e.g. 'no', 'big'. Other words are two, three or more syllables long, e.g. 'meeting' (two syllables); 'computer' (three syllables).

Verb A verb is usually described as a 'doing' word; for example, 'walk', 'work', 'make'. But remember, words like 'love', 'have' and 'think' are all verbs too. In the following sentences the words in bold are verbs:

There **are** three offices on the ground floor.

They **sold** five vehicles yesterday.