

A Level English Language



GRAMMAR GLOSSARY

Updated for 2017

WHAT ON EARTH IS GRAMMAR?

Grammar's a hard word to define, and the Oxford English Dictionary's definition isn't exactly the most helpful: they say that grammar is 'the whole system and structure of a language or of languages in general, usually taken as consisting of syntax and morphology'.

Put more simply, grammar relates to how words are structured and the ways in which they work with each other in sentences.

● WHY DOES IT MATTER?

In A Level Language, you are tested on your grammatical understanding in every unit. AO1 assesses both the quality of your writing *and* your ability to label things **linguistically**. And guess what? You are given marks for AO1 in *every single unit*. That's why it's important to see that grammar matters.

● ARE SOME LABELS WORTH MORE THAN OTHERS?

What a good question! The answer is yes. The mark scheme for AO1 has a hierarchical structure:

Level 5	You label clause types and patterns . <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>The writer repeatedly foregrounds conditional clauses (e.g. 'If you buy...') to emphasise...</i>
Level 4	You label detailed word classes and sentence types . <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>The writer uses the evaluative adjective 'grotesque' in the compound sentence to indicate...</i>
Level 3	You label basic word classes and sentence functions . <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>The writer uses the adjective 'grotesque' to show that...</i>

To get full marks for AO1, you need to be discussing clause types/order *as well as* showing achievement in the lower bands. In other words, it's no good labelling a couple of subordinate clause types and not bothering with any words!

● IS EVERYTHING I NEED TO KNOW IN HERE?

Of course it isn't. That's why we've given you some blank pages at the back to add anything else that crops up throughout the course. But it's certainly more than enough to get you well on your way to full marks for AO1.

● WHAT IF I STRUGGLE?

Congratulate yourself on being human. Grammar is *hard* – particularly when you get to the sentence and clause type stuff, which is very tricky. The key is practice. Also, ask your teacher if you're stuck on something. We are paid to help.

Good luck, language lovers!

WORD CLASSES

adjective

Adjectives give us extra information about **nouns**: *the **beautiful** English teacher, the **ugly** student.*

- **evaluative adjectives** do exactly what you'd expect – they offer a judgement on the noun being described.
 - *The student's work was **awful**.*
- **comparative adjectives** usually end in *-er* or have *more* in front of them. Unsurprisingly, comparative adjectives make comparisons.
 - *You are **more stupid** than him.*
 - *Nadine is **prettier** than you.*
- **superlative adjectives** express the highest degree of a quality, and usually end in *-est* or have *most* in front of them.
 - *You are the **most stupid** person I have ever met.*
 - *Mr Shovlin is the **smartest** man alive.*

Other labels you might come across

- **attributive adjectives** come *before* the noun they modify.
 - *Do you have any **available** rooms?*
- **predicative adjectives** come *after* the noun (with a verb in between).
 - *Do you know if this room is **available**?*
- **post-positive adjectives** come *immediately after* the noun.
 - *Is this room **available**?*

adverb

Adverbs give us extra information about **verbs** and **adjectives**: *he ran **quickly**, he was **especially** ugly.* A word ending in *-ly* is often an adverb (but not always – so be careful).

- **adverbs of manner** describe the way in which something is done.
 - *The man kissed me **passionately**, and I bit his lip **hard**.*
- **adverbs of time** tell us the time that something happens, or its frequency.
 - *I'll see you **tomorrow**.*
 - *I go to the gym **regularly**.*
- **particularizing adverbs** focus attention on what follows them.
 - *I am **particularly** annoyed but my day was **mostly** okay.*

You can also refer to particularizing adverbs as **adverbs of degree**. If they intensify the meaning of a word, you can call them **intensifiers**.

- *I am **so** angry and you are **very** stupid.*

- **exclusive adverbs** focus attention on what follows them, to the exclusion of all other possibilities.
 - *You are **only** interested in yourself; it is **just** a question of when everyone finds out.*

Other labels you might come across

- **adverbs of place** tell us, surprisingly enough, where something happens.
 - *I left my keys **somewhere**.*
 - *Get **here** right now, you rat.*
- **additive adverbs** 'add' two or more items together.
 - *Miss Marvin likes wine – Mrs Greaves does **too**.*

conjunction

Conjunctions connect together words or **clauses**: *Nadine **and** Sarah sold millions of CDs as members of Girls Aloud, **but** they've had less success in their solo careers.*

- **coordinating conjunctions** connect together words or clauses that have 'equal' status.
 - *I like you **and** you like me.*
 - *Mr Shovlin likes Girls Aloud **but** Miss Marvin prefers Little Mix.*
- **subordinating conjunctions** connect clauses that have 'unequal' status.
 - ***If** you eat cheese, I'll spit on you.*
 - *I like children **although** I couldn't eat a whole one.*

determiner

A determiner does exactly what it says on the tin – it determines the kind of reference a noun or noun group has. Determiners *always* come before the noun they determine: *this is **the** best day of my life, **this** feeling is wonderful.*

- **demonstrative determiners** are like **demonstrative pronouns**, but they don't take the place of a noun – they come before one.
 - *Look at **that** idiot.*
 - *Have you seen **this** man?*
- **possessive determiners** are like **possessive pronouns** in that they indicate possession. Unlike possessive pronouns, they come before the noun being possessed.
 - *This is **my** face.*
 - *I want to bite **your** eye out.*
- **the definite article** is the name for the most commonly used word in the English language: *the*.
 - *You are **the** one that I want.*
- **the indefinite article** is the name for the second most commonly used determiner: *a*.
 - *I don't give **a** fig.*

noun

Nouns describe people, places or things: *I went to the **market** and saw **Gemma** filled with **jealousy** as someone kissed her **boyfriend**.*

- **concrete nouns** are things that exist physically.
 - *The **table** had four **legs**.*
 - *The **aroma** in the **air** was pungent.*
- **abstract nouns** are things that do not exist physically – ideas, emotions, that kind of thing.
 - *My **love** for Krispy Kreme doughnuts knows no bounds.*
 - *His **anger** overwhelmed him.*
- **proper nouns** almost always begin with a capital letter, and are the names of people, places, organisations and so on.
 - ***Mr Smith** loves to visit **Egypt**.*
- **collective nouns** refer to groups.
 - *Your **class** is filled with idiots.*
 - *The **flock** of animals follows us.*

Don't confuse collective nouns with plural nouns (*students* is plural, *class* is collective).

preposition

Prepositions tell you how one thing relates to another: *I'll see you **after** dinner, I hid **under** the table, I will kiss you **on** the lips.*

pronoun

Pronouns can take the place of a **noun** in a sentence: *Mr Shovlin loves Girls Aloud as **he** thinks **they** produce amazing music.*

- **personal pronouns** usually take the place of people.
 - *I went to work and met **him** and **he** took **me** to see **her**.*

When labelling personal pronouns, you should identify the **person** and **number** of the pronoun. **Person** relates to whether the pronoun is in the **first** (*I, me, we, us*), **second** (*you*) or **third** (*he, she, it, they, him, her, them*) person. **Number** relates to whether the pronoun is **singular** (*I, me, you, he, she, it, him, her*) or **plural** (*we, us, you, they, them*). So, for example, *them* is a third person plural personal pronoun.

- **possessive pronouns** show ownership.
 - *This house is **mine**, not **yours**.*

They are similar to **possessive determiners**, but usually end with an S (with the exception of *mine*). Other examples include *his, hers* and *ours*.

- **reflexive pronouns** refer back to a previous noun or pronoun, and end in *-self* or *-selves*.
 - *You can suit **yourself**.*
 - *The dog wet **itself**.*

Other examples include *myself, ourselves, yourselves, himself, herself, themselves, oneself*.

- **reciprocal pronouns** show, funnily enough, reciprocity. There are only two: *each other* and *one another*.
- **demonstrative pronouns** allow us to indicate the thing or person we're referring to.
 - **This** is what I'm talking about.
 - **That** is why I love you.
 - **These** are the finest apples.
 - **Those** are the students who are irritating me.
- **indefinite pronouns** allow us to be – guess what? – indefinite.
 - **Somebody** has pooped in my shoe – does **anybody** know why?

Other examples include *anything, anyone, something, someone, nothing, nobody, none, no one*.

Other labels you might come across

- **interrogative pronouns** can be found at the start of **interrogative sentences**.
 - **What** did he say?
 - **Who** are you?
 - **Why** are you here?
 - **Where** did you come from?
 - **When** did you arrive?
 - **Whatever** are you wearing?
- **relative pronouns** immediately follow the noun to which they refer.
 - *New York is the city **that** never sleeps.*
 - *This is the lady **whom** I love.*

verb

Verbs describe an action, state or occurrence: *I **kicked** him in the guts and **felt** great about it.*

- **dynamic verbs** describe physical actions.
 - *You **punched** him.*
 - *I **smashed** the ball.*
 - *I **kissed** him.*
- **stative verbs** describe states or feelings.
 - *I **am** irritated.*
 - *I **love** him with all my heart.*
 - *I **want** some chocolate.*
- **progressive verbs** end in *-ing* and express action in progress.
 - *He was **hitting** me.*
 - *She'll be **coming** round the mountain when she comes.*

- **perfective verbs** express completed action. Look out for the verb being paired with an auxiliary (or helping) verb like *has* or *had*.
 - *He **has hit** me.*
 - *She **had come** round the mountain.*

- **progressive-perfective verbs** combine the features of progressive and perfective verbs in that they express completed action as though it's in progress. Confused? Look out for *been* combined with an *-ing* ending to spot these bad boys. The *been* signals the perfective part, and the *-ing* ending shows the progressive bit.
 - *He **had been hitting** me.*
 - *She **had been coming** round the mountain.*

- **modal verbs** are a type of auxiliary (or helping) verb and express necessity or possibility.
 - *You **can** see me later.*
 - *You **should** pay more attention.*
 - *I **will** deal with you in due course.*
 - *I **could** kill for a drink.*

With modals, it's important to explain their *function* too. Do they express possibility (*I **might** come out*), certainty (*I **will** come out*), compulsion (*You **must** come out*), uncertainty (*I **may** see you later*)?

PHRASES

adjectival

An adjectival phrase is a group of words that, together, function as an adjective in a sentence. If your phrase is adjectival, its 'head word' – the word the phrase cannot live without – will be an adjective.

- *You really are **disgustingly ugly**.*
- *The man was **improbably large**.*

adverbial

An adverbial phrase is a group of words that, together, function as an adverb in a sentence. If your phrase is adverbial, its 'head word' – the word the phrase cannot live without – will be an adverb.

- *He left the meeting **very quickly**.*
- *I bet you now understand phrases **completely and utterly**.*

noun

A noun phrase is a group of words that, together, function as a noun in a sentence. If your phrase is a noun phrase, its 'head word' – the word the phrase cannot live without – will be a noun.

- *I jumped aboard **the bright red bus**.*
- ***Lutterworth College's English Faculty** is brilliant.*
- *English Language is easily **the best A Level subject**.*

prepositional

A prepositional phrase is a group of words that, together, function as a preposition in a sentence. They are typically made up of a noun phrase with a preposition.

- *Would you like to see me **after your dinner**?*
- *I found Mrs Greaves hiding **in a bush**.*
- ***In a few days**, Miss Marvin will be downloading *Girls Aloud's* entire discography.*

verb

A verb phrase is a group of words that, together, function as a verb in a sentence. If your phrase is a verb phrase, its 'head word' – the word the phrase cannot live without – will be a verb.

- *He **ran quickly** down the stairs.*
- *She **greedily gobbled** the doughnuts.*

CLAUSES

main

A main clause can form a complete sentence on its own. It must contain a **verb**.

- *I like eating chocolate bars.*
- *You are a disgusting rat.*
- *I am amazeballs.*

coordinate

A coordinate clause is a **main clause** in a **compound** or **compound-complex** sentence.

- *I like eating Krispy Kreme doughnuts and you enjoy them too.*
- *Lutterworth College is a brilliant place but the students are vile.*

Where a coordinate clause forms a sentence on its own, you can call it a **stranded coordinate clause**.

- *And I loved it!*
- *But he's an idiot.*

subordinate

A subordinate clause is a clause that does not make sense on its own, and needs to be paired with one or more **main clauses** to form a complete sentence. They are introduced by **subordinating conjunctions**. As with other clause types, it must contain a **verb**. As a general rule, you can move subordinate clauses around in a sentence without changing the meaning. Have a go with the examples below.

- *Although I like children, I couldn't eat a whole one.*
- *Mrs Greaves wants to leave Lutterworth College because the students are vile.*
- *If you buy a Girls Aloud song, your life will be better.*

Subordinate clauses that start sentences can be called **foregrounded subordinate clauses**. Subordinate clauses in the middle of sentences can be called **embedded subordinate clauses**.

You can label subordinate clauses even more specifically, if you're brave enough to give it a go!

- **concessive subordinate clauses** concede something.
 - *Miss Marvin bought Mrs Wesley a Girls Aloud CD, although she couldn't really afford it.*
 - *Even though I love him, he won't reciprocate.*
 - *While I don't agree with her, I respect her view.*
- **conditional subordinate clauses** provide, unsurprisingly, a condition.
 - *If you give me a chocolate bar, I'll give you a kiss.*
 - *Provided you work hard, you'll do well in Language.*
 - *Don't phone me unless it's an emergency.*

- **subordinate clauses of reason** provide, *quelle surprise*, a reason.
 - ***Because he missed the train***, Zayn was late.
 - *I borrowed your tooth brush **since you weren't using it**.*
 - ***As I didn't know the way to work***, I stayed in bed.

- **temporal subordinate clauses** relate to time.
 - ***When you leave***, shut the door.
 - *I'll ring you again **before I go**.*
 - ***While you were sleeping***, I played with your dog.

- **relative subordinate clauses** add additional information, and begin with a **relative pronoun**.
 - *This is the woman **who lives in a box**.*
 - *Jennifer, **who hadn't slept for days**, looked rough as hell.*
 - *The cat had wet the bed, **which the dog found hilarious**.*

- **to-infinitive clauses** begin with the infinitive form of a verb.
 - *You have to book tickets early **to secure a seat**.*
 - ***To improve your work***, you need to include more grammatical vocabulary.
 - *I want **to hit you in the face**.*

SENTENCE TYPES

simple

A simple sentence contains **one main clause**.

- *You are a fat rat.*
- *I like to pierce my body.*
- *Miss Marvin likes to eat student casserole.*

compound

A compound sentence contains **two or more main clauses**, often joined by **coordinating conjunctions**.

- *You are a fat rat but I like you all the same.*
- *Martin likes to bake rat pie and Rachel enjoys munching on it.*
- *'Call The Shots' is Girls Aloud's saddest song but 'Sexy! No No No...' is their best.*

complex

A complex sentence contains **one main clause** and **one or more subordinate clauses**.

- *Although Mrs Greaves enjoys the music of Girls Aloud, she'd never buy one of their albums.*
- *If you want to get your girlfriend on side, buy her a slice of rat pie.*
- *Provided you work hard, you will do well in Language if you have the ability.*

compound-complex

A compound-complex sentence contains **two or more main clauses** and **one or more subordinate clauses**.

- *Although my best friend is married, she can't keep her hands off me and my wife is getting a little jealous.*
- *If you want to know the truth, I like to eat my Crème Eggs whole and regurgitate all of it minutes later.*

minor

A minor sentence is one that is not grammatically complete. It may be missing a subject or a verb.

- *In your dreams, buddy.*
- *Whatever.*
- *Working together – for lower costs and higher prices!*

SENTENCE FUNCTIONS

declarative

Declaratives are statements.

- *You adore Cheryl Fernandez-Versini (or whatever her surname is now).*
- *I think cheese is preferable to chocolate.*
- *Paris is the capital of France.*

imperative

Imperatives are instructions or commands, and always begin with a verb.

- *Go to hell, you fat chicken wing.*
- *Leave this room immediately.*
- *Kiss me on the lips.*

interrogative

Interrogatives are questions.

- *Do you think Girls Aloud are amazeballs?*
- *Would you like cream with your coffee?*
- *Do I look like Sheldon from The Big Bang Theory?*

Be careful not to confuse interrogatives with declaratives that end with a tag question. For example: *I like cheese, don't you?* is a declarative sentence with a tag question, whereas *Don't you like cheese?* is an interrogative.

exclamative

Exclamatives exclaim – who'd have thought it? An exclamation mark usually signals an exclamative sentence, but not always – so take care!

- *Christ on a bike!*
- *Goodness me!*
- *Oh no!*

OTHER BITS AND BOBS

active and passive voice

In the **active voice**, the subject of a sentence (who comes first) is the *do-er* of an action.

- *Sarah kicked Stewart in the face.*

In the **passive voice**, the subject of the sentence is the *done-to*.

- *Stewart was kicked in the face by Sarah.*

In both of the examples above, the same action is being described. However, Sarah is the subject in the first sentence and Stewart is the subject in the second.

The passive voice allows us to leave out the **by-phrase** – that is, the *do-er* of an action. For example, the second example could be written as *Stewart was kicked*, with the identity of the kicker kept concealed.

antonym

An antonym has the opposite meaning to another word. For example, *high* and *low*.

collocation

A set of words that have become strongly associated with each other. For example: *health and safety*, *fish and chips*.

ellipsis

Ellipsis has two meanings in English Language. It can refer to three dots (...) or to the missing out of a word or words in a sentence. It's common in newspaper headlines.

- *Missing man found alive.*
- *Shock decision rocks nation.*

euphemism and dysphemism

A **euphemism** is a word or phrase that tries to avoid saying something unpleasant. A **dysphemism** is the opposite: a word or phrase that draws attention to the unpleasantness of its meaning. In the examples below, the euphemisms come first, with the dysphemisms following.

- *I'm going to spend a penny. / I'm going for a slash.*
- *He passed away peacefully. / He dropped dead.*
- *The company downsized. / The company sacked loads of its staff.*

hyperbole and meiosis

Hyperbole is exaggeration for effect.

- *I cried my eyes out.*
- *He meant the world to me.*

Meiosis is the opposite – deliberate understatement.

- *Oh? The £10,000 watch I bought you? Just a small token of my appreciation.*
- *The car's written off? It was only a little prang!*

idiom

An idiom is a phrase whose meaning cannot be worked out from the meanings of the individual words that make it up. People who learn English as a foreign language often struggle to understand our idioms, even if they know our vocabulary well.

- *It's raining cats and dogs.*
- *I'm going to take him to the cleaners.*

nouns in apposition

When two or more noun phrases describing the same thing are placed together, we can describe these as nouns in apposition. It's often interesting to look at which noun phrases are placed in apposition, and how these might contribute toward a particular representation. Compare the examples below.

- *Mr Shovlin, Assistant Headteacher at Lutterworth College...*
- *Mr Shovlin, Girls Aloud's biggest fan...*
- *Mr Shovlin, a 34-year-old grammar fanatic...*

phonetic rendition

This is when words are spelled as they sound. For example, *Lestuh* is how a lot of you pronounce *Leicester*.

synecdoche and metonymy

Synecdoche (pronounced sin-eck-duh-key) is when a part of something stands in for a whole or the whole stands in for a part. Confused? Here are some examples.

- *We need **all hands** on deck!* (*Hands* refers to workers.)
- *I'm going to buy some new **wheels**.* (*Wheels* refers to a car.)
- *I've got five **mouths** to feed.* (*Mouths* refers to children.)
- *The **government** made the decision.* (*Government* here could refer to a majority of ministers – not necessarily all of them.)

Metonymy is when one thing stands in for something else that it represents.

- ***The White House** stopped the law passing.* (Here, *The White House* represents the US government or the President.)
- ***Wall Street** crashed again in 2008.* (*Wall Street* represents the US banking system.)

syntactic parallelism

This is when a writer or speaker repeats a sentence structure – usually for persuasive effect.

- *If we build it, they will come; if they come, we will succeed.*
- *Write about syntactic parallelism and you will impress the examiner. Impress the examiner, and you will score high marks.*

synthetic personalisation

This is when a writer or speaker makes use of the second person to 'synthesise' a relationship with the reader.

- *You've tried the rest – now try the best!*
- *Working harder and smarter for a better future for you.*

Don't assume all use of second person indicates synthetic personalisation; if the writer or speaker already knows the audience, it's not synthetic!

triad/tricolon

A triad or tricolon is a pattern of three words or phrases. For example: *We came, we saw, we conquered.*

ANYTHING ELSE?



Written by Stewart Shovlin
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