

Glossary of Terms Used in Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar

Teaching in Primary Schools

Adjective	A word which describes a noun .
Adverb	A word which describes how a verb action is being carried out.
Apostrophe ,	A punctuation mark used to show possession or to represent missing letters in a contracted form . See also possessive apostrophe .
Bullet points	A way of setting information out in a list of points, which may be phrases , words or short sentences .
Clause	Clauses are the building blocks of a sentence. They are groups of words that contain a subject and a verb. They can be 'main' or 'subordinate'.
Comma ,	A punctuation mark used in a sentence to demarcate items within a list, e.g. The little girl packed her shoes, leotard, socks and water bottle into her gym bag. Within KS2, pupils are also taught to use commas to demarcate clauses before introducing direct speech.
Command	A type of sentence which instructs or orders an action to take place. Contains an imperative verb which does not need a subject . Often a command will begin with this imperative verb or with a time connective . For example, 'Eat your dinner. <u>Next</u> add the eggs to the mixture'.
Common exception word	A word which does not follow the common phonetic spelling rules of the language, or where the usual rules act in an unusual way. Children have a list of these words which they are expected to learn by the end of each year in primary school. A full list of all the Year 1 and Year 2 Common Exception Words can be found here.
Common noun	Describes a class of objects (e.g. dog, man, day) which do not have a capital letter (e.g. Rover, John, Tuesday). See also proper nouns .
Comparative	The comparative form of an adjective compares one thing with another. For example, 'My cake is big but hers is bigger'. Usually formed by adding the suffix '-er' (smaller, higher, happier) or the word 'more' (more beautiful). See also superlative .
Complex sentence	Formed by joining a main clause with a subordinate clause using a subordinating conjunction. They can also be called multi-clause sentences. The main clause can stand alone but the subordinate or dependent clause cannot. For example, 'I burned dinner when I was on the phone'.
Compound sentence	Formed by joining two main clauses with a connective . The two clauses can stand on their own as sentences . For example, 'I like dogs but my friend likes cats'.
Compound word	A combination of two or more individual words that have a single meaning. For example, 'football', 'carwash', 'sunflower'.
Conjunction	A type of connective that joins clauses. Co-ordinating conjunctions include 'and', 'but' and 'so'. Subordinating conjunctions include 'because', 'if' and 'until'. See also subordinate clause .
Connective	Any word which joins two bits of text.
Consonant	Any letter of the alphabet other than the vowels (a, e, i, o, u).
Contracted form	Short words made by putting two words together and omitting some letters, which are replaced by an apostrophe . For example, 'did not' is contracted to 'didn't'.

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Co-ordinating conjunction	A conjunction which joins two main clauses to create a compound sentence. (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so)
Co-ordination	The joining of clauses in a way that gives each one equal importance. For example, 'I am seven and my friend is eight'.
Digraph	A sound represented by two letters - for example 'ee' or 'th'.
Exclamation	A sentence which expresses surprise or wonder, and ends with an exclamation mark in place of a full stop . Begins with the words 'how' or 'what' and must also contain a verb . For example, 'What big eyes you have, Grandma!' or 'How cold it is today!'
Exclamation mark !	A punctuation mark used at the end of an exclamation - for example, 'What a fantastic day we have had!' It can also be used at the end of a statement or command to show something has been said with feeling or emotion, for example, 'That was a really scary film!' or 'Stop hitting your brother!'
First person	A sentence is written in the first person if it is written from the point of view of the subject - in other words, using the pronouns 'I' or 'we'.
Full stop	A punctuation mark used to demarcate the end of a statement or command .
GPC	Stands for grapheme-phoneme correspondence, and refers to the way that sounds heard in words are written down.
Grammar	The rules that cover spoken and written language.
Grapheme	A letter or string of letters that represents a spoken sound.
Homophone	Words that sound the same but have different meanings. Some have different spellings and meanings but sound the same - for example, 'there/their/they're'; some are spelt the same but have different meanings - for example, 'fair' ('Let's go to the fair!'/ 'That's not fair').
Main clause	The leading clause in a sentence which indicates the main subject and action of the sentence. It stands alone without any additional clauses . For example, 'Even though the weather is bad, <u>I will still go for a walk</u> '.
Noun	A naming word for things, animals, people, places and feelings. Can be common, proper, concrete, abstract or collective .
Noun phrase	A small group of words that does not contain a verb . A noun phrase contains a noun plus words to describe it - for example, 'the spotty, black dog'.
Object	The object of a sentence is involved in the action but does not carry it out. For example, 'I dropped <u>my cup</u> on the floor'.
Paragraph	A distinct section of a piece of writing, which usually has a single theme. It is indicated by starting a new line or indenting the start of the first sentence.
Past progressive tense	Also known as past continuous tense, a form of the past tense where something goes on for a period of time in the past - for example, 'I was walking in the park'. Usually formed by adding the suffix '-ing' to a verb.
Past tense	Any one of a set of verb tenses which describe action that took place in the past. See also progressive tense, past perfect tense .
Phonics	A way of teaching reading and writing which focusses on hearing and learning the sounds in words, and how these are written down. Children are taught to blend sounds together to read words and to segment sounds in words they hear, in order to write down the correct GPCs .

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Phrase	A small group of words that does not contain a verb .
Plural	More than one. Using plurals can affect the nouns and verbs in a sentence .
Phoneme	A sound which makes up all or part of a word. For example, the word 'light' is made up of the phonemes: 'l', 'igh' and 't'.
Possessive apostrophe	An apostrophe used before the letter s to show ownership. For example, 'This is Sally's coat'.
Prefix	Letters that go in front of a root word and change its meaning, for example, 'un-' (happy/unhappy), 'dis-' (appear/disappear), 're-' (act/react)
Present progressive tense	A tense which describes an action which began in the past and is still going on now. For example, 'I am <u>learning</u> to speak French'.
Present tense	Any one of a set of tenses that describe actions which are happening now. See also present perfect tense and present progressive tense .
Proper noun	A noun which names a particular person, place or thing. For example, 'John', 'London', 'France', 'Monday', 'December'.
Punctuation mark	A symbol used to create and support meaning within a sentence or within a word, for example full stop, comma, question mark, colon, speech marks .
Root word	A basic word with no prefix or suffix added to it. Adding prefixes and suffixes can change the meaning of a root word.
Question	A type of sentence which asks a question. It either begins with one of the question words (who, what, where, when, how, why) or reverses the (pro)noun/verb order in a statement - for example, 'Sarah is washing the dishes' becomes 'Is Sarah washing the dishes?'
Question mark ?	A punctuation mark which indicates a question and comes at the end of the sentence in place of the full stop .
Sentence	One word or a group of words that makes sense by itself (a grammatical unit). Begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark . Usually contains a subject and always contains a verb .
Simple sentence	Has a subject and one verb. Can also be called a single-clause sentence. See also compound sentence and complex sentence .
Singular	Referring to only one. Use of the singular may affect the nouns, pronouns and verbs in a sentence .
Split digraph	A digraph that is split by a consonant. Usually represent long vowel sounds 'a-e' (for example, 'cake'), 'i-e' (five), 'o-e' (code) and 'u-e' (rule).
Statement	A sentence that conveys a simple piece of information. For example, 'It is a sunny day today'.
Subject	The subject of a sentence is the thing or person carrying out the main action. For example, ' <u>The cow</u> ate the grass'.
Subordinate clause	A clause that cannot stand alone as a complete sentence, but is linked to a main clause using a subordinating conjunction . It does not express a complete thought, and if read on its own it requires additional information. For example, 'I played out until <u>it went dark</u> '. Subordinate clauses contain a subject noun and a verb.

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Subordinating conjunction	A conjunction that connects a main clause to a subordinating clause . Examples include 'because', 'until', 'when', 'as', 'since', 'whereas', 'even though'.
Subordination	The joining of clauses and phrases in a way that links a main clause to a subordinate clause that does not stand alone.
Suffix	A string of letters that go at the end of a root word , changing or adding to its meaning. Suffixes can also show if a word is a noun, verb, adjective or adverb .
Superlative	A form of an adjective used to compare one object to all others in its class. Usually formed by adding the suffix '-est' or the word 'most'. For example, 'Mia ran <u>fastest</u> on Sports Day'. 'I am hungry, you are hungrier than me, but he is the <u>hungriest</u> of all'. See also comparative .
Syllable	A sequence of speech sounds in a word. The number of syllables in a word sounds like the 'beats' in the word, and breaking a word into syllables can help with spelling. One-syllable words include words such as, 'dog', 'cat', 'walk' and 'bath'; two-syllable words include, 'teacher' and 'Christmas'; three-syllable words include, 'beautiful', 'manager'.
Trigraph	A string of three letters which make a single sound, for example 'igh'.
Verb	A word used to describe an action, occurrence or state. An essential part of a sentence .
Vowel	The letters a, e, i, o and u.