

Grammar for A Level

English Language & Literature

Grammar is all about **structures** in language: how its various component parts fit together in ways we understand so we can communicate with each other. Like almost all structures, the larger whole is made up of a combination of smaller parts. There are six different elements, and they are referred to as the **linguistic rank scale**:

morpheme word phrase clause sentence text



Word Classes



image: Pierre Metivier on Flickr

To understand grammar, you need to be clear about the functions of particular types of words, or *word classes*. Here's a reminder of the key terms. After each section, there are links to relevant parts of the Englicious website where you can find out more and practise identifying the various word classes. I strongly recommend you have a look at the practice pages to fix these concepts firmly in your memory!

Noun **Adjective**
Verb **Adverb**

Pronoun **Preposition**
Determiner **Conjunction**

Make sure you know what each of these word classes are. You'll need to be able to spot them at speed in your exams.

Nouns

A **noun** is a word that identifies a person, place or a thing.

Sub-class	Description	Examples
Common nouns	refer to <i>general</i> rather than individual things that have been specifically named.	<i>dogs, cats, boys, girls</i>
Proper nouns	are the names we give to specific individual people, places and things.	<i>Oscar, London, Portugal</i>
Concrete nouns	refer to tangible things that physically exist.	<i>dog, cat, table, book, volcano</i>
Abstract nouns	refer to things which exist but which are not physically there.	<i>love, hope, determination, idea</i>
Collective nouns	are those that name groups of things.	<i>flock, army, team, family</i>
Possessive nouns	are formed by adding an <i>apostrophe</i> and an <i>s</i> to a noun.	It is <i>Jane's</i> car; We lost <i>John's</i> phone.

Have a look at the Englicious website here for some more help with nouns:



[About nouns](#)
[Identifying nouns practice](#)
[Nouns topic menu](#)

Verbs

A **verb** shows a **state of being, an action or a process/event**. **Lexical** verbs convey meanings, while the rest (auxiliaries) only have grammatical functions.

Sub-class	Description	Examples
Stative verbs	refer to a state of being	to <i>love</i> , to <i>hate</i> , to <i>hope</i>
Dynamic verbs	refer to an action (these can be further subdivided into material , relational , mental and verbal verbs – see below)	to <i>run</i> , to <i>eat</i> , to <i>listen</i> , to <i>think</i>
Auxiliary verbs	are added to the main verb in a clause, usually to change the tense or mood of the main verb. The auxiliaries <i>be</i> , <i>do</i> , <i>have</i> , <i>will</i> are the main ones, but there are others too, such as modal verbs (see below). In the example below, the auxiliaries of <i>have</i> and <i>am</i> are added to the main verb to change the tense: I <i>have</i> taken the test; I <i>am</i> taking the test	<i>be</i> , <i>do</i> , <i>have</i> , <i>will</i> ; <i>modals</i>
Modal verbs	are a specific type of auxiliary verb , and they slightly alter the meaning of the main verb in various ways (these can be further subdivided into epistemic , deontic , and dynamic modals – see below)	<i>can</i> , <i>may</i> , <i>must</i> , <i>might</i> , <i>could</i> , <i>will</i> , <i>would</i> , <i>shall</i> , <i>should</i> .
Phrasal verbs	are made up of more than one word and are idiomatic because their meanings are not just the meanings of the words added together, but an entirely new meaning.	I will <i>drop by</i> on my way home.

Have a look at the Englicious website here for some more help with verbs:



[About verbs](#)
[Auxiliary verbs](#)
[About phrasal verbs](#)
[Identifying verbs practice](#)

[Main/auxiliary practice](#)
[Verbs topic menu](#)
[Modal verbs](#)

Adjectives

An **adjective** is a type of **modifier** as it **changes (modifies) the meanings of nouns**. They describe a quality of the noun (what *kind* of?), or quantify the noun (*how many* of?), or identify which noun (*which* one?).

Sub-class	Description	Examples												
Adjectives of quality	describe the nature of the noun.	the <i>blue/crushed/large</i> hat												
Adjectives of quantity/number	refer to the amount of the noun. These are a type of determiner (see below).	<i>seven</i> cats; the <i>fourth</i> car; <i>many</i> pigeons; <i>every</i> person												
Possessive adjectives	(<i>my, its, his, her, our, your, their</i>) indicate to whom the following noun belongs. These are a type of determiner (see below).	<i>my</i> cat, <i>its</i> wheels, <i>his</i> hair, <i>her</i> bike...).												
Demonstrative adjectives	identify a specific noun. These are a type of determiner (see below).	<i>this</i> bag; <i>that</i> tree; these people; <i>those</i> chairs												
Interrogative adjectives	ask questions. These are a type of determiner (see below).	<i>what</i> bird is that; <i>which</i> car is yours; <i>whose</i> dog is that?												
Comparative and superlative adjectives	allow you to compare things: <table border="1" data-bbox="443 1211 1125 1384"> <thead> <tr> <th>Base</th> <th>Comparative</th> <th>Superlative</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Tall</td> <td><i>Taller</i></td> <td><i>Tallest</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Expensive</td> <td><i>More expensive</i></td> <td><i>Most expensive</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Good</td> <td><i>Better</i></td> <td><i>Best</i></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Base	Comparative	Superlative	Tall	<i>Taller</i>	<i>Tallest</i>	Expensive	<i>More expensive</i>	<i>Most expensive</i>	Good	<i>Better</i>	<i>Best</i>	
Base	Comparative	Superlative												
Tall	<i>Taller</i>	<i>Tallest</i>												
Expensive	<i>More expensive</i>	<i>Most expensive</i>												
Good	<i>Better</i>	<i>Best</i>												

Have a look at the Englicious website here for some more help with adjectives:



- [About adjectives](#)
- [Identifying adjectives practice](#)
- [Adjectives topic menu](#)

Adverbs

An **adverb** is also a **modifier** as it **changes the meanings of verbs, adjectives and other adverbs**:

The house <i>Noun</i>	was built <i>verb</i>	<i>quickly</i> <i>adverb</i>		<i>quickly</i> modifies <i>was built</i>
The house <i>Noun</i>	was <i>verb</i>	<i>extremely</i> <i>adverb</i>	large <i>adjective</i>	<i>extremely</i> modifies <i>large</i>
The house <i>Noun</i>	was built <i>verb</i>	<i>extremely</i> <i>adverb</i>	quickly <i>adverb</i>	<i>extremely</i> modifies <i>quickly</i>

Sub-class	Description	Examples												
Adverbs of manner	describe the way in which a verb is performed.	the house was built <i>quickly</i>												
Adverbs of place	describe where something is occurring or where it is going.	she walks <i>in the park</i> ; he walks <i>to the shops</i>												
Adverbs of time	describe when something is happening.	she walked in the park <i>yesterday</i> ; he went to the shops <i>this morning</i>												
Adverbs of frequency	describe how often something is happening.	he walks in the park <i>every day</i>												
Adverbs of purpose	describe why something is happening.	he walks to the shops <i>to buy a newspaper</i>												
Comparative and superlative adverbs	allow you to compare, and are often created by adding either more/most or less/least to the base adverb: <table border="1" data-bbox="359 1451 1141 1630"> <thead> <tr> <th>Base</th> <th>Comparative</th> <th>Superlative</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Quickly</td> <td><i>More/less quickly</i></td> <td><i>Most/least quickly</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Extremely</td> <td><i>More/less extremely</i></td> <td><i>More/less extremely</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fast</td> <td><i>Faster</i></td> <td><i>Fastest</i></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Base	Comparative	Superlative	Quickly	<i>More/less quickly</i>	<i>Most/least quickly</i>	Extremely	<i>More/less extremely</i>	<i>More/less extremely</i>	Fast	<i>Faster</i>	<i>Fastest</i>	
Base	Comparative	Superlative												
Quickly	<i>More/less quickly</i>	<i>Most/least quickly</i>												
Extremely	<i>More/less extremely</i>	<i>More/less extremely</i>												
Fast	<i>Faster</i>	<i>Fastest</i>												
Adverbs that are intensifiers	convey a greater or lesser emphasis of the verb.	I <i>really</i> love cats; he knows me <i>well</i> ; he was <i>totally</i> lost; she <i>almost</i> dropped the ball												
Adverbs of degree	describe the greater or lesser degree of other adverbs or adjectives.	the house was <i>extremely</i> large												

Have a look at the Englicious website here for some more help with adverbs:



[About adverbs](#)

[Identifying adverbs practice 1](#)

[Identifying adverbs practice 2](#)

[Adverbs topic menu](#)

Pronouns

A **pronoun** is a word that is used in place of an actual noun. A pronoun is usually referring back to an actual noun, which we call its *antecedent*:

<i>Jane</i>	owned	<i>the car.</i>	<i>She</i>	loved	to	drive	<i>it.</i>
<small>Noun</small>	<small>verb</small>	<small>noun.</small>	<small>Pronoun refers to <i>Jane</i></small>	<small>verb</small>			<small>pronoun refers back to <i>the car</i></small>

Sub-class	Description	Examples
Personal pronouns	take the place of nouns referring to people, places or things.	<i>I, he, she, you, it, we, they, me, you, him, her, it, us, them</i>
Subject pronouns	are used to refer to the subject of the verb in a clause.	<i>I, he, she, you, it, we, they</i>
Object pronouns	are the ones we use to refer to the object of a verb in a clause.	<i>me, you, him, her, it, us, them</i>
Possessive pronouns	indicate something belonging to someone/something.	<i>mine, yours, his, hers, its, ours, theirs</i>
Relative pronouns	<i>who, whose, whom, that, which</i> , and <i>what</i> indicate a relationship (hence, <i>relative</i>) between a clause and the subject of that clause.	the boy <i>who</i> kicked the ball
Interrogative pronouns	(<i>who/whoever/whosoever, which/whichever/whichsoever, whom/whomever/whomsoever, whose/whosever/whosesoever, what/whatever/whatsoever</i>) are used to ask questions. Take care with these. If they're used with a noun, they become interrogative adjectives/determiners instead.	<i>who</i> kicked the ball? <i>which ball</i> needs inflating?).

Have a look at the Englicious website here for some more help with pronouns:



[About pronouns](#)

[Identifying pronouns practice 1](#)

[Identifying pronouns practice 2](#)

[Pronouns topic menu](#)

Prepositions

Prepositions connect other words/phrases in a sentence, either in terms of place (spatial), time (temporal) or logical connection.

Examples

you were running *through* the streets;
you stood *by* the shop;
you slept *in* the bed

you left *after* me;
he slept *during* your speech

the drawer *for* art materials is the top one;
she learned *from* her sister;
I got better *by* practising

Have a look at the Englicious website here for some more help with prepositions:



[About prepositions](#)
[Identifying prepositions practice](#)
[Prepositions topic menu](#)

Conjunctions

Conjunctions join words, phrases or clauses together in sentences.

Sub-class	Description	Examples
Co-ordinating conjunctions	<p>(<i>and, but, or, so, for, nor, yet</i>) join main clauses together as well as individual words and also phrases of equal significance, or any combination of those three.</p> <p>Individual words: I have red, black <i>and</i> green hats; my hats are old <i>but</i> neat; my hats are either tasteful <i>or</i> humorous</p> <p>Phrases: my English teacher <i>and</i> my parents spoke today; my English teacher, <i>but</i> not my science teacher spoke today</p> <p>Main clauses: I attended a play today, <i>and</i> it was a brilliant performance; I attended a play today, <i>but</i> it was a terrible performance</p>	
Subordinating conjunctions	<p>(e.g. <i>after, although, as, because, before, if, once, since, than, that, though, till, until, when, where, whether, while</i>) join a main (or independent) clause to a subordinate (or dependent) clause (one that cannot stand alone as a complete sentence because it does not express a complete thought).</p>	<p>I listen to my iPod <i>while</i> I wait;</p> <p>I don't wear my coat <i>because</i> it is warm</p>
Correlative conjunctions	<p>are always in two parts (e.g. <i>both...and; either...or; neither...nor; not only...but also; whether...or</i>).</p>	<p><i>Both</i> John <i>and</i> Jennie will need to work hard.</p> <p><i>Either</i> do your best <i>or</i> don't try at all.</p> <p><i>Neither</i> John <i>nor</i> Jennie have worked hard enough.</p> <p><i>Not only</i> John <i>but also</i> Jennie has applied for the job.</p> <p><i>Whether</i> you apply <i>or</i> you do not is up to you.</p>

Have a look at the Englicious website here for some more help with conjunctions:



- [About conjunctions](#)
- [Identifying conjunctions practice 1](#)
- [Identifying conjunctions practice 2](#)
- [Conjunctions topic menu](#)

Phrases

So far, we have looked at word classes and also the ways in which words can be changed by the addition of derivational and inflectional affixes. The next step up in the rank scale is the **phrase**. A **phrase** is a group of words that functions as an element within a clause or a sentence.

Noun Phrases

A **noun phrase** is a phrase that functions as a noun. It contains a *main noun* (called the **head word**), and will usually also contain *other words*:

The		woman	
		<i>noun (head)</i>	
The	young	woman	
	<i>modifier (adj)</i>	<i>noun (head)</i>	
The	young	woman	in the car
	<i>modifier (adj)</i>	<i>noun (head)</i>	

Adjectives (either words or *adjective phrases*) that appear before a head word are called **pre-modifiers**, while adjectives and qualifiers that follow the head word are referred to as **post-modifiers**.

Pronoun Phrases

These are noun phrases, really, but formed with a **pronoun** as the head.

Almost	everyone
<i>modifier (adj)</i>	<i>pronoun (head)</i>
We	who support Southampton
<i>Pronoun (head)</i>	<i>relative clause</i>

Verb Phrases

A verb phrase contains the **head word** (the *main verb*), plus any *auxiliary verbs* (including *modal auxiliaries*).

The	man	<i>had</i>	<i>been</i>	<i>sleeping</i>	that afternoon	
		<i>auxiliary</i>	<i>auxiliary</i>	<i>head</i>		
The	man	<i>was</i>		<i>sleeping</i>	that afternoon	
		<i>auxiliary</i>		<i>head</i>		
The	man	<i>might</i>	<i>have</i>	<i>been</i>	<i>sleeping</i>	that afternoon
		<i>modal aux.</i>	<i>auxiliary</i>	<i>auxiliary</i>	<i>head</i>	

Adverb Phrases

An **adverb phrase** is a group of words that functions as an *adverb*. It contains the *main adverb* (or **head**), plus *modifiers* either before or after it (or both).

very	quickly	
<i>modifier</i>	<i>adverb head</i>	
Quickly	indeed	
<i>adverb (head)</i>	<i>modifier</i>	
very	quickly	indeed
<i>modifier</i>	<i>adverb head</i>	<i>modifier</i>

Note – all of the modifiers above are also adverbs in their own right (adverbs of degree)

Adjective Phrases

An **adjective phrase** is a group of words that describes the noun it refers to. It contains a *main adjective* (again, called the **head word**), plus any *adverbs*, *prepositions*, *determiners* and *nouns*. The head is red in these examples:

The dog <i>Noun phrase</i>	is <i>verb</i>	happy to run <i>adjective phrase</i>
The dog <i>Noun phrase</i>	was <i>verb</i>	covered in mud <i>adjective phrase</i>

Have a look at the Englicious website here for some more help with phrases:



[Phrases](#)

[Noun phrases](#)

[Verb phrases](#)

[Adverb phrases](#)

[Adjective phrases](#)

[Phrase identification practice](#)

[Phrases topic menu](#)

Clauses

Moving up a level from phrases, we now need to look at how **clauses** are formed. A **clause** is a group of words that contains a *verb phrase* as well as other words and phrases. Those other words and phrases are given specific names according to the *way* in which they combine with the verb phrase:

Clause element	Description	Examples	
subject (S)	Usually a noun/pronoun phrase (sometimes a subordinate clause), the subject of a clause is either the agent of a material verb process (see <i>Agents and Patients</i> below) or the focus of a relational verb process (i.e. it is the person or thing that is “doing” the verb in an active clause – see <i>The active and passive voice</i> below).	<i>Sarah and Simon</i> walk in the park	noun phrase
		<i>She</i> walks in the park	pronoun phrase
		<i>People walking in parks</i> enjoy the fresh air	subordinate clause
verb phrase (V)	The <i>main verb</i> , plus any <i>auxiliary verbs</i>	<i>walks</i>	main verb
		<i>had been walking</i>	main verb plus auxiliaries
object (O)	Usually a noun/pronoun phrase (sometimes a subordinate clause), the object of a clause is the person or thing upon which the action of the verb is being performed.	John kicks <i>the ball</i>	noun phrase
		John waved at <i>the boys eating ice cream</i>	subordinate clause
adverbial (A)	a word, phrase or subordinate clause that modifies the meaning of a verb	She ate the apple <i>hungrily</i> He bought the bike <i>yesterday afternoon</i> She sold the car <i>because she wanted a new one</i>	

Have a look at the Englicious website here for some more help with clause elements:



[Clauses](#)

[Subjects](#)

[Direct objects](#)

[Indirect objects](#)

[Adverbials](#)

[Subject complements](#)

[Object complements](#)

[Clause topic menu 1](#)

[Clause topic menu 2](#)

Constructing clauses

A clause, then, is made up from a combination of two or more of the elements in the table [above](#), as long as one of them is a verb phrase. The shortest clauses contain just a subject and the verb.

Sarah	slept
S	V

But you can add other elements to make things more interesting:

Sarah	slept	fitfully	in the attic
S	V	A	A

Sarah's sleeping	annoyed	her friends	immeasurably
------------------	---------	-------------	--------------

S V O A

Some Practice

Try adding your own content to the clause structures below, putting subjects, verbs, objects, complements and adverbials in the appropriate positions.

S V

S V O

S V O A

S V A A

S V O A

Have a look at the Englicious website here for some more help with clause elements:



[Subject practice](#)

[Adverbial practice](#)

Types of Clauses

There are quite a few ways of categorising clauses. Here are the main ones.

Independent (or main) clauses

A clause that can stand on its own as a sentence. It will contain at least a subject and a verb, but may contain other clause elements as well (complements, objects, adverbials, etc.) Sentences that have just one independent clause and no dependent clauses are called **simple sentences**.

John bought a newspaper.
S V O

Dependent (or subordinate) clauses: these are clauses that do not communicate a complete meaning, and so cannot stand alone as a sentence. They always appear with a main (independent) clause, either modifying it in some way (adjective, also known as *relative*, and adverbial clauses) or forming an integral part of the main (independent) clause itself (noun, also known as *nominal*, clauses).

The house *that I loved* was for sale

adjective (or relative) clause

(often begun with one of the relative pronouns – *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *that* or *which*; can also begin with a relative adverb – *when*, *where* or *why*)

Another type of subordinate clause is the **conditional clause**. It's a type of adverbial clause that usually begins with *if* or *unless*. They describe a future event which is *conditional* on something else happening:

If you pass the salt, I'll give you the pepper.

Unless you pass the salt, you'll not get the pepper

Sentences that have one or more dependent clauses added to an independent (main) clause are called **complex sentences**.

Declaratives, Interrogatives, Imperatives and Exclamatives

Clauses can also be categorised according to these four functions. I've explained these later on in this guide under **Sentences**.

Have a look at the Englicious website here for some more help with clause types:



[Clause types](#)
[Independent/main and subordinate](#)

[Relative clauses](#)
[Independent/main v subordinate practice](#)
[Clause topic menu 1](#)
[Clause topic menu 2](#)

Voice and tense

We learned about **verbs** in an earlier section of this guide (*Word Classes*). Strictly speaking, what follows should really appear under that section as all of this relates to the way we use *verbs*. However, since these uses all take place within clauses, it's easier to explain and understand in that context, which is why you're reading about them here.

Verbs are the grammatical "engine room" of a clause or sentence. They can be used to express all sorts of different things, and they can be used in a variety of ways.

The active and passive verb voices

A clause will use either the active or the passive "voice", but what does that mean?

Agents and patients

In a clause, we have already identified that various words and phrases (and even some subordinate, or dependent, clauses) fulfil specific functions: *subjects*, *verbs*, *direct* or *indirect objects*, *complements*, *adverbials*. However, we can also refer to the **agent** and the **patient** of the verb. We need to do this when understanding the active and passive voice of a clause.

An **agent** is the person or thing that performs the action of the verb.

<i>Sarah</i>	ate	her breakfast
<i>Agent</i>	<i>V</i>	

A **patient** is the person or thing upon which the action of the verb is performed.

<i>Sarah</i>	ate	<i>her breakfast</i>
<i>Agent</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>patient</i>

In the **active voice**, the **agent** of the verb is also usually the *subject* of the clause, and the **patient** of the verb is also usually the *direct object* of the clause. The example above, then, is in the **active voice** as the *subject* of the clause (*Sarah*) is also the **agent** of the verb, and the *direct object* (her breakfast) is also the **patient** of the verb.

However, if we want to, we can change the sentence around to make it a **passive voice** clause, in which the **patient** is now the *subject* of the clause:

Breakfast	was eaten	by Sarah
Patient	V	agent (within a prepositional phrase)

In the **passive voice**, the agent is optional. We could remove it from the example above, and the sentence still makes sense (*Breakfast was eaten*).

The **effect** of using the **passive voice** is to reduce the importance of the agent, or to remove the agent entirely. This may simply be because the agent is not known. Think of a newspaper report where the perpetrators of a crime are unknown:

The jewels were stolen at some time in the morning, while the shop was yet to open

Or it may be a conscious decision to divert attention from the agent. Think of a guilty person not wanting to reveal the identity of the person responsible for something when asked what had happened:

The window was broken sir, rather than I broke the window, sir.

The opposite is true of the **active voice**, of course.

Some Practice

Try converting these active voice clauses to passive voice:

Active	Passive
John threw the ball	
The party woke up the neighbours	
The people eating ice cream thanked the ice cream vendor	

Now try converting these passive voice clauses to active voice:

Passive	Active
The car was driven by a chauffer	
Our house was struck by a bolt of lightning	
The lorries that were parked on the verge had been stolen	

Have a look at the Englicious website here for some more help with voice:



[Active and passive voice practice](#)

Verb Tenses

The verbs in clauses can be changed (*conjugated*) to show *when* the action of the verb takes place. Doing this changes the **tense** of the verb. The verb will either be happening at some point in the present, or in the past, or perhaps in the future. We can change the endings of verbs (**inflections**) to change their tenses.

At a basic level, then, there should be three verb tenses:

Simple present	The children <i>walk</i> to school <i>no inflection – present</i>
Simple past	The children <i>walked</i> to school <i>ed inflection added - past</i>
Simple future	The children <i>will walk</i> to school <i>no inflection, but modal added</i>

Confusingly, though, many modern grammarians insist that there is no real future tense, just past and present. That's because there are no verb *inflections* that we can use to show the future tense. Instead, we either use particular versions of the present tense, or we add the modal auxiliaries *will* or *shall* to the verb, as in the example above. Technically, then, there are only two main tenses (present and past). Most people, though, still refer to a future tense.

Have a look at the Englicious website here for some more help with tenses:



[Tense](#)
[Tense and aspect practice](#)

Sentences

The next unit of language in the rank scale after clauses is the **sentence**. A sentence can consist of a single independent clause, like both of these:

Freddie	reads.
S	V

Freddie	reads	the book	well.
S	V	DO	A

As we have already discovered, though, a sentence can also include other clauses. These sentences can be categorised into different types.

Clause element	Description	Example
Simple	Sentences that have just one independent clause and no dependent clauses are called <i>simple sentences</i> .	<i>John bought a newspaper</i>
Compound	Sentences that have two or more independent clauses joined together by one of the coordinating conjunctions (<i>and, but, or, so, for, nor, and yet</i>) or a semicolon and no dependent clauses are called <i>compound sentences</i> .	<i>The car was stolen, but the thief was soon caught.</i> <i>I love to walk in the countryside; I even enjoy walking in the rain.</i>
Complex	Sentences that have one or more dependent clauses added to an independent (main) clause are called <i>complex sentences</i> .	The house <i>that I loved</i> was not for sale Please polish the car <i>until you can see it shine</i> I think you can see <i>what I can see</i> I think <i>that everyone is equal</i>
Compound-complex	Sentences that have two or more independent clauses joined together in this way <i>as well as</i> at least one dependent clause are called <i>compound-complex sentences</i> .	<i>The car was stolen, but the thief was soon caught because he was a clumsy criminal.</i>

Minor Sentences

Although, grammatically, a sentence should contain at least a subject and a verb, writers often ignore this to create an impact. A **minor sentence**, then, is one that we recognise as such in a text because it has a capital letter at the start and a full stop at the end, but it may not have a verb. A famous example comes from the opening to Dickens' *Bleak House*:

London. Michaelmas term lately over, and the Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincoln's Inn Hall. Implacable November weather.

The first sentence is just one proper noun, and the third is a single noun phrase. It is only the orthographic conventions of starting with capitals and ending with full stops that communicates to the reader that these are to be viewed as sentences.

Sentence (and clause) Functions

Clauses and sentences can fulfil different functions within a text. There are four basic functions:

Sentence function	Description	Example
Declaratives	these convey information or make a statement of some kind.	<i>I like cars.</i> <i>Mount Everest is a mountain.</i> <i>The aeroplane slowly accelerated out of sight.</i>
Interrogatives	these ask direct questions that require an answer	<i>Do you like reading?</i> (Yes/no interrogative) <i>What are you reading?</i> (wh-interrogative) <i>You like reading, don't you?</i> (tag question – an interrogative tagged onto a declarative)
Imperatives	these are orders (commands) or instructions	<i>Sit down please.</i> <i>First, unpack and check the parts of your new self-assembly wardrobe.</i>
Exclamatives	these are actually declaratives with an exclamation mark added at the end to show emphasis, often (but not always) beginning with a <i>wh-operator</i> (<i>who, what, when, where, why, how</i>)	<i>What a silly idea!</i> <i>How amusing!</i>

Have a look at the Englicious website here for some more help with sentences:



[Sentence/clause types](#)

[Simple, compound and complex sentence practice](#)

Some other sentence styles you might find useful

It's possible to categorise sentences further by looking at their *style* and structure.

Loose Sentences

These are where the main clause and, therefore, **point** of the sentence occurs at the beginning, followed by a series of other clauses and/or phrases that provide extra information. They are the form of sentence most commonly used in English.

I come from Southampton, a city near the coast, though I have spent much of my life in Northampton because I have friends there.

Periodic Sentences

These are sentences where the completion of the main clause is purposely delayed until the end of the sentence, with a series of other clauses or phrases in between. It is used as a persuasive tool as the reader

is forced to consider each of the points you make before the main clause while they wait to find out what the point of the sentence is going to be.

It is because of his intelligence, his kindness to others and his ability to connect with the people that *I think Mr Smith should be the new leader of our party.*

Balanced Sentences

These are where the author has thought about the symmetry of a sentence. They contain two statements structured in a way that highlights similarities or differences in their meanings.

*The fact that John is here is a good thing; the fact that he is only staying for an hour is not so good.
In the nineteenth century the revolution was industrial, but in the twentieth it was electronic.*

Parallelism:

A similar technique is the use of the parallelism in sentences. This is where a series of similar structures are used in a sentence to convey information clearly, quickly and emphatically.

We want someone who is experienced, who is hard-working, and who is looking for promotion.

You'll be using all this grammar knowledge to help you identify and closely analyse

words phrases clauses and sentences within the texts

we study on the English Language and Literature course, all of which work together to convey meaning.