

A glossary of grammatical terms for teachers

The following are the main terms and concepts with which you should be familiar in order to be able to understand, analyse and describe grammar and structure in English.

Term	Gloss	Example
<i>a</i> -adjective	A special kind of adjective beginning with <i>a</i> -. These adjectives are always used predicatively (q.v.)	<i>The dog is <u>asleep</u></i> NOT <i>The asleep dog</i>
Absolute adjective	Adjectives which cannot be made stronger or weaker	<i>A <u>perfect</u> meal</i> NOT <i>A more perfect meal</i>
Absolute tense	A tense which is fixed in time and not relative to any other time	<i>He <u>came</u> yesterday</i>
Abstract noun	A noun referring to an intangible concept	<i>happiness</i>
Accent	Stress or a diacritic (q.v.) mark The term is sometimes used when word stress is meant. It also refers to differences in pronunciation.	<i>café</i> <i><u>coffee</u></i>
Active-only verb	A verb which, although transitive, can only appear in the active voice	<i>John resembles his father</i> NOT <i>*His father is resembled by John</i>
Additive adverb	An adverb which acts cohesively to signal an item of equal importance	<i>Mary has a point and John's is valid, <u>too</u></i>
Adjective	A word which modifies or describes a noun phrase	<i>The <u>large</u> dog</i>
Adjective phrase	A group of words doing the work of an adjective	<i>The <u>large, black</u> dog</i>
Adjunct	An adverbial which is part of the main structure of a clause	<i>She drove the car <u>quickly out of the car park</u></i>
Adverb	A word which modifies a verb, an adjective, another adverb or a verb phrase. Adverbs may also modify other elements of a clause.	<i>She walked <u>quickly</u></i> <i>The book was <u>very</u> expensive</i> <i>He <u>usually</u> drives <u>too</u> slowly</i>
Adverb of degree	An adverb telling you to what extent	<i>I <u>really</u> enjoyed the book</i>
Adverb of frequency	An adverb telling you how often (often subsumed into the adverb of time category)	<i>He <u>usually</u> goes home at 6</i>
Adverb of manner	An adverb telling you the way something happens	<i>It <u>quickly</u> became dark</i>
Adverb of place	An adverb telling you where an action or state exists	<i>I came <u>inside</u></i>

Term	Gloss	Example
Adverb of time	An adverb telling you when something happens	<i>She left <u>then</u></i>
Adverb phrase	A group of words doing the job of an adverb	<i>They walked home <u>slowly and sadly</u></i>
Adverbial	Any word or phrase which modifies a verb phrase or clause	<i>He went <u>into town</u></i> <i><u>Honestly</u>, I don't know</i>
Affix	Any morpheme added to the beginning, middle or end of a word to alter its sense or word class	<i><u>Pseudo</u>-science</i> <i>National<u>ise</u></i>
Agent	In passive clauses, the causer or doer of the action	<i>The window was broken by <u>them</u></i>
Alethic modality	Expressing an absolute truth	<i>Parallel lines <u>cannot</u> meet</i>
Allophone	A variation of a phoneme which does not alter the meaning of a word	<i>/t^h/ in <i>top</i> vs. /t/ in <i>pots</i>/</i>
Amplifier	An adjective or adverb which serves to increase the scale of another	<i>She's a <u>great</u> help</i> <i>It was <u>really</u> interesting</i>
Anaphoric	Referring back	<i><u>John</u> liked it but <u>he</u> couldn't afford it</i>
Antecedent	The noun phrase to which a later pronoun refers	<i><u>The yellow car</u> was beautiful so I bought <u>it</u></i>
Anticipatory <i>it</i> Anticipatory <i>there</i>	The words <i>it</i> or <i>there</i> used to fill the subject slot when the real subject occurs later	<i><u>It</u> is difficult to speak French well</i> <i><u>There</u> is some truth in what you say</i>
Apophony	The alteration of an internal vowel to inflect	<i>I <u>came</u> and I <u>saw</u></i>
Apposition	Two words or phrases having the same reference	<i><u>My brother, the grocer</u>, brought the food</i>
Article	A class of determiners (q.v.) which modify noun phrases for number or reference	<i>She bought <u>a</u> house</i> <i>They have <u>an</u> idea</i> <i>I am <u>the</u> boss here</i>
Aspect	Descriptive of how an event or action is perceived relative to time, e.g., progressively, continuously, habitually or repeatedly	<i>She has arrived (perfect aspect)</i> <i>They left (simple aspect)</i> <i>She was cycling (progressive aspect)</i> <i>I know (continuous aspect)</i>
Assemblage noun	A collective noun which refers to a specific type of entity	<i>A <u>flock</u> of sheep</i> <i>A <u>pride</u> of lions</i>
Assertive form	A determiner, adverb or pronoun which appears in affirmative clauses	<i>We have <u>some</u> bread</i> <i>I have <u>already</u> finished</i> <i>I'd like <u>a</u> few</i>

Term	Gloss	Example
Asyndetic (opposite Syndetic)	Coordination without a conjunction	<i><u>Hot, tired</u>, we went for lunch</i>
Attributive	Describing adjectives coming before or directly after nouns	<i>The <u>black</u> horse</i> <i>The president <u>elect</u></i>
Auxiliary verb	A verb which has no meaning alone but works with main verbs to express speaker perception or aspect (q.v.). There are two types: primary auxiliary verbs (q.v.) which form tenses and aspects and modal auxiliary verbs (q.v.) which signal the speaker's view of an event or state.	<i>I <u>have</u> done the work</i> <i>I <u>must</u> go home now</i>
Base form	The form of the verb (or other word) from which other inflected forms are derived	The verb <u>spea</u> k is usually intransitive <i><u>hope</u>ful</i>
Binding	Joining clauses of unequal weight (See linking)	<i>He was tired <u>because</u> he had been walking fast</i>
Binomial	A kind of idiom consisting of two parts whose order cannot usually be changed	<i>Done and <u>dusted</u></i> <i>To and <u>fro</u></i> <i>Helter <u>skelter</u></i>
Blend	A word formed by combining (and clipping) two other words	<i><u>Motel</u> (motor + hotel)</i>
Bound base	A morpheme to which a suffix is added but which cannot itself stand alone	<i><u>dext</u> in dexterity</i>
Case	The way to describe what a noun phrase is doing in a sentence in terms of its relationship to other parts of the clause	<i><u>They</u> saw me (subject or nominative case)</i> <i>They saw <u>me</u> (object or accusative case)</i> <i>That's <u>my</u> car (possessive or genitive case)</i>
Cataphoric	Referring forwards	<i>When he got to <u>it</u>, <u>the shop</u> was closed</i>
Catenation	Verbs following each other in a chain of meaning	<i>I <u>dislike</u> waiting</i> <i>She <u>wants to go</u></i>
Causative	A verb or structure which operates to say what caused an event	<i>I <u>made</u> him work harder</i> <i>I <u>got</u> my house painted</i>
Circumstance	In functional grammar any item which relates to place, angle, accompaniment and similar notions	<i><u>According to John</u>, it's too expensive</i> <i>I hit it <u>with a hammer</u></i>

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Classifier or class adjective (See epithet)	A type of adjective which cannot be modified with, e.g., <i>very</i> and cannot have superlative or comparative forms and which tells us what type of thing the noun is	A <u>sports</u> car A <u>junior</u> school A <u>school</u> book
Clause	Traditionally, a verb plus its predicate. Alternatively, a group of words containing a finite or non-finite verb form	<u>He went because I asked him to</u> <u>Opening the door, he crept in</u>
Cleft	A clause which has been divided into two parts, assigning a verb to each noun phrase	<u>What I liked most were the</u> <u>dancers</u> <u>It is the weather that will</u> <u>decide</u>
Clipping	Word formation using abbreviation	<u>pram</u>
Closed-system items / Closed class words	Words belonging to classes to which it is very rare to make additions and which can, therefore, in theory, be exhaustively listed. See open-class items.	<u>prepositions, determiners,</u> <u>pronouns, conjunctions</u>
Cohesion	Explicit grammatical or lexical linkage in discourse	<u>She went although she was tired</u> <u>It was a bad accident but he put</u> <u>the event behind him</u>
Collective noun	A noun which refers to a group of things or people	<u>The army</u> <u>My family</u>
Colligation	Having similar syntactic properties	<u>I made him do it</u> <u>I helped him do it</u>
Collocation	Words appearing routinely together	<u>A heavy snowfall</u> <u>NOT</u> <u>*A strong snowfall</u>
Combining form	An affix which adds to rather than alters the meaning of a word	<u>Herbicide</u> <u>Neuroscience</u>
Comparative	The form which is used to show a greater or lesser degree of a quality	<u>A bigger house</u> (inflexion) <u>A more beautiful cat</u> (periphrastic)
Complement	A phrase which completes the meaning of a verb or other element	<u>The house in the corner</u> (prepositional phrase complement) <u>He is the boss</u> (subject noun complement of a copular verb)
Complex sentence	A sentence which has at least one main and one subordinate clause	<u>I came so I could help</u>
Compound sentence	A sentence which has two equal clauses	<u>I came and I talked to her</u>

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Compound-complex sentence	A sentence which has at least one main and one subordinate clause and one equal clause	<i>I came and I talked to her although she was very angry</i>
Compounding	Word formation by simple addition. The stress in a compound usually falls on the first element.	<i>gaslight</i>
Concessive	A phrase or clause which refers to a circumstance which should make the main action impossible but does not	<i>She went <u>despite the rain</u> They left <u>although the concert was not finished</u></i>
Concord	Agreement between subject and verb or pronoun form	<i>The jury <u>is</u> out The men got <u>their</u> letters</i>
Conditional	A clause whose truth is contingent on the truth of another	<i><u>Give me the money</u> and I'll buy it for you <u>Come if you can</u></i>
Conjunct	An adverbial which serves to link clauses	<i>I wanted to come. <u>However</u>, the trains were cancelled</i>
Conjunction	A word to join two ideas (clauses, verbs, nouns etc.)	<i>She went home <u>because</u> she felt ill We ate bread <u>and</u> butter</i>
Content word	A word which has meaning when standing alone (compare function word)	<i>house, bring, pretty, usually, French</i>
Continuous	An aspect of a verb tense to describe something on-going or in the background	<i>She <u>thinks</u> I love her They <u>are working</u> in Italy</i>
Conversion	Altering word class without altering form	<i>I got some <u>paint</u> to <u>paint</u> the garage door</i>
Coordinating conjunction	A word which joins two equal and potentially independent clauses, phrases or nouns	<i>They were happy <u>but</u> I was sad We had bread <u>and</u> butter</i>
Copular verb	A verb which joins two nouns together, a noun and an adjective or a noun and a prepositional phrase	<i>She <u>became</u> a teacher They <u>grew</u> tall She <u>was</u> in the garden</i>
Correlating conjunction	A conjunction in two parts to join clauses or nouns	<i>She was <u>not only</u> angry <u>but also</u> sad</i>
Count noun	A noun which can have a plural and take a plural verb	<i>The <u>cats</u> are in the <u>house</u></i>
Count pronoun	A pronoun which stands for a count noun	<i>Do you have <u>any</u>? I don't have <u>many</u></i>

Term	Gloss	Example
Dative shift	Moving the indirect object and linking it prepositionally	<i>I read them a story</i> vs. <i>I read a story <u>to them</u></i>
Declarative	The mood of the verb which refers to a positive assertion	<i>I <u>want</u> the money</i> <i>Do you <u>like</u> the music?</i>
Deixis	Pointing to what is not here, not now or not the speaker	<i>He left <u>then</u></i> <i>I put them <u>over there</u></i>
Demonstrative	A class of determiner telling us what noun we are talking about	<i><u>This</u> house</i> <i><u>That</u> garden</i> <i><u>Those</u> cars</i> <i><u>These</u> people</i>
Demonstrative pronoun	A pronoun which stand for a demonstrative plus its noun	<i><u>This</u> is my wife</i> <i><u>Those</u> are his friends</i>
Denominal adjective	An adjective derived or converted from a noun	<i>A <u>partner</u> organisation</i> <i>A <u>garden</u> shed</i>
Deontic modality	Modality concerning obligations, commitments and duties (or their lack)	<i>I <u>should</u> go now</i> <i>Driving slowly is <u>recommended</u></i>
Dependent clause	A subordinate clause	<i>She had enough money <u>although she wasn't rich</u></i>
Determiner	A word which comes before a noun to say what we know about it	<i><u>Many</u> people</i> <i><u>The</u> car</i> <i><u>My</u> house</i> <i><u>Those</u> children</i>
Diacritic	In many languages, these are small marks or accents on letters which may or may not affect pronunciation (See also accent)	<i>café</i> <i>während</i> <i>façade</i>
Direct object	The first object of a verb	<i>He spent <u>the money</u></i>
Direct speech	The actual words spoken	<i>He said, "<u>Hello, Mary.</u>"</i>
Disjunct	An adverbial indicating the speaker's attitude (angle) or evaluation	<i><u>Unfortunately</u>, he lost all his money</i> <i><u>Economically</u>, the country is doing fine</i>
Distributive	A class of determiner which describes how something is apportioned	<i>They gave chocolate to <u>all</u> the children</i> <i><u>Each</u> child got some chocolate</i>
Ditransitive	Describing a verb which can take more than one object	<i>He <u>gave</u> her the book</i>
Downtoner	An adverbial which lessens the effect of an adjective	<i>She is <u>slightly</u> sad</i>

Term	Gloss	Example
Dummy subject (empty subject)	The words <i>it</i> or <i>there</i> used to make a subject which carries no reference (See anticipatory)	<i>It's raining</i> <i>There's a house on the hill</i>
Durative	An aspect expressing a continuous state or action	<i>The professor <u>is</u> writing a book</i> <i>but <u>is</u> on holiday now</i>
Dynamic	Describing: Verb use Adjective use Type of passive clause	<i>Be quiet, I'm <u>thinking</u></i> <i>He's <u>being</u> stupid</i> <i>The window <u>got</u> broken</i>
Elision (n.) / elide (v.)	Describing the omission of a phoneme or syllable	Pronouncing <i>suppose</i> as /spəʊz/ instead of /sə.'pəʊz/ or <i>bed and breakfast</i> as /bed.ŋ.'brek.fəst/ instead of /bed.ənd.'brek.fəst/
Ellipsis (n.) / ellipt (v.)	Describing the omission of a word, phrase or clause	<i>He came and talked to me</i> (ellipting the pronoun) <i>I want the French cheese, not the Greek</i> (ellipting the object)
Emphasiser	An adjective or adverb which serves to increase the strength of another	<i>That was <u>plain</u> daft</i> <i>It was <u>clearly</u> poorly done</i>
End focus	Marking an item for emphasis by moving it to the end of a clause	<i>What is important is <u>the money</u></i>
End weighting	The tendency to place complex or structurally 'heavy' items to the end of a clause	Preferring: <i>The money was an issue although it was not the subject of our immediate discussion and would be considered later</i> to <i>Although it was not the subject of our immediate discussion and would be considered later the money was an issue</i>
Epithet	An adjective in the descriptive sense rather than a classifier (q.v.)	<i>It was a <u>blue</u> door</i>
Ergative	A special case in which the ostensible object of a verb is raised to subject status	<i><u>The shirts</u> sold well</i> <i><u>The vegetables</u> cooked quickly</i>
Exclamation	A sentence expressing anger or surprise etc.	<i>How wonderful!</i>
Existential <i>it</i> and <i>there</i>	See dummy subject	
Extrapositioning	Moving an item to conform to end focus (q.v.) or end weighting (q.v.)	<i>What I enjoyed was the hotel</i>
Finite form	A verb or a clause marked (even by zero) for tense, number or gender	<i>She <u>drank</u> the tea</i> <i>They <u>play</u> tennis</i>

Term	Gloss	Example
Fronting	Moving an item to the initial position in a clause usually for emphasis	<i><u>Under no circumstances</u> can you leave early</i>
Function word	Words which have no meaning when alone but make the grammar work	prepositions, conjunctions, pronouns, determiners etc.
Gender	A grammatical term for the class of a noun: usually feminine, masculine or neuter but there are others	The gender of house in French is feminine (<i>la maison</i>), in Spanish the word for garden is masculine (<i>el jardín</i>) and in German the word for house is neuter (<i>das Haus</i>)
Genitive	The possessive case although the case shows other relationships	<i>That's <u>my</u> pen not <u>John's</u></i> <i>The <u>man's</u> letter to me</i>
Gerund	A noun formed from a verb with the suffix <i>-ing</i>	<i>I gave up <u>smoking</u></i>
Gradable	Describing adjectives which can have <i>very</i> in front of them or make a comparative or superlative	<i>A very <u>nice</u> house</i> <i>The <u>highest</u> mark</i> <i>The <u>larger</u> part</i>
Grammar word	See Function word	
Grammaticalisation	The process through which a content word is converted over time to a function word	<i>He is <u>going</u> to the shops</i> (content) <i>He is <u>going</u> to buy some wine</i> (function)
Habitual	An aspect of a verb describing what we usually do / did	<i>I <u>used to go</u> to the cinema a lot</i> <i>I <u>play</u> tennis on Sundays</i>
Head (of a phrase)	The item which determines the syntactical category of a phrase	<i>He walked <u>across</u> the road</i> <i>She added some cold <u>milk</u></i>
Headedness	The tendency in languages to place the head of a phrase or compound to the left or the right of the remainder	<i>English (left headed): taxi driver</i> <i>Spanish (right headed): conductor de taxi</i>
Hypernym	The overarching item in a set containing hyponyms (aka superordinate)	<i><u>Vehicle</u>: car, bus, lorry, train etc.</i>
Hyponym	The lower ranked items in a set under a single hypernym (q.v.)	<i><u>Building</u>: house, palace, school, bungalow, cottage etc.</i>
Idiom	A lexical chunk used as a single concept which can variably be understood by understanding its constituent lexemes and is variably fixed	<i>It's <u>turned up its toes</u> (died / become useless)</i> <i>He ran <u>helter-skelter</u> down the hill</i>

Term	Gloss	Example
Imperative	The form of the verb used to tell someone what to do or make offers	<i>Go home</i> <i>Don't tell her</i> <i>Have some cake</i>
Impersonal pronoun	A pronoun without an identifiable personal referent	<i>No-one is home</i>
Indefinite pronoun	A pronoun which does not stand for a particular thing or person	<i>Somebody is at home</i> <i>Can anyone help me?</i>
Indicative	Denoting a mood of a verb expressing a statement of a fact	<i>She <u>felt</u> tired</i>
Indirect object	The second object of a ditransitive verb (dative case)	<i>He gave <u>me</u> the money</i>
Indirect speech	A clause in which the words said are not reported <i>verbatim</i>	<i>He <u>greeted</u> Mary</i>
Infinitive	A non-finite verb form often preceded by <i>to</i>	<i>I came to <u>help</u></i> <i>We should <u>go</u></i>
Inflexion	A change to a word to denote person, tense, case or number	<i>She speak<u>s</u> well</i> <i>Three apple<u>s</u></i> <i>Take it to <u>her</u></i>
Inherent vs non-inherent adjectives	Referring to a central quality of the noun or an associated concept respectively	<i>Her friend is very <u>old</u> (inherent)</i> <i>He's an <u>old</u> friend of mine (non-inherent)</i>
Instrumental	Describing the means	<i>He hit it <u>with a hammer</u></i> <i>They came <u>by bus</u></i>
Intensifier	An adverbial which affects the strength of an adjective or adverb (in either direction)	<i>That's <u>really</u> interesting</i> <i>It was <u>slightly</u> frustrating</i> <i>She went <u>very</u> slowly</i>
Interjection	A word class signifying emotional state	<i>Wow!</i> <i>Really!</i> <i>Oh.</i>
Interrogative	A question form	<i>Do you know her?</i>
Interrogative pronoun	A pronoun which makes a question form	<i><u>Who</u> came?</i> <i><u>Which</u> do you like?</i>
Intransitive	Describing a verb which cannot have an object	<i>She <u>stayed</u> alone</i> <i>They <u>arrived</u></i>
Inversion	The reversal of subject and auxiliary following certain adverbials (also applied to the formation of a question)	<i>Never <u>have I</u> seen such stupidity</i> <i><u>Can you</u> come?</i> <i>Rarely <u>do I</u> work that hard</i>
Iterative	An aspect of a verb describing repeated actions	<i>They <u>have been ringing</u> the bells</i> <i>They <u>keep asking</u> questions</i>
Lexical verb (aka content verb)	A verb that is not an auxiliary but has meaning standing alone	<i>She <u>wept</u></i>

Term	Gloss	Example
Lexical word	A word which carries significance rather than performing a grammatical function	<i>She <u>went</u> to the <u>post office</u></i>
Limitier	An adjective or adverb which serves to limit the scope of a characteristic	<i>It was the <u>main</u> reason I came She was <u>only</u> asked to give a little</i>
Linking	Joining clauses of equal weight (See binding)	<i>He came <u>and</u> he brought his sister</i>
Linking verb	See copular verb	
Locative	The case or grammatical form which refers to place	<i>The house is <u>on the corner</u></i>
Marginal modal auxiliary verb	A verb which behaves structurally like a main verb but signals a modal sense	<i>He was <u>supposed</u> to be her</i>
Marked (opp. unmarked)	Distinguished in some way, e.g., for person, gender, number or tense (or for meaning / emphasis)	<i>Twenty <u>people</u> She <u>speaks</u> <u>lioness</u> <u>In</u> they came</i>
Mass noun	A noun which can have no plural and takes a singular verb	<i>The <u>milk</u> is in the fridge</i>
Mass pronoun	A pronoun which stands for a mass noun	<i>Do you have <u>any</u>? I don't have <u>much</u>.</i>
Modal auxiliary verb	A verb which tells us how the speaker feels about the main verb	<i>I <u>should</u> talk to her It <u>may</u> rain again</i>
Modifier / Modification	A word or phrase which changes or adds to the meaning of another word or phrase	<i><u>Three</u> cats <u>That person over there</u> The car <u>with the yellow roof</u></i>
Mood	The nature of a verb that signifies the speaker's attitude toward the likelihood, existence, or desirability of the verb's action: indicative (q.v.), imperative (q.v.), and subjunctive (q.v.).	<i>The car <u>broke down</u> (indicative) <u>Go</u> away (imperative) <u>If I were</u> in your shoes (subjunctive)</i>
Morpheme	The smallest meaningful unit of language Bound morphemes cannot stand alone, free morphemes can	<i>He was protest-<u>ing</u> (4 morphemes) The house-<u>s</u> were paint-<u>ed</u> (6 morphemes) He was at the bank (5 morphemes)</i>

Term	Gloss	Example
Multi-word verb	A phrasal Prepositional or Phrasal prepositional verb	<i>He <u>worked out</u> the solution</i> (phrasal) <i>He <u>abstained from</u> voting</i> (prepositional) <i>He <u>put up with</u> the noise</i> (phrasal-prepositional)
Negative / Negation	A sentence or verb form which refers to something not happening	<i>It <u>didn't</u> rain</i> <i>I <u>deny</u> taking any</i>
Negative pronoun	A pronoun which stands for a negative noun phrase	<i><u>Nothing</u> was broken</i> <i><u>Nobody</u> went hungry</i>
Nominal	Appearing in the function of a noun	<i>I'm surprised by <u>his reluctance</u></i> (nominal noun phrase) <i>I enjoy <u>speaking to large groups</u></i> (nominal verb phrase)
Nominal adjective	An adjective converted to a noun	<i>The <u>poor</u> need our consideration</i>
Nominal clause	A clause acting as a noun either as a subject or object	<i><u>That he was happy</u> surprised everyone</i>
Non-assertive form	A determiner, adverb or pronoun which appears in negative or interrogative clauses	<i>We <u>don't</u> have <u>any</u> bread</i> <i>Have you finished <u>yet</u>?</i> <i>I want for <u>nothing</u>.</i>
Noun	A word for a person, place, thing, feeling or characteristic	<i>John</i> <i>London</i> <i>hammer</i> <i>happiness</i> <i>stupidity</i>
Noun phrase	A group of words acting as a noun	<i><u>The old man</u> sailed the boat</i>
Object	The thing the verb acts on (accusative case)	<i>The old man sailed <u>the boat</u></i>
Omission	See ellipsis / elision	
Open-class item	Words belonging to a class to which additions can readily made to express new ideas and concepts	nouns, verbs, adjective and adverbs
Operator	An auxiliary verb that performs a grammatical operation	<i><u>Have</u> you seen John?</i> <i><u>Do</u> you need any help?</i> <i><u>Could</u> you see it?</i>
Participle	A non-finite verb form ending in <i>-ed</i> or <i>-ing</i> (or irregular in the case of past participles only) making up a verb acting as an adjective or in the perfect or progressive aspect	<i>The <u>interested</u> parties</i> <i>She has <u>finished</u> her book</i> <i>They are <u>painting</u> the house again</i> <i>The <u>broken</u> door</i> <i>A <u>falling</u> rock</i>
Particle	Usually, a preposition or adverb in a multi-word verb	<i>He got <u>over</u> the illness</i> <i>I objected <u>to</u> his idea</i>

Term	Gloss	Example
Partitive	A structure which defines an amount of a mass or count noun	<i>A rasher of bacon</i> <i>A pile of books</i>
Passive	A clause in which the subject undergoes the action	<i>They <u>were arrested</u></i>
Past participle	See participle	
Patient	The receiver of the action of a verb in the passive	<i>The <u>postman</u> was bitten by the dog</i>
Perfect	An aspect of the verb describing its relationship to another time	<i>He <u>has arrived</u></i> (describing the relationship to the present) <i>He <u>had arrived</u></i> (describing the relationship to the past)
Perfect participle	<i>having</i> + a past participle	<i><u>Having read</u> the book, he gave it to me</i>
Person	A grammatical category which indicates who something is about	<i>I <u>gave</u> it away</i> (zero inflection) <i>She <u>gives</u> it to charity</i> (-s inflection) <i>I spoke to <u>them</u></i> (third-person plural pronoun)
Personal pronoun	A pronoun for a person or persons	<i>Give it to <u>me</u></i>
Phrase	A group of words with one grammatical function in a sentence	<i>He went <u>to the shops</u></i> (prepositional phrase) <i>The <u>three boys</u> left</i> (noun phrase) <i>They <u>have opened</u> the box</i> (verb phrase)
Phrasal verb	A multi-word verb consisting of the verb and an adverb which affects its meaning	<i>I <u>gave up</u> smoking</i>
Phrasal-prepositional verb	A multi-word verb consisting of a phrasal verb plus a dependent preposition	<i>She <u>caught up with</u> her friends</i>
Plural	More than one	<i>8 <u>horses</u></i>
Possessive case	The indicator of ownership, description or origin	<i><u>My</u> house</i> <i>The <u>government's</u> policy</i> <i><u>John's</u> letter</i> <i>The people <u>of</u> France</i>
Possessive determiner	A determiner showing possessive case	<i>That is <u>her</u> house</i>
Postpositions	In some languages, the link between the verb and the noun goes after the noun	<i>She went the road <u>across</u></i> (Turkish) <i>The weather <u>aside</u></i>

Term	Gloss	Example
Pre-determiner	Determiners (q.v.) such as <i>all, both, half, such, quite</i> etc. which can precede other determiners	<i>He gave him <u>half</u> the money and <u>all</u> my food</i>
Predicate	The part of a clause that indicates what the subject does, what is done to the subject, or what is being said about the subject	<i>She <u>went to London</u></i> <i>He <u>was arrested</u></i> <i>John <u>is rumoured to be wealthy</u></i>
Predicative	Describing an adjective which comes after the noun and is linked to it by a copular verb	<i>She was <u>happy</u></i> <i>They became <u>very tired</u></i>
Prefix	A morpheme (q.v.) which is affixed to the beginning of a word and usually affects meaning	<i><u>dis</u>courage</i>
Preposition	A word which links the verb to a noun and forms the head of a prepositional phrase	<i>He walked <u>across</u> the park</i> <i>She arrived <u>at</u> six</i>
Prepositional phrase	A group of words which includes the preposition and its noun complement (or object)	<i><u>over the bridge</u></i> <i><u>under the river</u></i>
Prepositional verb	A verb with a dependent preposition	<i>She <u>complained about</u> the service</i>
Primary auxiliary verb	An auxiliary verb which forms a tense, voice or aspect with a main verb	<i>It <u>was</u> destroyed</i> <i>I <u>got</u> my car cleaned</i> <i>I <u>have</u> been to London</i>
Prime verbs	A set of simple verbs which can convey most concepts	<i>be bring come do get give go keep make put take</i>
Pro-form	A word which substitutes for a noun, phrase or clause	<i>I picked up the vase and put <u>it</u> on the table</i> <i>She likes the play and <u>so</u> do I</i>
Progressive	The aspect of the verb which shows that something is ongoing	<i>I <u>am writing</u> this sentence</i>
Pronoun	A word which stands for a noun	<i>Give <u>me</u> <u>it</u></i>
Proper noun	A noun for a person, place or job	<i>The President</i> <i>Mr Smith</i> <i>The Alps</i>
Prospective	The aspect of a verb which relates a time to a future time	<i>I <u>am going</u> to London tomorrow</i> <i>She <u>was going</u> to see me</i>
Putative <i>should</i>	The use of the modal auxiliary verb to speak of an imagined event	<i>I hurried lest I <u>should</u> miss the train</i> <i><u>Should</u> you need help, just ask</i>

Term	Gloss	Example
Quantifier	A determiner which tells us how much of a noun	<i><u>three</u> horses</i> <i><u>several</u> people</i>
Question tag	A phrase attached to the end of a positive or negative sentence to make it a question	<i>You are coming, <u>aren't you</u>?</i> <i>You aren't going to eat that, <u>are you</u>?</i>
Reciprocal pronouns	Pronouns referring to both or all participants	<i>The talked to <u>each other</u></i>
Reflexive pronoun	A pronoun used when the subject and object are the same	<i>He photographed <u>himself</u></i> <i>She poured <u>herself</u> some coffee</i>
Relative adverb	The adverbs <i>when, where</i> or <i>why</i> used to define a preceding noun	<i>That's the house <u>where</u> he lived</i> <i>That was the moment <u>when</u> I decided</i>
Relative pronoun clause	A clause starting with a relative pronoun (q.v.) which serves to define, describe or identify a preceding noun	<i>That's the man <u>who</u> spoke to me</i> (defining relative clause) <i>The books, <u>which</u> I no longer needed, were given to charity</i> (non-defining relative clause)
Relative pronoun	A pronoun used in a complex sentence to refer to the object or the subject	<i>They have found the car <u>which</u> was stolen</i> <i>The man <u>who</u> asked is here</i>
Relative tense	Tenses which only make sense in relation to other times	<i>She <u>has completed</u> the work (so now it is finished)</i> <i>She <u>will have spoken</u> to him</i>
Reported speech	See indirect speech	
Reporting verb	Verbs used to signal indirect speech	<i>He <u>complained</u> about the food</i> <i>She <u>said</u> she would come later</i>
Semi-modal verb	A verb which has a modal function but may be alternatively formed as a lexical verb	<i>She <u>didn't dare to</u> / <u>dared not</u> ask</i>
Sentence adverbial	See disjunct	
Simple sentence	A sentence which only has one subject, one verb and sometimes one object	<i>She <u>cried</u></i> <i>She <u>opened</u> the book</i>
Singular	One. Mass nouns and one only of count nouns are singular	<i>A horse came across the road</i> <i>The milk is in the fridge</i>
Stative	Describing the state of: Adjectives Verbs Passive constructions	<i>He is <u>old</u></i> <i>He <u>imagines</u> it's true</i> <i>The door <u>is broken</u></i>
Structure words	See function words	

Term	Gloss	Example
Style	The level of formality	<i>Gimme a light</i> (informal) <i>Would you please follow me?</i> (formal) <i>May I borrow your pen?</i> (neutral)
Subject	The doer of a verb (nominative case)	<i>The <u>man</u> broke the glass</i>
Subjunctive	The mood of a verb indicating that the statement is contrary to fact or imaginary	<i>I wish he <u>were</u> more polite</i>
Subordinating conjunction / Subordination	A conjunction which shows that one event or action depends on another event or action	<i>Tell me <u>if</u> you see him</i> <i>I must talk to him <u>when</u> I see him</i>
Substitution	Replacing an item with another	<i>He liked the car so he bought <u>it</u></i> (pronoun substitution) <i>He told me to go and I did <u>so</u></i> (verbal substitution)
Suffix	A morpheme (q.v.) added to the end of a word which usually affects word class	<i>resent<u>ment</u></i>
Superlative	The form of an adjective or adverb which means the most or least	<i>The <u>tallest</u> boy in the class</i> (inflexion) <i>The <u>most expensively</u> dressed man</i> (periphrastic)
Superordinate	See hypernym	
Tag question	See question tag	
Telicity	Referring to whether an event is considered to have an end point (telic) or not (atelic)	<i>I had washed the car (telic)</i> <i>I was washing the car (atelic)</i>
Temporal	Referring to time	<i>He left <u>as soon as</u> I arrived</i> (temporal subordinate clause)
Tense	The form of the verb marked for time or aspect	<i>He <u>walked</u></i> <i>She <u>has been</u> to London</i>
Transferred negation	Negating the projecting verb rather than its complement	<i>I <u>don't think</u> he will come</i> (compare: <i>I think he won't come</i>)
Transitive	Describing a verb which must (or can) take one or more objects	<i>She <u>smokes</u></i> (intransitive) <i>She <u>smoked</u> a cigarette</i> (transitive)
Uncountable	See mass noun	
Ungradable	Describing an adjective which cannot be made greater or less with <i>very</i>	<i>A <u>wonderful</u> meal</i> <i>A <u>horrible</u> accident</i> <i>A <u>perfect</u> storm</i>

Term	Gloss	Example
Universal pronoun	A member of the <i>every-</i> and <i>all</i> series of pronouns	<i>Everyone was happy</i> <i>All were on time</i>
Unmarked	See marked	
Verb	The action, state or event in a sentence	<i>She <u>came</u> late</i> <i>It <u>rained</u></i> <i>She <u>was</u> happy</i>
Verb chain	See catenation	
Verb phrase	A group of words acting as a verb	<i>She <u>has driven</u> the car home</i>
Voice	Indicative of the relationship between verbs and noun phrases	<i>He spent the money (active)</i> <i>The money was spent (passive)</i>
Wh- word	The words <i>what, who(m), when, where, why, how</i> and <i>which</i>	<i><u>Where</u> is your car?</i> <i><u>Who</u> told you?</i> <i>Tell me <u>where</u> it is</i>
Word class	The main syntactical categories of lexemes	Closed system / class words: <i>prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions, determiners</i> Open class items: <i>nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs</i>
Word order (canonical)	The usual way a language puts words into a sentence. Languages are often different in terms of word order.	<i>She broke the pen</i> (subject-verb-object) <i>The open book</i> (adjective-noun) <i>Two lions</i> (determiner-noun)
Zero	An invisible grammatical form	<i>They arrive</i> (zero verb inflection) <i>I eat potatoes</i> (zero article)