

Outline of the Grammatical Structure of a Sentence

A **sentence** must have at least one independent clause. It may contain multiple independence clauses linked by coordinating conjunctions. It may also contain one or more dependent clauses.

- An **independent clause** is a clause that can form a sentence on its own.
- A **dependent clause** is a clause that cannot form a sentence on its own.
 - A dependent clause is either part of an independent clause (as subject, object, or modifier) or part of another dependent clause contained within an independent clause. The independent clause is called the main clause.

A **clause** is a grammatical structure consisting of a subject and a predicate.

Subjects

A **subject** must be a noun phrase, an infinitive phrase, a gerund, or a noun clause.

- Gerunds and noun clauses function like noun phrases. Infinitive phrases may function like noun phrases.

Objects

An **object** may be a direct object, an indirect object, or an object of a preposition. Direct objects and indirect objects are part of the complement of a predicate. Object of prepositions are part of prepositional phrases.

Predicates

A **predicate** consists of a verb phrase with or without a complement.

- A verb phrase without a complement or with an adverbial phrase modifying it is **intransitive**.
- A verb phrase with a complement consisting of an adjectival phrase or noun phrase referring back to the subject of the verb is **linking**.
- A verb phrase with a complement consisting of a noun phrase referring to an entity different from the subject of the verb is **transitive**.

Complements

A **complement** is a noun phrase or an adjectival phrase in the predicate. It always follows the verb phrase of the predicate.

- A noun phrase or an adjectival phrase referring back to the subject of the clause is a **subjective complement**.
 - A subjective complement is not the same as the subject. The subject precedes the predicate and the subjective complement is the part of the predicate following the verb.
 - A subjective complement can only occur with a linking verb.
 - A subjective complement can never occur in the same clause as a direct object, indirect object or objective complement.

- A noun phrase referring to an entity different from the subject of the verb is the **direct object** of that verb.
 - A direct object can only occur with a transitive verb.
 - A direct object can never occur in the same clause as a subjective complement.
- A noun phrase referring to an entity receiving the direct object of verb is the **indirect object**.
 - An indirect object always comes before the direct object.
 - An indirect object can only occur with a direct object.
 - An indirect object can only occur with a transitive verb.
 - An indirect object can never occur in the same clause as a subjective complement.
 - An indirect object can never occur in the same clause as an objective complement.
- A noun phrase referring back to the direct object of verb is the **objective complement**.
 - An objective complement always comes after the direct object.
 - An objective complement can only occur with a direct object.
 - An objective complement can only occur with a transitive verb.
 - An objective complement can never occur in the same clause as a subjective complement.
 - An objective complement can never occur in the same clause as an indirect object.

Nonfinite Verb Phrases

A verb phrase where there is no verb or auxiliary in the present or past tense is a **nonfinite verb phrase**.

- A verb phrase with a modal auxiliary is a finite verb phrase. It can be the predicate of a clause.
- A nonfinite verb phrase cannot be the predicate of a clause. It must therefore function as a subject, object, or modifier *within* a clause.

There are three types on nonfinite verb phrase:

- **Infinitive phrases** are formed with the base (uninflected) form of the verb preceded by the particle *to*. They may have nominal, adjectival, or adverbial function. They can be subjects, objects, or modifiers in a clause.
- **Present participle phrases** are formed with the present participle form of the verb. They may have adjectival or adverbial function. They can modify noun phrases or verb phrases in a clause.
- **Gerunds** are formed with the present participle form of the verb. They may only have nominal function. They can be subjects or objects of a clause.
- **Past participle phrases** are formed with the past participle form of the verb. They may have adjectival or adverbial function. They can modify noun phrases or verb phrases in a clause.

Nonfinite verb phrases can be transitive, intransitive, or linking. That is, they may have subjective complements, direct objects, indirect objects, and objective complements according to the same rules given in the **Predicates** and **Complements** sections.

Nonfinite verb phrases must be analysed both separately and as part of the clauses that contain them. (For instance, a gerund may have a transitive verb and a direct object, but verb and direct object together may also be the subject of a clause.)

Prepositional Phrases

A **prepositional phrase** consists of a preposition followed by a noun phrase called the **object of the preposition**.

- The word *to* followed by the infinitive form of a verb is an infinitive phrase, not a prepositional phrase.
- Gerunds may be objects of prepositions.

Prepositional phrases may have adjectival or adverbial function. That is, they serve as modifiers of either noun phrases or verb phrases.

Dependent Clauses

A clause that cannot form a sentence on its own is a dependent clause.

- Dependent clauses are normally introduced by structure class words such as *wh*-words, complementizers, relative pronouns, and subordinate pronouns.
- A dependent clause is structurally like an independent clause in all other ways.

A dependent clause functions as either a subject or object in another clause, or as a modifier in another clause.

There are three types of dependent clauses:

- **Noun clauses** have nominal function. They may be subjects or objects of predicates. Noun clauses are introduced by *wh*-words or complementizers.
- **Relative clauses** have adjectival function. They modify noun phrases. Relative clauses are introduced by relative pronouns or relative adverbs.
- **Adverb clauses** have adverbial function. They modify verb phrases. Adverb clauses are introduced by subordinating conjunctions.
 - Many subordinating conjunctions can also be prepositions. When followed by a noun phrase only, they are prepositions. When followed by a subject + predicate, they are subordinating conjunctions.