

Springer Texts in Education

Andrea DeCapua

# Grammar for Teachers

A Guide to American English for  
Native and Non-Native Speakers

*Second Edition*

 Springer

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## Preface to the Second Edition

The first edition of *Grammar for Teachers: A Guide to American English for Native and Non-Native Speakers* was the result of my frustrations over many years of teaching structure courses and not being able to find an appropriate grammar text for the pre-service and in-service teachers enrolled in these classes. The students in these courses represented a variety of teaching backgrounds: pre-service teachers, ESL and EFL teachers at all levels and teaching in all types of programs, native and non-native speakers of English, content-area teachers with ESL students in their classes needing additional certification or endorsement, and many others. Some of these students had a strong knowledge of English grammar but had difficulties in applying their knowledge to real-life discourse. Other students' exposure had been limited to lessons in "correctness," and they were generally unaware of which language features were central to teaching ESL/EFL learners. And for some students, this was their first course in grammar. The challenge was to find a way to convey the essentials of American English grammar clearly, to engage students actively in their own learning and understanding of grammar as applicable to ESL/EFL learners, to motivate them to undertake perceptive analyses of grammatical elements and structures, and to develop an understanding of ESL/EFL learner needs and difficulties.

Since the first edition, I have continued to teach these various populations of pre-service and in-service teachers. In using *Grammar for Teachers* over the years in my classes, I became acutely aware of many ways to substantially improve the book. In addition, many colleagues, both in the United States and overseas who were also using *Grammar for Teachers*, encouraged me to revise the text and offered numerous suggestions for improvement.

My overall aim in writing the first edition of *Grammar for Teachers* was to make grammar accessible and comprehensible, and this aim has not changed. The text encourages users to develop a solid understanding of the use and function of the grammatical structures in American English so that they may better appreciate the language difficulties of ESL/EFL learners. The underlying premise is that teachers of ESL/EFL learners need to understand how English works from a practical,

everyday approach of “What does the learner need to know in order to produce X?” When teachers understand the grammar of American English and the problems and needs of ESL/EFL learner, they are in a better position to teach and explain elements of grammar.

Like the first edition, *Grammar for Teacher* reviews essential grammar structures clearly and concisely. The text approaches grammar from a descriptive rather than a prescriptive approach and focuses on the structures of grammar of greatest importance to ESL/EFL learners. *Grammar for Teachers* encourages users to tap into their own, generally subconscious, knowledge of the grammar of English and make it a conscious knowledge that they can apply to their own varied teaching settings. The text strives to make the study of grammar interesting and relevant by presenting grammar in context and by using authentic material from a variety of sources. Discussions of areas of potential difficulties for ESL/EFL learners are included throughout the text. *Grammar for Teachers* also explores differences in forms accepted in formal versus casual or informal writing and speaking.

The general design and contents of the book have not changed. In each chapter, users work through Discovery Activities that encourage them to explore for themselves different elements of grammar and to consider how these elements work together to form meaningful discourse. Additional Practical Activities at the end of each chapter provide more practice on structures presented in that chapter. Included in the Practice Activities are samples of learner errors and error analysis exercises. These exercises expose users to authentic ESL/EFL learner discourse at different levels of proficiency and from different native languages, thereby affording them opportunities to practice focusing on targeted errors.

While the design and contents remain the same, I have made substantial improvements in this second edition including: (1) rewritten and reworked material for concision and clarity throughout; (2) the use of the decimal system of numbering for section headings; (3) reorganization of content in various chapters for improved flow and more logical development; and (4) corrections of previous errors. I firmly believe that this new edition of *Grammar for Teacher* makes grammar even more accessible and comprehensible.

Specifically, new in this edition, users will find:

- updated information on current language use
- new teacher-created practice sentences
- new authentic excerpts for practice and discussion
- clearer examples throughout
- expanded discussion of the different types of adverbs
- changes in Discovery Activities to make them easier to understand and complete
- additional Discovery Activities
- reworked Answer Keys
- corrected and expanded appendices
- a new appendix of *wh*-question words

At this point, I would also like to respond to a question I increasingly encounter when I say I have written a grammar textbook for educators, namely “Why have a grammar text when we have the Internet?” Yes, it is true that there is a great deal of material available on the Internet, and, yes, the Internet is an invaluable resource. However, there are several reasons why a text such as *Grammar for Teachers* remains vital. Although the Internet provides many answers to grammar questions, it is not a comprehensive single, organized guide. Furthermore, when using a search engine, we are provided with a multitude of links to a variety of sources, not necessarily of equal quality. The grammar discussions are not always accurate or consistent, and do not provide a unified, logical approach to grammar appropriate for pre-service and in-service ESL/EFL teachers. There is also a noticeable dearth of learning activities such as the ones in the text.

I do encourage users of *Grammar for Teachers* to view the Internet as a resource to supplement the explanations of grammatical structures, examples, and discussions. Previous users will see, for instance, that in there is no longer Appendix A with a long list of irregular English verbs since such lists are readily available on the Internet. What I have retained are the patterns irregular verbs follow since this information is not as easily located.

Please note that while I realize that in many cases the terminology in the United States is changing from ESL (English as a Second Language) student to ELL (English language learner) or EL (English learner) and am aware of the issues surrounding ESL, I have chosen to retain this label because it is the most general and most widely recognized acronym globally.

# Acknowledgments

I especially thank the students at New York University, Long Island University, and The College of New Rochelle who used the first edition of the text and provided feedback. Special thanks are also due to Helaine W. Marshall of Long Island University—Hudson and my son, Lucian McMahon, whose comments, insights, and suggestions were invaluable.

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# Chapter 1

## What Is Grammar?

**Abstract** This chapter is an overview of what grammar is. We examine what exactly “rules” of grammar consist of and consider these “rules” from two perspectives: prescriptive and descriptive. Throughout the chapter, you will exercise your knowledge as a native or highly proficient non-native speaker of English—knowledge that you may only have had until now, implicitly.

**Keywords** prescriptive grammar • descriptive grammar

### Introduction

“When I think of grammar, I think of word usage—which, of course, everyone butchers.”  
“I despise grammar. I find the rules trite and boring.”  
“Grammar (and its enforcers) need to loosen up and enjoy life more! Grammar makes my stomach churn.”

These comments will strike a chord with many users of this textbook. The term *grammar* does not bring pleasant memories to the minds of many people. Instead, grammar frequently brings to mind tedious lessons with endless drills, repetition, and other generally mindless practice, focused on mostly obscure rules of how people are supposed to write and speak. For native speakers of any given language, grammar often represents to them the great “mystery” of language, known only to language specialists or those of older generations, the ones who really know what is “right.” Many feel that grammar is something that they were never taught and therefore “don’t know.” Because “bad” grammar is often attributed to people’s misuse of language, there is often a sense of resentment or frustration with the notion of grammar.

### 1.1 Section 1: Grammarians and Grammar

The idea that grammar is a set of rules, often seen as arbitrary or unrealistic, is only one narrow view of grammar. Such a view is based on the belief that grammar:

- must be explicitly taught;
- is absolute and fixed, a target or goal that speakers need attain in order to be “good” speakers or writers of the language;
- is inherently difficult and confusing, its mysteries apparent only to teachers, language mavens, or linguists.

People who follow this approach to grammar are called traditional or “prescriptive” grammarians.

### Discovery Activity 1: Making Decisions on Grammaticality

Look at the sentences below.

1. Based on your opinion, label each sentence as **G** for grammatical, **N** for ungrammatical, and **?** for “not sure” or “don’t know.”
2. For those sentences you labeled as **N**, identify the element or elements that you think are ungrammatical and explain why you think they are ungrammatical. For those sentences you labeled as **?**, discuss why you are unsure.
  - (a) \_\_\_\_\_ She had less problems with the move to a new school than she thought she would.
  - (b) \_\_\_\_\_ She lays in bed all day whenever she gets a migraine headache.
  - (c) \_\_\_\_\_ My sister Alice, who is older than me, still lives at home.
  - (d) \_\_\_\_\_ Everyone needs to buy their books before the first day of class.

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 1

In all of these sentences, there is a difference between casual English and formal English. In formal English, particularly when written, there are rules that speakers are taught that must be followed in order for sentences to be considered “correct.”

#### Sentence a

*Few*, according to prescriptive grammarians, should be used only with nouns we can count, such as apples, pens, or days, while *less* should be used with nouns we can’t count, such as math, water, or beauty. According to this rule, the sentence should be *She had fewer problems with the move to the new school than she thought she would* (see Chap. 3).

#### Sentence b

*Lie* and *lay* are two different verbs. *Lie* is a verb that is not followed by an object, while *lay* is a verb that is followed by an object. Compare these two sentences:

Cats lie on beds.	lie = resting or sleeping
Cats lay mice on beds.	lay = put

Another way to differentiate these two similar verbs is to describe *lay* as an action verb and *lie* as a non-action verb. According to the rule, *lie* doesn't take an object but *lay* does, therefore, Sentence b in formal English needs to be rewritten as:

She **lies** in bed all day whenever she gets a migraine headache.

Adding to the confusion between *lie* and *lay* is the fact that the past tense form of *lie* is *lay*.

Yesterday she **lay** in bed all day long.

A tip to remember how to distinguish *lay* and *lie* is to ask yourself whether or not the verb *put* can be substituted as in: *Cats put mice on beds* but not \**Cats put on beds*.<sup>1</sup>

### Sentence c

There is a grammar rule that dictates *I* needs to be used here, not *me*, because *than* compares two nouns in subject position as in:

My sister Alice, who is older than **I**, still lives at home.

Nevertheless, for most speakers of American English, *I* after *than* sounds stilted or affected, especially in spoken English and in informal written contexts, such as e-mail or personal correspondence.

### Sentence d

Here the discussion of which pronoun to refer back to *everyone* has long been a subject of controversy. Traditional grammarians for centuries have argued that the singular male possessive pronoun is the grammatically correct form because words such as *anyone* or *anybody* are singular, even though they refer to plural conceptualizations of people. The use of "his" after such pronouns as *anyone* or *everybody* is an artificial construct of traditional grammarians, derived from early English grammarians who wrote the first grammars based on "logical" Latin. Guided by the "logic" of Latin, they concluded that since *-one* and *-body* are singular and since a male pronoun would encompass reference to all persons, *his* was the "logical" or "correct" choice.

While such an argument may be true of Latin and other languages such as Spanish or German, there is no basis for this in English. In Spanish, all nouns are either masculine or feminine. In the case of Latin or German, all nouns are masculine, feminine, or neuter. The plural form, when reference is made to both sexes, has traditionally been the male plural form in these languages, although changes in modern languages include using both the male and female plural forms when referring to mixed groups.

English, in contrast, does not classify nouns according to gender, except in a few instances where they clearly refer to a specific sex, such as *girl* or *father*. Moreover,

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<sup>1</sup>Note: An asterisk \* before a sentence indicates an ungrammatical sentence.

in plural form, English pronouns are all gender neutral (*we, our, ours, you, your, yours, they, their, theirs*).

Thus, although grammarians have insisted that speakers use “his” for centuries, the tendency has been to use the plural pronoun form *their* and to avoid any reference to gender.

In the last several decades, it has become generally unacceptable in American English to use the singular male pronoun after such words as *each, everyone, and somebody*. It has become more and more acceptable, even in formal writing, to use the plural *they*. Many newspapers, such as the *Washington Post*, now accept *they* after indefinite pronouns; Facebook allows people to choose *they* as their preferred pronoun; and in 2015, the American Dialect Society chose *they* as the gender-neutral singular pronoun.

Alternatively, to avoid the issue altogether, grammar books and style guides generally recommend using plural nouns and pronouns and finding other ways to avoid the issue. Instead of *Everyone needs his book*, the sentence can be reworded as *All students need their books*. Another strategy is the use of *a* instead of *his* as in: *Everyone needs a book*.

## 1.2 Section 2: Language and Change

Discovery Activity 1 and the discussion that followed highlight the differences between how people actually express themselves and how language mavens say they should. Moreover, even among so-called language experts there is not uniform agreement as to what is “correct” or acceptable. One reason for such controversy is the nature of language: Language is a living, fluid entity that changes in response to changes in society. For example, the change in women’s status is reflected in changes in acceptable pronoun reference, as illustrated in Sentence d. Societal changes can also be seen in the new words adopted into the language; just think of the enormous number of new words related to computers and the Internet that have entered languages around the world.

Frequently, changes in grammatical use or even new word adoption are considered “degeneration” or “degradation” of the language. Some countries have official language academies charged with maintaining the “purity” and “integrity” of the language. In France, for instance, L’Académie française has been the arbiter of the French language for several centuries. Upset by the increasingly Anglicization of French (i.e., the adoption of English words into French, particularly in the sciences and technology), the French government passed a law in the mid-1990s essentially outlawing the adoption of foreign words into French and requiring instead the use of newly created or adapted French words.

Yet even with such an academy dictating proper usage, the French language spoken in the mid-20th century is different from that spoken at the beginning of the 21st century. Language change is an indicator of the viability and vitality of a

language. A language that does not change does not have any living native speakers, as in the case of Latin or Sanskrit.

While American English has no equivalent academy acting as “protector of the language,” there are numerous manuals of style, language mavens, and others weighing in on the grammaticality of a form or the acceptability of new words and usage. Since there is no single official arbiter of American English, there is often disagreement among the various experts, particularly in areas that many regard as involving the finer or “more obscure” points of grammar. Discovery Activity 2 will help expand our discussion of grammaticality.

### Discovery Activity 2: More Decisions on Grammaticality

Look at the sentences below.

1. Based on your opinion, label each sentence as **G** for grammatical, **N** for ungrammatical, and **?** for “not sure” or “don’t know.”
2. For those sentences you labeled as **N**, identify the element or elements that you think are ungrammatical and explain why you think they are ungrammatical. For those sentences you labeled as **?**, discuss why you are unsure.
  - (a) \_\_\_\_\_ Jackie says she don’t know if they can come.
  - (b) \_\_\_\_\_ I’m not going to do nothing about that missing part.
  - (c) \_\_\_\_\_ We sure don’t have any problems with the phone company.
  - (d) \_\_\_\_\_ Shoppers are used to standing on long lines at this store.

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 2

Before you look at the discussion of Discovery Activity 2, think about your initial reactions to each of these four sentences. Were any of your reactions different from your reactions to the sentences in Discovery Activity 1? If so, how and why? If you are a non-native speaker of English, ask a native speaker to complete this activity. Compare your responses. If they are different, think about why this might be so.

#### Sentences a and b

For many native speakers of American English, these two sentences represent forms of non-standard English and are considered markers of low socioeconomic and/or marginalized social status. In other words, these are *stigmatized* language forms that are recognizable to the general population as “incorrect” American English in both spoken and written forms. This is in contrast to the examples in Discovery Activity 1, where even highly educated speakers produce such sentences, except in the most formal contexts.

### Sentences c and d

These two sentences, in contrast to Sentences a and b, represent regional variations in the United States that speakers from other parts of the country find unusual or curious. Outside the New York City metropolitan area, most people stand *in line*, not *on line*. Outside most of the southern part of the United States, most speakers do not use *sure don't*. Neither Sentences c nor d, however, carries the stigmatizing effect that Sentences a and b do.

Discovery Activity 2 illustrates some further differences in the concept of grammar; that is, that there are structures or forms that most users of a language recognize as “standard.” Standard language users may not be able to articulate the rules and usages, but they can recognize what is and is not acceptable and can generally point to the reason why. For example, standard language users may not know the rule, “Use third person *-s* in singular present tense verbs,” but they do know that *he* or *she* uses *doesn't* and not *don't*. The difference between the sentences in Discovery Activity 1 and those in Discovery Activity 2 is that e Sentences a and b in Activity 2 are clearly recognized by the majority of speakers as incorrect Standard American English.

Teachers of ESL/EFL learners need to recognize that learners of English often produce sentences such as a and b in Discovery Activity 2 not necessarily because they are speakers of non-standard English, but because they have not yet mastered the standard forms. Even if students have been consistently introduced to and practiced the standard forms, it generally takes a significant period of time to master these forms.

## 1.3 Section 3: Linguists and Grammar

Linguists have a very different approach to the concept of grammar in comparison to traditional (prescriptive) grammarians. From the linguist's point of view, grammar is not a collection of rules—often obscure, arcane, and often illogical—that must be taught, but rather a set of blueprints that guides speakers in producing comprehensible and predictable language. Every language, including its dialects or variants, is systematic and orderly. Languages and their variations are rule-governed structures and therefore “grammatical.” In other words, all languages consist of patterns, or “grammars,” that make sense of the features of a given language.

Consider the following string of words. How many sentences can you come up with using these words and only these words?

the came girl baskets home with

Most native speakers, using only their intuitive knowledge of grammar, will come up with this sentence:

The girl came home with baskets.

Some native speakers may come up with this less common but still recognizably English variation:

The girl with baskets came home.

What native speakers do is use their innate knowledge of grammar to put this seemingly random string of words into a comprehensible sentence. Any other combination of words would produce sentences that would sound strange to English speakers because they would not be grammatical; that is, they would not fit the blueprint of how words are combined in English to make sentences.

While this is true for native speakers, ESL/EFL learners need to learn explicitly which words fit together in a string according to the rules or patterns of English. For them, their intuitive knowledge is valid for their own native language, which uses patterns different from, and often contrary to, English.

### ***1.3.1 Language Is Rule-Governed***

#### ***What does “rule-governed” mean?***

Children, as part of the process of acquiring their native language, learn without formal instruction what belongs with what in order to form coherent, intelligible, and meaningful sentences. They learn the grammar of their language and, with this grammar, they can create an unlimited number of new and original sentences. Even when the sentence elements are new and unique, ones that native speakers have never before seen, they can use and adapt them according to the patterns of their language. This is what is meant when linguists say languages are rule-governed, systematic, and organized or *grammatical*.

Consider this excerpt from *Jabberwocky* by Lewis Carroll:

Beware the Jabberwock, my son!  
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!  
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun  
The frumious Bandersnatch!

The poem is famous for consisting of nonsense words mixed in with regular English words. What makes the poem so vivid and effective in many respects is the ability of the author to evoke images based on the grammatical knowledge of the native or highly proficient non-native speaker. *Jabberwock*, for instance, is preceded by *the*. In English, this *the*, known as a definite article, precedes a noun. Both that clue and the fact that *Jabberwock* is capitalized tell us that this nonsense

word is a noun, specifically a proper noun or a name noun similar to *Chicago* or *Italy*.

Now let's look at the word *Jubjub*. Like *Jabberwock*, this word is capitalized and preceded by *the*. However, we know intuitively that *Jubjub* does not have the same sentence function as *Jabberwock*. Why is this so?

After *Jubjub* we see the word *bird*. *Bird* is a noun, specifically a noun that names a thing; in this case, a thing that flies and has wings and a beak. From the position of the word *Jubjub* before *bird*, we know that *Jubjub* is describing something about *bird*. Since *Jubjub* is written with a capital *J*, we can guess that it is telling us specifically what kind of bird is being referred to. In other words, *Jubjub* is functioning as a descriptive word, or adjective, before the noun *bird*, similar to *Siberian* as in *Siberian tiger*.

Similarly, we can guess that *frumious* is another adjective, describing something about the proper noun *Bandersnatch*. The sentence position of *frumious* before *Bandersnatch* is one clue. A different type of clue telling us something about *frumious* is the ending *-ous*. This is an ending that is found in other English words that describe nouns, such as *famous*, *gorgeous*, *voluptuous*, *egregious*, and *pretentious*.

Because native and highly proficient non-native speakers of English know the “grammar” of English, they can understand and appreciate this poem without ever before having seen such words as *Jabberwocky* or *frumious* and without necessarily knowing the terms *noun* or *adjective*. Few speakers are conscious of which “grammar” rules they are applying or using to understand this poem.

Since languages differ in the types and applications of rules, however, ESL/EFL learners need to learn the new patterns of the language they are studying. They need to begin by becoming aware that there *are* differences in how languages are patterned, and then work toward being able to subconsciously produce the new language without explicit reference to rules.

In Discovery Activity 3, you will have the chance to see how much you already know about English grammar.

### Discovery Activity 3: More on Jabberwocky Excerpts

Here are more excerpts from Lewis Carroll's *Jabberwocky*. Using your previous analysis and the discussion as a starting point:

1. What conclusions can you draw about the italicized words?
2. Explain why you reached the conclusions you did.

And, as in *uffish* thought he stood,  
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,  
Came whiffing through the *tulgey* wood,  
And burred as it came!

One two! One two! And through and through  
 The *vorpal* blade went *snicker-snack!*  
 [Carroll, L. (1871). *Through the looking glass and what Alice found there*. Available  
 online at: <http://www.jabberwocky.com/carroll/jabber/jabberwocky.html>]

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 3

You may not have been able to explain exactly why you came to the conclusions you did regarding the different italicized words in this activity; nevertheless, you were probably able to give some description as to the functions of the words. This ability is part of your knowledge of the underlying patterns, or grammar, of English.

Based on sentence position and endings, you probably concluded that *uffish*, *tulgey*, and *vorpal* are descriptive words (adjectives) describing the nouns following them; *-ish*, *-y*, and *-al* are common adjective endings. (In Chap. 2 we will examine word endings in more detail.)

<b>-ish</b>	<b>-y</b>	<b>-al</b>
waspish	smelly	logical
smallish	rainy	biographical
standoffish	crazy	nautical
greenish	jumpy	educational

Although *snicker-snack* is not recognizable as an adverb based on its word ending, its sentence position identifies it as such. It comes after the verb *went* and is describing something about the verb. We can also say that the alliteration of the sounds of the word easily bring to mind a sound such as a sword might make.

Discovery Activity 3 demonstrates that there are two very different conceptions of *grammar*. One school of thought views grammar as a set of rules that must be learned to use language “correctly.” Users of language who do not adhere to the rules are using an “inferior” or “sloppy” form of the language. The correct rules must often be explicitly learned and practiced, and may at times be contrary to what even highly educated native speakers use in formal language contexts. This is the **prescriptive** school of grammar, and the school that traditional grammarians follow.

Another school sees grammar as a blueprint of language guiding speakers in how to string together symbols, sounds, and words to make coherent, meaningful sentences. This type of grammar knowledge is intuitive and reflects the innate ability of speakers to learn and use their native language. Children do not memorize rules as they learn to speak. What they learn are the rules or patterns governing their

language. It is this grammar that allows language users to create and understand an unlimited number of new and original sentences.

No language has only one grammar; each language has subsets of grammar, generally referred to as dialects. These subsets are often considered sub-standard forms, yet they are just as rule-governed as the standard variety. This is the **de-****scriptive** school of thought, and the school that linguists follow. A more in-depth look at the two different schools of thought follows.

*What are some examples of the differences between prescriptive and descriptive grammar?*

## 1.4 Section 4: Prescriptive Grammar and Descriptive Grammar

### 1.4.1 Prescriptive Grammar

Prescriptive grammar is the grammar taught in school, discussed in newspaper and magazine columns on language and on various social media, or mandated by language academies such as those found in Spain or France. Prescriptive grammar tells people how they should say something, what words they should use, when they need to make a specific choice, and why they should do so. At times, prescriptive grammar rules are overextended to the point that speakers *hypercorrect*, that is, they apply the grammatical rules in situations where they should not.

Take, for instance, the use of the pronouns *I* and *me*. For many years, English teachers in the United States railed against the incorrect use of *me*, the object pronoun, in subject position as in:

\**Me* and John are going to the store.

or

\*John and *me* are going to the store.

\**Me* and Sue had lunch.

or

\*Sue and *me* had lunch.

There is a prescriptive grammar rule in English specifying that pronouns in subject position must be subject pronouns (*I, you, we, he, she, it, they*). According to this rule, speakers' use of *me* in these sentences is incorrect because *me* is the first person *object* pronoun. *Me* in these sentences is in *subject* position, and the subject pronoun *I* should follow any other noun subject or subject pronoun. From a prescriptive point of view, these sentences should be:

John and *I* are going to the store.

Sue and *I* had lunch.

In the last several decades, many native speakers, attempting to avoid the incorrect use of *me*, hypercorrect the use of *me* by substituting *I*, even in cases where *me* is called for because it is in object position. Consider the following samples of actual speech:

They couldn't have raised the necessary funding without input *from John* and *I*, even coming in at the last minute as we did.

*John* and *I* are objects of the preposition *from*. The prescriptive grammar rule requires the use of *me* and not *I*.

He really shouldn't have been put into that class, but *between you* and *I*, the principal didn't have any other choice.

*You* and *I* are also the objects of the preposition *between*, and *me*, rather than *I*, must be used.

The driver gave *the boys* and *I* directions on how to find the back entrance to the restaurant.

*The boys* and *I* are the objects of the verb *give*, so here *me* is the correct choice, not *I*.

What we see in these example sentences is a difference in prescriptive grammar rules and descriptive grammar rules. Prescriptive rules (sometimes referred to as usage rules) are those rules that explain what users of a language are *supposed* to do. To summarize, prescriptive rules are rules that:

- are taught in formal school settings.
- often require conscious effort to remember and apply.
- may be learned incompletely or insufficiently, leading to hypercorrection as we saw in our last three example sentences.

Change is vital to a living language. As the substitution of *I* for *me* in the object position becomes increasingly widespread, it may well become an accepted language form in the future, except perhaps for the most formal of contexts.

***How is the difference between who and whom related to prescriptive grammar versus descriptive grammar?***

#### 1.4.1.1 Who Versus Whom

An example of a change that has become widespread and accepted is the loss of the distinction between *who* and *whom*. Most native speakers of English do not make this distinction consistently, if at all. A prescriptive grammar rule maintains that *whom* is the object form of *who* as in:

The author, whom I met last year, signed several copies of the text.  
*For Whom the Bell Tolls* was written in 1940 by Ernest Hemingway.

In the first sentence, *whom* is the object of the verb *met*. In the second sentence, it is the object of the preposition *for*.

For many (if not most) speakers of American English, the rules governing the use of *whom* seem bothersome, and require attention and effort because *whom* is usually reserved for formal edited writing and not used in informal speech. In spoken and written English, native speakers commonly produce such sentences as:

*Who* did you see last night at the movies?

The person *who* you need to talk to is not here right now.

From the perspective of prescriptive grammar, the correct form in both of these sentences is *whom*, not *who*, because *whom* is functioning as an object and not as a subject. In the first sentence, *who* is the object of the verb *see*. In the second sentence, *who* is the object of *you need to talk to*. From a prescriptive perspective, these sentences should be:

*Whom* did you see last night at the movies?

The person *whom* you need to talk is not here right now.

The distinction between *who* and *whom* is a prescriptive grammar rule requiring conscious attention and effort and is frequently incorrectly applied. Speakers, in an effort to use “correct” grammar, produce sentences such as these:

(*Waitress to customer*): *Whom* ordered the steak rare?

The references of all applicants *whom* will be walking clients’ dogs will be checked.

In both sentences, the correct form is *who*, not *whom*, because they are in subject position before the verb phrases *ordered* and *will be walking*.

Learners of English who have begun their study of the language in their home countries are often more aware of the difference in use between *who* and *whom* because their instruction has been more prescriptive. Moreover, since their exposure is frequently limited to classroom instruction, they may have had less exposure to more informal forms of English.

### ***How much emphasis needs to be placed on the distinction between who and whom in the ESL/EFL classroom?***

There are several factors to consider in answering this question. For example, are the students preparing to take certain exams that test knowledge of prescriptive rules? If the answer is yes, then the ESL/EFL teachers must place more emphasis on this distinction than if the answer is no. Additionally, how much does not observing this distinction between *who* and *whom* interfere with understanding? Since native speakers routinely do not observe this distinction, the answer is very little. As we will see in later chapters, there are more serious learning issues that do interfere with comprehension on which ESL/EFL teachers need to focus.

### 1.4.2 *Descriptive Grammar*

In contrast to prescriptive grammar, descriptive grammar describes how adult native speakers actually use their language. Unlike prescriptive grammar, descriptive grammar does not say “this is right” or “this is wrong.” Instead, descriptive grammar focuses on understanding how language is organized into meaningful, systematic patterns, which are generally below the level of conscious awareness of most speakers. By understanding the patterns of English, ESL/EFL teachers can help their students in learning the language learning process.

Some people think that descriptive grammar means saying that everything is right and nothing is wrong. What we must consider is the purpose for which a speaker is using language. If a person is at a white-collar job interview or sending in a college application, using stigmatized language forms is inappropriate. On the other hand, if the person is among a group of peers, using a different variety of language is part of in-group acceptance and identity. This is not to say that there should be no grammar rulebooks, manuals of style, or standards of usage; on the contrary, there is a need for standards, especially in formal language contexts and when we are teaching English to non-native speakers. What ESL/EFL teachers must do is develop an awareness among their students as they become more proficient that there are variations of prescriptive grammar rules, some of which are more acceptable in certain contexts than others.

#### ***Why do I, as an ESL/EFL teacher, need to know the difference between prescriptive grammar and descriptive grammar?***

ESL/EFL teachers need to understand what learners need to know to learn English. The needs of these learners are very different from those of native speakers. Native speakers and the textbooks geared to them focus on prescriptive grammar. ESL/EFL learners, on the other hand, need to learn structures and forms that native speakers know as part of their innate knowledge of English.

ESL/EFL teachers must also consider why students are learning the language, which errors are more serious than others, and on which aspects of grammar to focus. In this text, we will be focusing on the grammatical rules and grammatical structures that ESL/EFL learners need to learn to communicate in English.

#### ***Why do I need to know grammar?***

For teachers of ESL/EFL learners, a knowledge of how English works is essential, that is, an understanding of grammar, especially from the *descriptive* perspective. Teachers need to be able to talk about how sentences are constructed, about the types of words and word groups that make up sentences, and about the functions of these words and word groups within sentences and in larger contexts.

With this knowledge, teachers can help their students understand the language and know what their students need to learn. Without knowing the essential components or the complexities of the language in question, it is difficult to understand what learners actually need to know in order to learn English.

### ***What do you mean by the “complexities of language?”***

The next two Discovery Activities introduce a few of the structures and forms that we will discuss in greater detail throughout the book. These are examples of the complexities that native speakers know intuitively that ESL/EFL learners need to learn explicitly. After you have finished Discovery Activity 4, check your answers with those found at the end of the chapter in the section labeled Answer Key.

#### **Discovery Activity 4: Verbs**

Look at the following sentences.

1. Find the verbs and underline them.
2. How would you explain the verbs in these sentences to an English learner?
  - (a) Many people don't like meat.
  - (b) Do you drive to New York regularly?
  - (c) She's lived in the country since last year.
  - (d) I'm about to buy a new car.
  - (e) The flight is leaving in the next 20 min.

After you have checked your answers to Discovery Activity 4, try Discovery Activity 5. Think about how you would explain the italicized words to an ESL/EFL student. Discuss your answers with your classmates; then compare your responses with those found in the Answer Key.

#### **Discovery Activity 5: Other Parts of Speech**

Look at the following sentences. Consider how you would explain the italicized words in these sentences to a learner of English.

- (a) The child painted a *big, beautiful, wooden* box. **versus** The child painted a *wooden beautiful big* box.
- (b) *The* pencil I have doesn't have *an* eraser.
- (c) That is a *stone* fence.
- (d) Mary drove *fast* but stopped *quickly* at the red light.

This concludes the chapter and our introduction to grammar.

## 1.5 Summary

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### Linguists Versus Grammarians

#### A linguist’s definition of grammar is:

- a system or the “blueprints” for creating language
- the shared rules (patterns) in native speakers’ minds that allow them to generate unique utterances; native speakers’ shared mental rules
- that there are different grammars shared by different groups of speakers; because all languages and variations are systematic in their generation of utterance, all grammars are viewed as valid
- descriptive

#### A grammarian’s definition of grammar is:

- the written rules governing when to use which forms or structures
- something you follow in order to use the language correctly
- one particular variety of grammar is considered the “standard”
- prescriptive

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#### A linguist’s purpose in examining grammar is to:

- understand the mental or subconscious rules shared by different groups of native speakers. These rules are learned as part of the process of growing up as a native speaker of a given language.
- describe the system and blueprints.
- understand the shared elements (rules) that make variations still belong to one language versus another different language; that is, what makes English not German or Chinese.
- learn which variations are used by which groups and in which situations.
- understand which variations are less acceptable or stigmatized in which situations and why.
- learn which changes are taking place and why.

#### A grammarian’s purpose in examining grammar is to:

- focus on discrete items and specific rules of use (“usage rules”).
- determine what word, phrase, or construction is or is not correct according to a particular usage or style book or person (usually self-appointed “language mavens” or “language gurus”).
- determine grammar “rules,” which must often be taught. These rules often exist on a continuum of acceptability because language changes and some usage or style books or language gurus are more reluctant to accept change than others.
- debate what must be used when and why based on what a particular usage or style book or person determines is correct.

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### Standard American English

- is that which most style and usage books and speakers recognize as “correct.” There is no language academy or formal government institution decreeing or legislating “correctness” for American English.
  - exists on a continuum of “correctness.” Not all style and usage books and not all “language gurus” agree on what is “correct” because language changes. Some grammarians are slower to accept change than others.
  - The English that is taught to non-native speakers is recognized as Standard American English because the grammar, for the most part, reflects formally educated native speakers’ shared rules.
-

## 1.6 Practice Activities

### *Activity 1: New Words*

Many words enter the English language. Can you find at least five words that are relatively recent additions to English? Discuss how they entered the language and whether they are considered standard or slang words (e.g., the use of the words *Internet* and *app* have become common parlance).

To take another example, the popular Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling made *muggle* a commonly accepted term designating ordinary people without special magical powers. Although there was such a word in the English language prior to the publication of the first Harry Potter book, it was an obscure term with very different meanings. The new meaning of *muggle* came about through literary means.

### *Activity 2: Language Intuition*

1. Look at the following list of nonsense words and English words. Create five sentences using all of these words (and no other additional words) in each sentence.

mishiffen a drinking keg gwisers some were stoshly frionized

2. Ask at least two other people (e.g., a friend or family member) to make up one to two sentences using these words.
  - They must use all of the words in each sentence.
  - When they finish writing the sentences, ask them if they can tell you why they wrote the sentences as they did.
3. Compare your sentences with those you collected.
  - How many sentences were the same?
  - How many were different?
  - Were there any sentences that surprised you or that you found unusual? Why or why not?
4. Bring your sentences, the sentences your friends or family members wrote, and their comments to class. Compare these with those other classmates gathered.
5. What insights did you gain into the idea of “language as a system” or “language as a set of blueprints”?

### *Activity 3: Nouns*

Look at the following sentence:

Some mishiffen gwisers were stoshly drinking a frionized keg.

- Which two words refer to things (nouns)?
- What clues are there to help you decide which words refer to things (nouns)?
- Which words do you think are describing the things (nouns) in this sentence?

**Activity 4: Prescriptive Grammar**

1. Come up with 5–10 sentences you consider to be “incorrect” grammar, for example, using *ain’t* instead of *isn’t* as in *\*She ain’t on time.*
  - Share this list with at least three other native or near-native speakers of English.
  - Ask them to tell you which sentences they find incorrect and why.
  - Bring the results to class, and discuss how your friends’ or family members’ evaluations compared to your own and why.
2. Compare your list to your classmates’ lists.
  - Do the lists include errors such as the sentences below made by ESL/EFL learners? Discuss why or why not.
    - (a) *\*She no like pancakes.*
    - (b) *\*She go when?*
    - (c) *\*She move to farm last year.*

**Activity 5: Gender and Pronoun References**

Write a reflective essay on the following situation. Use the questions below to guide your thoughts.

As a teacher you have conscientiously taught the use of the singular possessive pronoun in such sentences as *Everyone needs to bring his or her book to class tomorrow* or *Anyone who wants his or her grades can come to my office on Friday.* Several students come to you with the situations below:

- Student A was watching a movie. The student notices that everyone in the movie said such phrases as *Someone has to share their room* or *No one goes out without paying their parents* and asks you why they are using these forms.
  - Student B shows you some pages from an English novel. In one part the author has written *If each and every person had his or her way, there would be chaos.* In another part the same author has written: *Her mother called, “Someone has left their bag at our house.”*
1. How might you explain the differences to them? Consider the differences between prescriptive and descriptive grammar and language change. Take into consideration any standardized testing your students might need to take.
  2. How might you deal with issues related to prescriptive versus descriptive grammar?
  3. What differences, if any, do you see in addressing this issue when teaching ESL versus EFL learners?
  4. What changes (if any) would you make in your teaching? Justify your decision.

## 1.7 Answer Key

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 4

- (a) Many people don't like meat.

In English, to form a present tense negative sentence, we need to use what is commonly called an *auxiliary* or *helping* verb, in this case *do* (see Chap. 5). In many languages, in contrast, a negative sentence is formed by adding a negative word:

	<b>Affirmative</b>	<b>Negative</b>
Spanish	Tú caminas. (You walk.)	Tú <b>no</b> caminas. (You do not walk.)
German	Ich laufe. (I walk.)	Ich laufe <b>nicht</b> . (I do not walk.)
Chinese	Ni xi huan. (You like it.)	Ni <b>bu</b> xi huan. (You do not like it.)

- (b) Do you drive to New York?

In English, to form a question in present tense, we need to use what is commonly called an *auxiliary* or *helping* verb, in this case *do* (see Chap. 5). In many languages, questions are formed by inverting the subject and the verb:

	<b>Affirmative Statement</b>	<b>Question</b>
Spanish	Tú estudias. (You study.)	Estudias tú? (Do you study?)
German	Du studierst. (You study.)	Studierst du? (Do you study?)

In other languages, a word is added at the end of a sentence to indicate that it is a question:

	<b>Affirmative Statement</b>	<b>Question</b>
Chinese	Ni xi huan. (You like it.)	Ni xi huan <b>ma</b> ? (Do you like it?)

- (c) She's lived in the country since last year.

She's **lived** is a contraction for she *has lived*. This is a verb form that refers to indefinite time or time in the recent past. We will see exactly what this means in Chap. 6 when we examine time, tense, and aspect.

- (d) I'm about to buy a new car.

Compare these two sentences:

- (a) I am hot.
- (b) I am about to leave.

If you ask yourself whether the verb *am* in Sentence a refers to the same time as the verb *am* in Sentence b, you will note that it doesn't. The time referred to in the two sentences is different because of the phrase *about to*. This phrase changes the time of present tense *am* to indicate that an immediate future action is taking place (see Chap. 5).

- (e) The flight is leaving in the next 20 minutes.  
Normally, we would say that *is leaving* refers to something happening now. However, as in Sentence d, the addition of a phrase, *in the next 20 minutes*, changes the time reference to the immediate future (see Chap. 6).

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 5

- The child painted a *big, beautiful, wooden* box.  
Adjectives (descriptive words) follow a certain order when there is more than one. Saying *The child painted a wooden, beautiful, big box* sounds awkward to native and highly proficient native speakers because it does not follow normal English word order for multiple adjectives. (See Chap. 4.)
- The* pencil I have doesn't have *an* eraser.  
*The* and *an* are used before nouns. *The* refers to a specific object; *an* refers to an unspecified object and is used before a vowel sound as in *eraser, orange, ink,* and *apple*. Many languages do not have determiners. ESL/EFL learners whose native languages do not have determiners experience difficulties both in remembering to use *the* and *a/n* and in choosing between *the* and *a/n*.
- That is a *stone* fence.  
In English we often use two nouns together. The first noun describes something about the second noun. We can say *stone fence, wooden fence, iron fence, or garden fence* and each time describe a different type of fence. (See Chap. 3.)
- Mary drove *fast* but stopped *quickly* at the red light.  
*Quickly* describes the action word (verb) in the sentence. Such words are generally labeled adverbs (see Chap. 4). *Quickly* belongs to the subcategory of adverbs often called "manner adverbs" because they describe how something is done. They often, but not always, end in *-ly*:

happily   angrily   jokingly   sadly   loudly

*Fast* is an example of a manner adverb that does not end in *-ly*. Less proficient ESL/EFL learners find it confusing that we can say *Mary stopped quickly*, but not *\*Mary stopped fastly*. *Fast* is also an example of a word that has the same form as an adjective and as an adverb. (See Chap. 4.)

## Chapter 2

# Morphology: Words and Their Parts

**Abstract** This chapter is divided into two sections. Section 2.1 focuses on word classes and includes a brief introduction to some of the basic parts of speech to aid in understanding the next section. Section 2.2 focuses on morphology, the structure and form of words.

**Keywords** form class · structure class · inflectional morpheme · derivational morpheme · open class · closed class

### 2.1 Section 1: Word Classes

For many people, words are the center of language. This comes as no surprise if we consider that the most obvious, concrete, and recognizable parts of any language are its words or its *lexicon*. In any given language, there are tens of thousands of words, although most speakers will know and use only a relatively small number of them.

A primary concern of grammarians is the classification of words into groups or categories. Traditional English grammar, based on Latin, adopted terminology and classification systems that often do not reflect the actual grammar of English. Nevertheless, in order to discuss the different elements and structures of English, we need to employ some sort of terminology, so we continue to use the traditional labels and classification systems, which remain useful because they provide a common way to discuss words and structures. For example, you have probably learned that different words are classified into *parts of speech* and many grammar texts still use this classification.

Other grammar texts prefer to think of parts of speech in terms of *form* and *structure* classes. The **form** classes are composed of the major parts of speech: nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. These are the words that carry the content or meaning of a sentence. The **structure** classes are composed of the minor parts of

speech: prepositions, pronouns, determiners, conjunctions, quantifiers, and other subsets. These structure words generally accompany specific form classes. Determiners, or articles, such as *the* or *a/an*, typically occur before a noun, such as *dog*, *bed*, and *pen*.

Try Discovery Activity 1 to see how much you know about the different word classes (or parts of speech), even if you are not always sure of the labels.

### Discovery Activity 1: Introduction to Parts of Speech (Word Classes)

1. Look at the following words:

system	in	big	communicate	between	confidentiality	relevant	rebellion
obey	under	shatter	blizzard	warn	happy	beside	weary

Create four columns. Label these columns **Group A**, **Group B**, **Group C**, and **Group D**.

2. Without using a dictionary or other reference tool, try to place the words that you think belong together in the different columns. The first four words have already been done for you as an example.

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
system	in	big	communicate

3. After you have categorized as many words together as you can, explain why you grouped them as you did.
4. Now make two new columns, **Group A** and **Group B**. Using the new list of words below, try to place the different words that you think belong together. As you group this new list of words, consider whether any of the words can belong to more than one group. Try to explain why or why not.

harm	remind	cancer	cup	scream	date
struggle	queen	poison	announce	style	write

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 1**

Your grouping of the words in the first list probably looks like this:

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
system	in	big	communicate
confidentiality	between	relevant	obey
rebellion	under	weary	shatter
blizzard	beside	happy	warn

Each of these four groups represents a word class. Even without knowing the labels for each group, you should have been able to place the words in the list together with other words performing the same function. Group A consists of *nouns*; Group B consists of *prepositions*; Group C consists of *adjectives*; and Group D consists of *verbs*.

Your grouping of the words in the second list should look like this:

Group A	Group B
harm	harm
	remind
cancer	
cup	cup
scream	scream
date	date
struggle	struggle
queen	
poison	poison
	announce
style	style
	write

Groups A and B again represent different word classes. Group A represents words that are nouns, and Group B represents words that are verbs. Some of the words fit into both groups; *harm* can be either a verb or a noun. You can *harm* (verb) someone, or you can suffer *harm* (noun).

While you may recognize that a word can fit into more than one group, you may not be able to do so without thinking of a sentence or *context* for that particular word. In English, the group or class to which a word belongs is not always obvious without context, as you probably realized when doing Discovery Activity 1. The *form* of a word in English does not necessarily determine its *function*.

Unlike many other languages, English does not always rely on word endings or word forms to determine word class. As we saw in Chap. 1, words need to occur in a certain order to be grammatical. Because word order is highly fixed, context and sentence position are key to clarifying the function of a word or phrase.

### 2.1.1 Context and Function

#### *How are the sentence position of a word and its function related?*

As the *Jabberwocky* activities and discussion in Chap. 1 illustrated, the *sentence position* of some of the nonsense words told you their function. The *context* helped you guess what word class some words belonged to.

The following sentences illustrate the importance of context in assigning function and/or class. In both sentences, you can see that the same word in different contexts has a different function:

She made a *wish* on a star.

They *wish* to learn more about effective research practices.

In the first sentence, *wish* is a noun, while in the second sentence, *wish* is a verb. In subsequent chapters we will be analyzing the clues that help us decide which function words have in different contexts.

#### 2.1.1.1 Word Plays and Context: An Additional Illustration

Newspaper headlines are famous for using short, catchy phrases with words that have different meanings depending on context. A reader's attention is caught by the headlines, which often play on the different meanings of words that have the same form. The actual meanings may only become clear after reading the articles themselves as you will see in Discovery Activity 2. The discussion of this activity is in the Answer Key at the end of the chapter.

#### **Discovery Activity 2: News Headlines**

Look at these newspaper headlines.

1. Underline the words you find ambiguous, that is, words that have more than one meaning.
2. Explain what these different meanings are.
  - (a) Students Cook and Serve Grandparents
  - (b) Kidnapped Child Found by Tree
  - (c) British Left Waffles on Gibraltar
  - (d) EMT Helps Raccoon Bite Victim
  - (e) Truck Carrying Fruit Crashes, Creates Jam

***Tell me again why I need to focus on context with my ESL/EFL learners? Shouldn't I just focus on their mastering a form and then worry about context?***

Teachers need to be aware of what learners need to know about a language and why they need to know it. Reflect again on our discussion in Chap. 1 of native speakers'

innate knowledge of grammar and Discovery Activity 1 of this chapter. Context lets native and near-native speakers “know” the function of a word without necessarily knowing *how* they know it or without knowing the labels for what they know. ESL/EFL learners, on the other hand, don’t have this type of knowledge because they are *learners* of English.

As Discovery Activity 2 highlighted, context is critical in determining meaning. Whether *left* refers to the past tense of *leave* or to the term describing political persuasion becomes clear only in the reading of the text. Words without context can be difficult to understand. Similarly, grammar taught without context has little meaning for ESL/EFL learners. Isolated grammar rules with isolated sentences may be necessary at very low levels of English proficiency to introduce learners to a particular form. However, ESL/EFL learners need to use forms and structures in meaningful and relevant contexts to truly learn the language.

Discovery Activity 3 highlights again the importance of context in understanding meaning and function.

### Discovery Activity 3: Context

Look at the following groups of sentences.

#### Group 1

- (a) I *practice* my *talk* every morning.
- (b) I *talk* every morning before the *practice*.

#### Group 2

- (c) I *present* many speeches.
- (d) I gave her a nice *present*.
- (e) The students are all *present*.

1. How does the context alter the function and meaning of the words in each group?
2. Consider how in English form is not equal to function:
  - In Group 1, are *practice* and *talk* the same in (a) and (b)?
  - What differences and similarities are there between *practice* and *talk*? Do they have the same function?
  - Do they have the same form? Can you explain why or why not?
3. In Group 2, *present* has the same form, but does not have the same function in the three sentences.
  - Explain the use of *present* in the three sentences.
  - Does *present* have the same form in the three sentences? Can you explain why or why not?

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 3

The purpose of this activity is to highlight the importance of context in understanding the meanings and functions of individual words. Words that look the same can have different meanings and functions depending upon where they occur in a sentence.

<i>Group 1</i>	
(a) practice	action word (verb) referring to what <i>I</i> (the subject) is doing
talk	a “thing” (noun)
(b) talk	action word (verb) referring to what <i>I</i> (the subject) is doing
practice	a “thing” (noun)
<i>Group 2</i>	
(c) present	action word (verb) referring to what <i>I</i> (the subject) is doing
(d) present	a “thing” (noun)
(e) present	describing something (adjective) about <i>the students</i>

ESL/EFL learners need to be aware that in spoken English, *present* is pronounced differently depending whether or not it is an action word (verb). In Sentence c, where *present* is used as a verb, it is accented on the second syllable and pronounced with a/z/sound: pre zent'. In Sentences d and e, *present* is used as a noun and an adjective, and is accented on the first syllable and pronounced with an/s/sound: pre' sent

The next part of the chapter will introduce the parts of speech or word classes. Different chapters will explore these word classes in greater depth.

### 2.1.2 Parts of Speech or Lexical Categories

As mentioned earlier, English words fall into two main categories: (1) *form* class words or major word classes, and (2) *structure* class words, or minor word classes.

The **major** category is the larger of the two categories. This category consists of the word classes commonly labeled nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs (although not all linguists agree that adverbs belong in the major category). These major word classes are made up of the words that carry the content or essential meaning of a sentence. They are often referred to as *content* or *form* words.

The **minor** category includes the classes generally known as prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions, and determiners. These words serve primarily to indicate grammatical relationships and are frequently referred to as *structure* words. Although there are fewer words in the minor classes, these words are more difficult for ESL/EFL students to master.

Take a look at the following sentence:

*Victoria ate a banana at the table.*

This sentence consists of seven words: four content words and three structure words. If you saw only *Victoria*, *ate*, *banana*, *table* in that order, you could probably make an accurate guess as to the sentence's general meaning because these four content words are crucial for conveying meaning.

The three structure words, *a*, *at*, and *the*, show the grammatical relationships of the content words:

- *a* before *banana* tells us Victoria ate one thing.
- *at* tells us where Victoria ate the banana.
- *the* specifies the thing, namely a specific table.

Content words, such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, are words that carry lexical or content meaning. These major class words are also referred to as *open* word classes. Structure words, such as prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions, and determiners, are words that show grammatical relationships within sentences. These minor class words are referred to as *closed* word classes. We will now examine why this is so.

### 2.1.2.1 Open Word Classes

Speakers are endlessly creating new English words, especially nouns and verbs, but also adjectives and adverbs. Therefore, the major word or form classes are called *open word classes* because new words enter the language constantly.

#### *How do new words enter the English language?*

Often new words enter via informal language (slang or jargon) and, with increased use, become accepted into Standard American English as illustrated in this sentence:

The girls *dissed* Ashley during lunch.

The verb *dis* (or *diss*), meaning to make fun of, show disrespect to, or disobey, is used primarily in informal speech. It is a shortened form of *disrespect* and has come into Standard American English from African-American English via rap music.

Technology and social media are especially rich sources of new words. Nouns such as *mouse*, *surf*, *e-mail*, and *blogs* are early examples of words that have taken on new meanings or been invented in relation to the computer. Newer words include verbs such as *snapchat*, *navigate*, *unplug*, *tweet*, and *go viral*, and nouns such as *cyberstalking*, *down time*, *cookies*, and *multitasking*.

Discovery Activity 4 explores how many words you recognize that have entered English in the last 50 years or so. The discussion for this activity and the remaining Discover Activities are in the Answer Key at the end of the chapter.

### Discovery Activity 4: To Word Is Human

Look at the list below of words.

1. How many of these words do you recognize?
2. For those words you recognize, explain where you have seen and/or heard them.
3. How comfortable do you feel using each word? Explain.
  - (a) bromance
  - (b) spam
  - (c) icon
  - (d) locavore
  - (e) to google/to Google
  - (f) televangelist
  - (g) go postal
  - (h) microwave

Something you may have noticed in doing this activity is that there are several words that you may not recognize as being “new.” This is a common occurrence when words become part of everyday vocabulary. The activity also illustrates the creativity of speakers in developing new words and in giving existing words new meaning in response to change.

We now turn to look at the second category of words, *closed word classes*.

#### 2.1.2.2 Closed Word Classes

*Closed word classes* consist of the minor or structure words. They are among the most common and frequently used English words. These classes are considered “closed” for several reasons. First, they consist of small numbers of words that change very little over long periods of time and that have been in the English language for centuries. They include:

- prepositions (e.g., *in, on, at, of, from*)
- determiners (e.g., *a, an, the, this, that, these, those*)
- coordinators (e.g., *and, but, or*)
- pronouns (e.g., *it, his, you, them, mine, herself*)<sup>1</sup>

Second, words in the closed classes are fixed and invariant, meaning that they do not have other forms. There is only one form for the preposition *in*. In contrast, open class words can have different forms because they can take different endings. The noun, *dog*, for instance, can take the plural and possessive endings (*dogs* or

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix D for more information about structure words.

*dog 's*); the verb *walk* can take three different endings (*walked*, *walks*, *walking*); and the adjective *tall* can take two different endings (*taller*, *tallest*).

Third, these words occur only in a narrow range of possible positions within a sentence, and they must always accompany content words. There is no flexibility in word order. *The* must always precede a noun. It cannot follow a noun. We cannot say *dog the* but must say *the dog*.

Finally, closed word classes have little lexical or semantic function. The job of these words is to show the relationships between the different parts of sentences.

***What does it mean to say “to show the relationships between the different parts of sentences”?***

If we say, for example, *I went **to** the store*, this sentence has a different meaning than if we say, *I went **by** the store*. The only difference between the two sentences is the change of prepositions from *to* to *by*, but it is these words (prepositions) that indicate a difference in the relationship between *I went* and *the store*.

Because English depends on word order to show grammatical relationships, these structure words are essential sentence elements. Discovery Activity 5 further illustrates how prepositions function to signal grammatical relationships.

### **Discovery Activity 5: Prepositions and Grammatical Relationships**

The following pairs of headlines have different meanings.

- Explain how the inclusion or omission of a preposition changes the meaning of each pair of sentences.
- Consider what this tells us about prepositions and grammatical relationships.

*Political Headlines:*

- 1(a) Iraqi Head Seeks Arms
- 1(b) Head of Iraq Seeks Arms

*Agriculture Headlines:*

- 2(a) Angry Bull Injures Farmer with Axe
- 2(b) Angry Bull Injures Farmer Axe

*Headline News:*

- 3(a) Man Struck by Speeding Car
- 3(b) Man Struck Speeding Car

*Local News:*

- 4(a) Police Help Fire Chief
- 4(b) Police Help to Fire Chief

As you see in Discovery Activity 5, the inclusion or omission of a preposition in the headlines alters the meaning. The activity illustrates the importance of the role of structure words in establishing grammatical relationships. This role grows even more important as the complexity of a sentence increases.

We continue with a look at the traditional parts of speech that make up the major word category.

### 2.1.3 Major Parts of Speech

The next section is a brief overview of the major parts of speech comprising the major word category and provides the basis for our discussion on morphology.

#### 2.1.3.1 Nouns

The traditional or standard definition of a noun is a word that refers to *a person, place, or thing*. On the surface, this definition has merit. We can easily come up with words that fit this definition of a noun:

Person	Place	Thing
girl	city	car
teacher	school	lesson
pilot	airport	wheel
doctor	hospital	bed
swimmer	beach	towel

If we expand *thing* to include two subcategories, tangible (concrete) and intangible (abstract) things, the list expands quickly:

Tangible	Intangible
bus	philosophy
wood	adolescence
water	justice
horse	suggestion
medicine	anger

We can also differentiate another subcategory, proper nouns. Proper nouns name a specific person, place, or thing and are typically written with a capital letter:

Person	Place	Thing
Dr. Smith	Chicago	Pacific Ocean
Jane	Afghanistan	Mt. Everest
Professor Jones	Europe	Lake Tahoe
President Lincoln	Florida	Erie Canal
Ms. Peters	Everglades	The Sphinx
Spaniard	Pyrenees	Spain

The basic definition of nouns works well up to a certain point and provides a starting point in determining which words are nouns. As we will see in Chap. 3, it will be necessary to revise this definition to account for nouns that do not fit neatly into this definition.

### 2.1.3.2 Adjectives

Adjectives are usually characterized as descriptive or modifying words because of their function in a sentence. Words such as *beautiful*, *hard*, *happy*, and *tall* come readily to mind. These are content words that function to create descriptive images or add color and flavor to a sentence. Multiple adjectives can be found in a sentence such as:

He had never seen such a *harsh*, *boring*, yet *beautiful* and *magical* landscape.

The adjectives *harsh*, *boring*, *beautiful*, and *magical* all describe the noun *landscape*. The author has chosen to use pairs of opposing adjectives to fix the contradiction of the landscape in the reader's mind.

Other types of adjectives and words that can function as adjectives will be examined more closely in Chap. 4.

### 2.1.3.3 Verbs

The first association many people make with the term “verb” is that of action, as in *run*, *drive*, *listen*, or *identify*. Verbs also refer to the state of something, as in *be* (*am*, *is*, *are*) or *feel*. English verbs can also indicate time: *We eat sandwiches* and *We ate sandwiches* refer to different times.

A sentence must always contain a verb. A verb and a noun are enough to form a complete sentence:

I run. They walk. We listen.

A sentence can be long and complex, and yet still contain only one verb:

Despite the long, hot, sultry day, the boys *wore* long heavy shirts, denim pants, thick cotton socks, and work boots.

As we saw in Discovery Activity 1, English verbs and nouns may have identical forms. This can make it difficult for ESL/EFL learners to identify the verb or verbs, especially in more complex sentences. Context and structural clues help determine whether the verb or noun form is being used. The forms, functions, and structural characteristics of verbs will be examined in Chaps. 5 and 6.

### 2.1.3.4 Adverbs

The common definition of an adverb is a word that describes or modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. Yet, as we will see in Chap. 4, adverbs are difficult to characterize because the label *adverb* refers to many different kinds of words that perform a variety of functions. Essentially, adverbs can modify anything in a sentence. Adverbs are generally grouped into subcategories, according to their function as in the following table:

Manner	Frequency	Time and Place
quickly	often	now
happily	always	here
silently	sometimes	later

There are other words and subgroups of adverbs. Unlike the other parts of speech we have looked at, there is not complete agreement as to which words should be classified as adverbs or placed in separate subclasses. In addition, the distinction between adjectives and adverbs is not always clear. Some adjectives end in *-ly*, the common adverb suffix (e.g., *deadly*, *lonely*, *kindly*), while some adjectives and adverbs have the same form (e.g., *early*, *fast*, *far*). Compare, for instance:

Adverb	Adjective
Judy walks <i>fast</i> .	Judy is a <i>fast</i> walker.
Jason rises <i>early</i> .	Jason is an <i>early</i> riser.

Chapter 4 discusses adverbs and adjective in greater depth, but at this point we end our overview of the major word categories and turn to morphology, the structure and form of words.

## 2.2 Section 2: Morphology

In this section we examine the parts that make up the words of English. The smallest unit of meaning is called a *morpheme*. A morpheme can be a single word or other independently meaningful units, such as the *-s* ending to form an English plural.

Many words that users think of as being a single word are actually composed of several parts. For example, consider the word *book*. There is no smaller form of this word; in other words, this word *book* cannot be broken into any other units. It is a single morpheme. Now consider these words:

bookworm	bookish	books
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Most speakers will easily recognize *bookworm* as one word (a compound word) composed of *book* + *worm*. The other two words may be more difficult to recognize as consisting of two parts or two morphemes.

*Bookish* can be broken down into *book* + *ish*, and *books* into *book* + *s*. Most speakers would probably not consider *-ish* and *-s* meaningful units. Although *-ish* and *-s* are not “words,” they are independently meaningful units, or morphemes. They change the meaning and sometimes the class of a word. *Bookworm* has a meaning different from either of its parts. The addition of the morpheme *-ish* to *book* changes it from a noun to an adjective that describes a person as in *She’s a bookish person*.

Likewise, *books* can be broken down into two morphemes, *book* + *s*. Adding *-s* to certain words (nouns) indicates that there is more than one, as in *books*, *computers*, *days*, *shoes*, *pens*, and *geraniums*. This plural *-s* can also be added to *bookworm* to form *bookworms*. *Bookworms* now consists of three morphemes: *book* + *worm* + *s*. In all of these examples, *-s* is a morpheme that gives meaningful information, that is, plurality.

It is easy to confuse the concept of morpheme with the concept of syllable. *Bookworm* has two syllables and two morphemes. *Complimentary* has four syllables but only two morphemes: *compliment* + *-ary*. The next Discovery Activity will help you in distinguishing morphemes.

### Discovery Activity 6: Decoding Morphemes

Look at the following words.

1. Break the words down into the smallest possible meaningful units, or morphemes.

blizzard  
entertainment  
teachers  
often  
sincerely  
truthful  
activity  
activities

2. When you have finished, think about whether or not it was easy to find the smallest possible meaningful units. Remember not to confuse syllable with morpheme.
3. When you have finished, check your answers in a dictionary.

As you may have noticed, some of these morphemes can stand alone; that is, they don't to be attached to a word. Examples include *book*, *worm*, and *blizzard*. Other morphemes cannot stand alone but need to be attached to a word, such as *-ish*, *-s*, and *-ly*. This is the difference between *bound* and *free morphemes*.

**What are bound and free morphemes?**

#### 2.2.1 Bound and Free Morphemes

We call words such as *blizzard*, *never*, *amaze*, or *grace* **free morphemes** because they are meaningful units that do not need to be attached to another morpheme to have meaning.

Endings such as *-ful*, *-ment*, *-ly*, *-er*, or *-s* need to be attached or “bound” to other meaningful units. Since they cannot occur alone and function only as parts of words, they are called **bound morphemes**. Frequently several morphemes, both bound and free, occur in the same word:

undeniable	un + deny + able
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*Undeniable* consists of two bound morphemes *-un* and *-able* and the free morpheme *deny*. (The *y* changes to *i* in accordance with English spelling rules.) Here is another example:

backpacks	back + pack + s
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*Backpacks* is a compound word consisting of two free morphemes *back* and *pack* and the bound morpheme *-s*.

There are many compound words or words consisting of two free morphemes in English. Usually the *-s* bound morpheme can be attached to these words.

Compound Word	+ -s
firehouse	firehouses
workshop	workshops
schoolbook	schoolbooks
lifestyle	lifestyles

**Are suffixes and prefixes morphemes?**

We see that *-able* attaches at the end of *deny* and *un-* attaches to the front of *deny*. As a group, these morphemes are called **affixes**, and they are always bound. We distinguish what kind of affixes they are by where they occur. If they come before another morpheme, they are called **prefixes** (e.g., *-un*). If they come after, they are called **suffixes** (e.g. *-able*). There are many affixes in English, and extensive lists can be found on the Internet. Some common affixes are:

Prefix		Suffix	
dis-	disappear disclaimer disregard	-less	groundless fearless thoughtless
inter-	interdependent international interchange	-ness	kindness happiness blindness
re-	reappear rewrite reuse	-ment	announcement judgment excitement

**Are there different types of bound morphemes?**

**2.2.2 Derivational and Inflectional Morphemes**

Bound morphemes can be divided into two groups: **derivational** morphemes and **inflectional** morphemes. Derivational morphemes are lexical morphemes. They change the meaning of a word and/or change the class of a word. The *-un* in *undeniable* changes the meaning of the word, and the *-al* in *renewal* changes *renew*, a verb, to an adjective.

Inflectional morphemes, on the other hand, are grammatical morphemes. They provide grammatical information about a word. Adding *-s* to *chair* in English changes the word from a singular noun to a plural noun, *chairs*. Inflectional morphemes do not change the class to which a word belongs, nor do they change the meaning of a word.

### 2.2.2.1 Derivational Morphemes

Derivational morphemes have to do with the vocabulary of the language. They can come at the beginning (prefix) or at the end (suffix) of a word, and more than one derivational morpheme can be added to a word as shown here with *disagreement*:

disagreement:	<b>dis</b> + agree + <b>ment</b>
<i>dis-</i>	prefix meaning opposite
<i>-ment</i>	suffix that changes the word class to a noun and that refers to an action, process, or means

The addition of a **derivational** *suffix* often, but not always, changes the word class:

<b>Noun</b> →	<b>Adjective</b>	<b>Verb</b> →	<b>Noun</b>
child	childish	realize	realization
face	faceless	establish	establishment
trend	trendy	conform	conformity

Sometimes a **derivational** *suffix* will only change the meaning of a word but not the word class:

<b>Adjective</b>	<b>Adjective With Different Meaning</b>	<b>Noun</b>	<b>Noun With Different Meaning</b>
economic	economical	fellow	fellowship
politic	political	progress	progression

**Derivational** *prefixes* only change the meaning of a word, never the word class:

<b>Adjective</b>	<b>Adjective With Different Meaning</b>	<b>Verb</b>	<b>Verb With Different Meaning</b>
forgettable	unforgettable	appear	disappear
essential	nonessential	finish	refinish

It is not always easy to divide words into morphemes because some of them are not recognizable today as individual parts of words. Many of these morphemes

have their origins in Greek, Latin, or Old French word forms that are unfamiliar to most people. The English word *correlation*, for instance, consists of the morphemes *cor* + *re* + *lation*. The morpheme *cor* is a derivative of *com*, meaning “together,” *re* meaning “back or again,” and *relation*, meaning “report or connection.”

Breaking down words to such a degree is not important for ESL/EFL learners. The most important point in teaching derivational morphology is to help learners to recognize the more common affixes and their functions. Learning the meanings of derivational morphemes can be a powerful tool for developing one’s vocabulary and is more productive than trying to memorize long lists of vocabulary words. Knowing, for instance, that the suffix *-tion* usually tells us that the word is a noun can be helpful in deciphering new words with this suffix.

### 2.2.2.2 Inflectional Morphemes

Inflectional morphemes, in contrast to derivational morphemes, are a small closed set of eight grammatical morphemes. These eight morphemes serve to indicate a grammatical feature of major category words, such plural or tense, and can only occur as suffixes. Inflectional morphemes change the form of a word only. They do not change either word class or the lexical meaning of a word:

cat           →           cats  
 walk          →           walked

The addition of *-s* to the noun *cats* indicates that more than one cat is being referred to. The *-ed* at the end of *walk* indicates a past action. The following chart lists the eight English inflectional morphemes.

The Eight English Inflectional Morphemes			
Morpheme	Grammatical Function	Attaches to	Examples
-s	plural	noun	desks, chairs, pens
-’s	possessive	noun	the cat’s tail, the girl’s bike
-s	3rd person singular	verb	She drives. He talks. It meows.
-ed	regular past tense	verb	They danced. She laughed.
-ed	regular past participle	verb	She has danced. They had danced.
-ing	present participle	verb	She is dancing. She was dancing.
-er	comparative	adjective/adverb	taller, faster
-est	superlative	adjective/adverb	tallest, fastest

### *Do ESL/EFL learners have trouble with these—inflectional endings?*

Although English has relatively few inflectional morphemes, some of the most frequent learner errors are in the correct use of these inflections. These include omitting the present tense 3rd person singular *-s* or the past tense *-ed* to produce sentences such as:

\*She *like* Florida.<sup>2</sup>

\*We *walk* home late yesterday.

For ESL/EFL learners, the inflectional morphemes generally require some explicit language instruction. For one, learners may not “hear” these morphemes because they are unstressed in spoken English. For example, the past tense *-ed* of the verbs in the following paragraph is barely pronounced in natural speech:

When Margaret *arrived* at work, she noticed that her left tire was low. She called a mechanic who *discovered* a nail in the tire. He *pulled* the nail out and *patched* the hole.

Another reason learners may have difficulties with the inflectional morphemes is that there may not be anything comparable in their language. English requires multiple ways to convey identical information, that is, redundancy. In a sentence such as *Amy called her sister last week*, we see an example of this. Even though *last week* indicates that the event occurred in the past, English still requires the *-ed* inflectional morpheme on *call*. In other languages, such as Chinese, *last week* by itself suffices to indicate the time reference. In the sentence *Many teachers came in late*, we see another example of redundancy. *Many* indicates that “teacher” is plural, but English also requires the plural *-s* inflectional morpheme. Again, learners who speak languages where such redundancy is not required are likely to forget to use the *-s*.

## 2.3 Summary

Word classes are grouped into two categories, closed and open:

Closed Word Classes (Prepositions, Determiners, Coordinators, Pronouns)	Open Word Classes (Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives, Adverbs)
• structure or grammatical words	• content words
• provide information as to the grammar or organization of a sentence	• have grammatical function (e.g., subject of a sentence)
• have little or no lexical (content) meaning; new words are rarely added	• convey important lexical (content) meaning
• the number of words is relatively fixed	• new words are constantly being added and/or formed following the grammatical constraints of English

(continued)

<sup>2</sup>Reminder: An asterisk (\*) before a sentence indicates an ungrammatical sentence.

(continued)

Closed Word Classes (Prepositions, Determiners, Coordinators, Pronouns)	Open Word Classes (Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives, Adverbs)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>do not take inflectional or derivational morphemes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can take inflectional or derivational morphemes</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>do not share any formal features such as specific derivational endings that make them identifiable as members of particular word classes. There is nothing, for example, about the form of the words <i>a</i>, <i>an</i>, or <i>the</i> to identify them as articles, nor about the form of the words <i>by</i>, <i>without</i>, <i>from</i>, or <i>on</i> to identify them as prepositions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>often take derivational forms that make them identifiable as members of a particular word class. For example, words ending in <i>-ment</i> are nouns as in <i>basement</i>, <i>replacement</i>, <i>advancement</i>, and <i>management</i>.</li> </ul>

**Morphemes**

- are the simplest meaningful unit of a word, not to be confused with a syllable
- cannot be divided into smaller units (e.g., *work*, *for*, 's)
- can be free (e.g., *blizzard*, *elephant*, *board*) or bound (e.g., *-ly*, *re-*, *-ing*, *-est*)

Bound morphemes can only attach to major word classes. We distinguish between two types of bound morpheme, derivational and inflectional:

Derivational Morphemes	Inflectional Morphemes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>are both prefixes and suffixes</li> <li>can change the word class to another (e.g., the addition of the suffix <i>-able</i> changes a noun to an adjective as in: <i>reason</i> → <i>reasonable</i>; <i>measure</i> → <i>measurable</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>are only suffixes</li> <li>do not change the word class or lexical meaning of a word but provide grammatical information (e.g., plural of nouns, possessive of nouns, tense and aspect of verbs, comparison and contrast of adjectives and adverbs)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can change the lexical meaning without changing the word class (e.g., the addition of the prefix <i>un-</i> changes the meaning to “opposite” as in: <i>conscious</i> vs. <i>unconscious</i>)</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>more than one can be found in a word (e.g., <i>unworkable</i> → <i>un</i> + <i>work</i> + <i>able</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>only one inflectional morpheme can be added, except the possessive <i>s</i> after a plural noun. This second <i>s</i> is only obvious in written English (e.g., <i>The boys' dog</i> = One dog belonging to more than one boy).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>number in the hundreds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consist of eight</li> </ul>

## 2.4 Practice Activities

### Activity 1: Identifying the Major Word Classes

1. Identify the major word classes in the following paragraph. Write **N** for noun, **V** for verb, **Adj** for adjective, and **Adv** for adverb.

*Example:*

	<b>N</b>	<b>V</b>	<b>Adv</b>
The	boy	rode	quickly.

2. Think about which word classes occur most frequently. Do you think this is typical? Explain.

During the respectful, appreciative buzz of voices that followed the speech, General Montero raised a pair of heavy, drooping eyelids and rolled his eyes with a sort of uneasy dullness from face to face. The military backwoods hero of the party, though secretly impressed by the sudden novelties and splendors of his position... [Conrad, J. (1994). *Nostramo*. (p. 109) London: Penguin Books.]

### Follow-up

Find another paragraph in a book, magazine, or newspaper. Identify the major parts of speech in the paragraph you selected.

- Do your findings support or not support your response to #2? Explain why, if you can.

### Activity 2: Derivational Morphemes

1. Look at the words in the list below.
2. Identify the derivational morphemes.
3. Explain which derivational morphemes you found that identify word class.
4. Discuss the meaning of each derivational morpheme you identified.
  - Limit your examination to common derivational morphemes. Do not look at obscure and/or forgotten roots.
  - Keep in mind that you are looking for derivational morphemes that help learners decode meaning and function.

*Example:*

partnership: partner + ship

The suffix *-ship* is only used with nouns. *-ship* refers to position or skill as in *professorship* or *penmanship*.

- (a) regardless
- (b) unhappy
- (c) biology
- (d) brutalize

- (e) journalist
- (f) terrible
- (g) positive

**Activity 3: Inflectional Morphemes**

1. Identify the inflectional morphemes in the excerpts below.
2. Explain the function of each one.

**A.**

The Nile River Cruise Lines promises that its guests will have a unique experience. Each cruise includes experts onboard to discuss local sights and history. The company owns the largest fleet of ships with bigger cabins than available on most others. Nile River Cruise received two prestigious awards last year for food and service, and is striving to be number one in the industry.

**B.**

He established that the caves had served as a kind of boat storage depot... about 4,600 years ago... Tallet realized that he was dealing with the oldest known papyri in the world... We are standing in an encampment in a desert valley... Tallet leads us up the hillside and clambers on a rocky trail. [Stille, A. (October 2015). The power and the glory. *Smithsonian*. Retrieved from: <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/ancient-egypt-shipping-mining-farming-economy-pyramids-180956619/>]

**Activity 4: More Decoding of Morphemes**

It is not always easy to distinguish morphemes, especially bound morphemes. Try this activity if you would like more practice in distinguishing morphemes. There are both derivational and inflectional morphemes here.

1. Identify the different morphemes that make up each word.
2. Label the different morphemes as **B** for bound and **F** for free.

*Example:*

breakwaters	break = F	water = F	s = B
-------------	-----------	-----------	-------

- (a) neighborhood
- (b) fashionable
- (c) forecasters
- (d) aorta
- (e) bartended
- (f) usually
- (g) renewing
- (h) inaccessibility

## 2.5 Answer Key

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 2

In order to see the double meanings implied by the headlines, consider these questions:

- (a) Are the grandparents the food?
- We hope not. To avoid such an interpretation—even if just for a moment, it would be better to add “... and serve *to* Grandparents.”
- (b) Can a tree find a child, or is the reference to the place where the child was found?
- Since it is unlikely that a tree can find a child, you may want to choose to rewrite the headline as: Kidnapped Child Found *Sitting* by Tree.
- (c) Did the British leave an edible food item or are the leftists indecisive?
- Here the writer is probably referring to the verb form of *waffles*. To convey the verb form meaning, you could rewrite the headline along these lines: British Left Waffles on Gibraltar *Decision*, or British Left Waffles on *Decision* About Gibraltar.
- (d) Did EMT personnel help the raccoon or the victim?
- Similar to Headline b, it is unlikely that the medical personnel helped a raccoon bite its victim. You might like to rewrite the headline this way: EMT Helps Victim *Bitten* by Raccoon or Raccoon Bite Victim *Helped* by EMT.
- (e) Is a truck crash likely to result in a tasty jam?
- While a track crash will most likely create some sort of traffic jam, it is not likely to result in breakfast fruit preserves. The simple addition of *traffic* to the headline would avoid any ambiguity: Truck Carrying Fruit Crashes, Creates *Traffic* Jam

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 4

bromance	a noun referring to an affectionate and very close non-sexual relationship between two straight men. It is a combination of “brother” and “romance.”
spam	Originally a proprietary name registered by Geo. A. Hormel & Co. in the late 1930s to refer to a canned meat product, the meaning expanded to include Internet junk mail in the 1990s. <i>Spam</i> also came to be used as a verb for sending the same message indiscriminately to large numbers of e-mail addresses.
icon	Now commonly used to refer a small symbol that represents a graphical interface on a computer, smartphone, or tablet screen, it was once primarily used for a religious devotional picture typically painted on wood.

(continued)

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locavore	Persons committed to eating locally grown or produced food have taken to calling themselves <i>locavores</i> , a combination of <i>local</i> and the <i>vore</i> of <i>carnivore</i> and <i>herbivore</i> . The word started in the early 2000s with a push from people dedicated to promoting and eating locally sourced food.
to google/to Google	Developed in the 1990s, Google quickly became one of the largest and most popular search engines on the web. The name has become synonymous with searching on the web and, like <i>spam</i> , is an example of a proper noun (the name of something) becoming a verb. The initial letter is sometimes capitalized and sometimes not.
televangelist	A noun referring to a Christian minister who conducts religious ministry on television broadcasts. These broadcasts became popular starting in the early 1970s. The term is derived from <i>tel</i> + <i>evangelist</i> .
go postal	The phrase originated in in the 1990s when there were several instances of disgruntled United States postal workers shooting fellow employees. It has since taken on the meaning of becoming violent or going berserk, the latter itself a borrowed expression first entering Standard American English in the early 1800s.
microwave	Although the term first entered the language in the 1930s, it only came into common use in late 1960s and the early 1970s as microwaves became inexpensive and popular.

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 5***Political Headlines:*

- 1(a) One part of a body is in search of other body parts!  
 1(b) The political leader is trying to buy weapons.

*Agriculture Headlines:*

- 2(a) The farmer was in possession of an axe. (A quick reading could also lead one to read the headline as the bull having the Axe.)  
 2(b) The farmer's family name is "Axe."

*Headline News:*

- 3(a) The car hit the man.  
 3(b) The man hit the car.

*Local News:*

- 4(a) The police assist the fire chief.  
 4(b) The police aided in the dismissal of the fire chief from his job.

## Chapter 3

# The Noun Phrase

**Abstract** Chapter 2 introduced the basic definition of a noun as a person, place, or thing. In this chapter, we will examine in more detail what constitutes the word class *noun* to expand our understanding of what exactly a noun encompasses. We will also discuss different types of nouns and various noun signals that can help to identify which words are functioning as nouns. The chapter is divided into four parts. Section 3.1 discusses identifying nouns. Section 3.2 examines different types of nouns. Section 3.3 considers some of the structure classes that signal nouns; and Sect. 3.4 reviews pronouns, words that substitute for nouns.

**Keywords** count noun • non-count noun • crossover noun • demonstratives • quantifiers • pronouns

### 3.1 Section 1: Identifying Nouns

In English, identifying the class membership of content words is not always easy because form is not always equal to function. In Chap. 2, for instance, we saw that some words fit into more than one class. We review this concept by looking at the two sentences below with the word *harm*.

The <i>harm</i> was minimal.	noun
The drug <i>harmed</i> more than it helped.	verb

In the first sentence, *harm* is a noun referring to a thing. In the second sentence, *harm* is a verb referring to an action. These two different functions of *harm* are indicated by structural clues that can be analyzed as follows:

- In first sentence, *harm* follows the noun signal *the* and comes before the verb *was*. *Harm* is in what we call **subject** position.
- In the second sentence, *The drug* is now in subject position, before *harm*, which is now in verb position.

Many words are like *harm* in that they belong to more than one word class. There are other words that belong only to one word class but may take on other functions.

The words *rich* and *poor*, for instance, are words that fit our definition in Chap. 2 of a descriptive word or an adjective:

Plants grow in *rich* soil.  
Plants don't grow in *poor* soil.

In these two sentences the adjectives *rich* and *poor* describe the noun *soil*. They tell us in what kind of soil plants grow or do not grow. In the next two sentences *rich* and *poor* are still adjectives, but they are functioning differently:

The *rich* have a good life.  
The *poor* have a hard life.

Here the adjectives *rich* and *poor* are in the sentence position where we normally expect a noun (to the left of the verb). They are functioning as nouns and as the subjects of the verb *have*.

As these six sentences illustrate, in English, membership in a particular word class does not automatically determine grammatical function because the same form may have different functions. Remember, form is not necessarily equal to function.

***What clues are there to help identify nouns?***

### 3.1.1 Semantic Clues

When we say that we use semantic clues to help us identify the function of a word, we mean that the meaning of a word itself provides a clue to its use. The standard definition of a noun as a person, place, or thing is what is called a *semantic* definition because it categorizes words by what they mean.

When we categorize words by what they mean, we consider the semantic properties that they have in common. *Astronaut* and *firefighter* are classified as nouns because they refer to people. *City* and *New York* are classified as nouns because they refer to places, and *plant* and *lamp* are classified as nouns because they refer to things. In other words, certain types of words can be grouped or classed together because they have shared intrinsic meanings. In Chap. 2 in Discovery Activity 1, you were able to group different words together without necessarily knowing the names of different word classes. There were certain inherent properties or characteristics in the different words that allowed you to place them together in specific groups. Words such as *listen*, *speak*, and *sit* all carry the idea of some type of action. Words such as *bird*, *tree*, and *pencil* bring to mind a concrete object or thing.

Words that carry core semantic properties are called *prototypical* words. The word *bird* for most people conjures up an image of a creature with a beak, wings, and feathers that has the ability to fly. This is a prototypical bird, regardless of whether a person's exact mental image is of a robin, crow, cardinal, or parrot. The word *bird*, however, encompasses a vast number of birds that do not necessarily share all these avian features (e.g., ostriches or penguins do not have the ability to fly). Ostriches and penguins are still birds, just not prototypical examples of birds.

While native speakers and highly proficient non-native speakers may be able to rely on semantic clues in classifying words as nouns, this is generally not the case for

ESL/EFL learners—especially if their language is unrelated to English—and they must rely on other clues to help them determine which words are functioning as nouns.

***What other clues are there for helping us to identify nouns?***

There are three other types of clues we can use to help us identify nouns: structural ones, which we will introduce here briefly and discuss later in Sect. 3.3, and derivational and morphological clues, to which you were introduced in Chap. 2.

### 3.1.2 Structural Clues

Another way to identify word function is to consider structural clues, such as sentence position, and the co-occurrence of other words. For example, nouns characteristically occur after articles such as *the*:

the book  
the water  
the computer

Such structural clues help us identify the class membership of words that look identical but occupy different functions in a sentence:

I drank the *water*.  
I *water* the plants.

In the first sentence, *water* is preceded by *the*, a structural clue indicating that water is functioning as a noun. In the second sentence, *water* occurs after the subject pronoun *I*. The placement of *water* in this sentence occurs where we normally expect an action word or verb, namely before (or to the right of) the subject. Such a structural analysis allows us to account for and understand the (occasional) use of adjectives as nouns in the sentences we saw earlier:

The *rich* have a good life.  
The *poor* have a hard life.

The structural clues in these two examples indicate that the adjectives are functioning as nouns here. Neither adjective, however, has changed class membership; *poor* and *rich* remain adjectives.

In Sect. 3.3 of this chapter we will examine structural clues in greater detail.

### 3.1.3 Morphological Clues

#### 3.1.3.1 Derivational Clues

In Chap. 2, we saw how certain derivational suffixes provide us with clues to identifying class membership. We saw, for instance, that the suffix *-ment* generally signals nouns, such as *amazement*, *settlement*, or *movement*.

### 3.1.3.2 Inflectional Clues

Also in Chap. 2, you were introduced to inflectional endings. One of these was the *-s* inflection to indicate a regular plural noun as in *books, pencils, pens, and folders*. There is also the possessive *'s* (sometimes referred to as the *genitive case*) as in *Justin's car, cat's whiskers, and girl's jacket*.

Thus, words that are plural or take the possessive *'s* provide morphological clues in identifying them as nouns. Although this is helpful, not all nouns can form the plural, nor can all nouns can take the possessive *'s* inflection. In addition, a concern for ESL/EFL learners is how to distinguish the plural *-s* from the 3rd person singular present *-s*, particularly as they are pronounced identically. Finally, as we discuss below, not all nouns can take the possessive *'s* inflection.

***What exactly does the possessive 's inflection tell us?***

### 3.1.3.3 Possessive 's

Traditional definitions of possessive *'s* define this inflectional ending as something added to certain nouns to show possession or ownership. In reality, the *'s* indicates more than possession or ownership. It can also convey the meaning of originator or inventor as in:

Darwin's theory of evolution  
Edison's light bulb  
Stephen King's novels

Possessive *'s* can also describe something related to a characteristic as in:

the soldier's courage  
the killer's obsession

It can also be a description in itself as in:

children's literature  
the women's movement

***Can all nouns can take the possessive 's?***

Not all nouns can take the possessive *'s*. Nouns that can take the possessive *'s* are generally those referring to:

- people
- time
- animals
- collective nouns

Nouns that generally do not take the possessive *'s* are **inanimate** nouns, although there are certain inanimate nouns that do take the possessive *'s*. These are generally collective nouns that refer to groups of people such as *company, team, committee, or government*.

Most inanimate nouns take *of* phrases to show possession, as in *the back of the desk* and not *\*the desk's back*. Like many other examples in English that we will see, there are many exceptions to this “rule.” We say, for instance, *the book's cover*, although you can also use an *of* phrase here.

While ESL/EFL learners may want to know exactly when they can or cannot use the possessive 's, there is no hard and fast rule for them to follow, only general guidelines. When ESL/EFL learners do use the possessive 's where native speakers would not, such errors are not serious. They generally do not cause misunderstandings and are rarely stigmatized by native speakers.

At this point we leave our brief overview of clues for identifying words as nouns, and turn to Sect. 3.2 to explore the different types of nouns.

## 3.2 Section 2: Count, Non-Count, and Crossover Nouns

### *Why can we say an animal but not an advice?*

One way to classify nouns is by categorizing them as *count* or *non-count* nouns. Simply put, count nouns refer to those nouns that can be counted and non-count nouns to those that cannot be counted.

### 3.2.1 Count Nouns

Count nouns have both singular and plural forms, for example, *animal*, *animals*, or *book*, *books*. Plural count nouns take a plural verb and are replaced with plural pronouns:

*Books* are interesting. → *They* are interesting.  
Some *animals* live in the wild. → *They* live in the wild.

Only count nouns have plural forms. The regular plural is the *-s* inflection attached to the end of the count nouns, although there are a few exceptions. A number of irregular nouns change the internal vowel, add irregular plural endings, or undergo other spelling changes. There are also count nouns that do not have plural forms, such as *1 sheep*, *2 sheep*, or *10 deer*, *15 deer*. Some nouns always end in *s* but are not plural as in *series* or *genius*.

#### Examples: Irregular Plurals

irregular plural ending		vowel change		f → ves		no change
basis	bases	child	children	leaf	leaves	sheep
phenomenon	phenomena	foot	feet	wife	wives	aircraft
syllabus	syllabi	mouse	mice	shelf	shelves	series

Many irregular nouns are nouns that have been borrowed from Latin or Greek and take the Latin or Greek plural formation. Over time, there has been a tendency for these nouns to adopt the regular English plural *-s* inflection. Therefore, we see words such as *syllabus* that have two plural forms, the original *syllabi* and the English *syllabuses*.

Since irregular nouns are limited exceptions, they are not difficult very difficult for ESL/EFL learners. At times, learners may generalize the plural *-s* inflection and produce words such as *\*childrens*.

Try Discovery Activity 1 to see how much you know about plural nouns and nouns ending in *s*. Check your answers in a dictionary if you are not sure of a word.

### Discovery Activity 1: Nouns and *s*

1. Look at the following list of words.
2. Identify which nouns are plural and which ones are nouns that simply end in *s*.

*Example:*

linguistics	noun that ends in <i>s</i>		
fans	plural word		
genius	chess	jeans	news
clothes	parts	fans	alias
admirers	scissors	syllabus	summons

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 1

As this Discovery Activity illustrates, not all nouns that end in *s* are plural. Words such as *jeans*, *clothes*, and *scissors* are nouns with only plural forms; other words such as *genius* and *syllabus* simply end in *s* with no plural meaning attached to the *s*. Since there are relatively few nouns that follow this pattern, it is not difficult for learners of English to become familiar with the most common of these and to use them correctly.

### 3.2.2 Non-Count Nouns

Non-count nouns refer to things we cannot count, such as abstract concepts, general nouns, or units. We will look shortly at the types of non-count nouns in greater depth, but for now, we will use this very general definition.

Non-count nouns have only one noun form, for example, *relaxation* but not *\*relaxations*; *rice* but not *\*rices*. Because non-count nouns cannot be counted, they do not occur with *a/an* or precise numbers, such as *two*, *three*, etc. Non-count nouns always take a singular verb because there is no plural form and are replaced by a singular pronoun.

**Advice** *is* helpful. → **It** *is* useful.

Look at the box below to help clarify the difference between count and non-count nouns. If you look at the words in the left-hand column, you will notice that you can add a number before each one. You can also add the inflectional *-s* plural ending. If you look at the right-hand column, you will see that you can't add any numbers or the plural *-s* inflection (e.g., we can't say *\*three advices*).

Count Nouns	Non-Count Nouns
cookie	advice
answer	information
letter	air
wall	input
map	weather
drawer	harm
calendar	recreation

In Discovery Activity 2, see how well you can distinguish between count and non-count nouns. For this activity, the answers are not provided because you can check the words in a dictionary. If there is no plural form given, it is a non-count noun.

**Discovery Activity 2: Count Versus Non-Count Nouns**

Look at the words below.

1. If the word is a count noun, label it **C**.
2. If the word a non-count noun, label it **NC**.

*Examples:*

cat **C** happiness **NC**

carrot	knowledge	garbage
chalk	anger	scanner
muscle	blog	health
soap	raindrop	sadness

**What about a loaf of bread or a slice of bread? Aren't these count nouns?**

The non-count noun *bread* is still a non-count noun. What has happened is that we have added a quantifying phrase, *a loaf* or *a slice*, before the non-count noun *bread*.

Many non-count nouns can be quantified, that is, made countable by adding certain phrases before them: *a grain of sand*, *three bottles of water*, *a piece of advice*. When one of these phrases comes before a noun, we call the entire group of words a noun phrase.

Phrase	+	Noun	=	Noun Phrase
<i>a or the</i> bit of		information		<i>a or the</i> bit of information
<i>a or the</i> loaf of		bread		<i>a or the</i> loaf of bread
<i>a or the</i> piece of		cheese		<i>a or the</i> piece of cheese

In Discovery Activity 3, try adding an appropriate quantifying phrase to the non-count nouns. For most of the non-count nouns in this Discovery Activity, you will find that there is more than one possibility. You can compare your answers with those in the Answer Key.

**Discovery Activity 3: Adding Quantifying Phrases to Non-Count Nouns**

Provide at least one quantifying phrase that you can use with each non-count noun below.

*Example:*

bread: a slice of a loaf of a piece of

1. ham
2. paper
3. butter
4. water
5. hair
6. wisdom
7. intelligence
8. grass

*Is there any way to classify or categorize different types of non-count nouns?*

**3.2.2.1 Subcategories of Non-Count Nouns**

In looking at the non-count nouns in Discovery Activity 3, you will notice that they refer to different types of non-count nouns. *Wisdom*, for instance, is something we refer to as an abstract concept. *Water*, on the other hand, is a liquid. To help

ESL/EFL learners understand non-count nouns, we generally classify them into three major different subcategories: **abstract**, **mass**, and **collective nouns**.

***What is the difference between an abstract, mass, or collective noun?***

**Mass nouns** include those nouns that cannot be counted and that refer to larger units or categories. These include nouns such as *furniture*, *cheese*, or *grass*. The noun *furniture*, for instance, is the larger unit or category including items such as tables, chairs, sofas, beds, and similar items. Mass nouns are also nouns that refer to undifferentiated substances such as liquids, gases, and solids like *water*, *oil*, and *bread*.

**Abstract nouns** are nouns that refer to ideas, concepts, emotions, beliefs, precepts, or intangible phenomena such as *intelligence*, *hate*, *fear*, and *honesty*. These cannot be counted because they do not refer to anything that has substance or that we can touch.

**Collective nouns** include words that refer to sets or groups, such as *audience*, *press*, *committee*, or *faculty*. *Audience* or *faculty* can be thought of as a set, for instance, because each word refers to a group of persons or individuals.

In American English, collective nouns generally take a singular verb, but in British English they take a plural verb.

Collective Nouns	
American English	British English
The committee <i>meets</i> at 10 a.m.	The committee <i>meet</i> at 10 a.m.
The <i>press has</i> become intrusive.	The <i>press have</i> become intrusive.

### 3.2.2.2 Structure Words and Non-Count Nouns

Different structure words signal different types of nouns. Count nouns can occur alone or with determiners, such as articles (*the*, *a*, or *an*) and expressions (e.g., *a few*, *several*, *some*). Non-count nouns can be preceded by noun signal phrases that are countable (e.g., *a slice of bread*, *a ball of yarn*, or *a quart of oil*).

Look at the chart below to see how the count noun *animal* takes different noun signals than the non-count noun *advice*.

Structure Words Accompanying Nouns: Animal (Count) Versus Advice (Non-Count)			
animal		advice	
<b>an</b> animal	<i>an, the</i>	<b>the</b> advice	only <i>the</i> (no <i>an</i> )
<b>the</b> animal			
animals	plural <i>-s</i>		no plural form
<b>this</b> animal	<i>this, that</i>	<b>this</b> advice	only <i>this, that</i> (no <i>these, those</i> )
<b>that</b> animal		<b>that</b> advice	
<b>these</b> animals	<i>these, those</i>		
<b>those</b> animals			
<b>many</b> animals	<i>many</i>	<b>much</b> advice	<i>much</i>
<b>a few</b> animals	<i>a few, few</i>	<b>a little</b> advice	<i>a little, little</i>
<b>few</b> animals		<b>little</b> advice	
<b>three</b> animals	exact number		no numbers

As you can see, count and non-count words are preceded by different structure words. Because knowledge of count and non-count nouns is part of their innate grammar, native speakers automatically know which structure words go with which type of noun. ESL/EFL learners, in contrast, must learn both what count and non-count nouns are and which structure words accompany which type of noun. We will look at this more closely in Sect. 3.3.

***Do ESL/EFL learners have difficulty understanding when a noun is “countable”?***

- ***Learner difficulties***

Native speakers are generally not consciously aware of the distinction between count and non-count nouns but, for ESL/EFL learners, this can be a difficult concept. For one, conceptualizing which nouns are count or non-count is difficult for speakers whose native languages have different ways of looking at nouns. In some languages, nouns are categorized according to whether they are animate or inanimate; in other languages, nouns are categorized according to shape and size. In many languages, nouns are not categorized at all.

For some ESL/EFL learners, using phrases such as *a bit of* or *a piece of* make a non-count noun countable in their minds. Other ESL/EFL learners conceptualize a non-count noun such as *information* or *advice* as countable in and of itself and produce such utterances as *\*informations* or *\*advices*.

It is important for ESL/EFL learners to gain an understanding of the distinction between count and non-count nouns because knowing which type of noun a given word is affects other sentence elements, such as verbs, determiners, and quantifiers.

***What else do I need to teach my ESL/EFL learners about nouns?***

Look at the following sentence:

Michale Chiarello was introduced to flavored **oils** in the kitchen of his *nonna*, who would put a spoonful of olive **oil** infused with dried tomatoes in her tomato sauce. [Gugino, S. (2006, November 30). Tastes: Flavored oils. *The Wine Spectator*, p. 19.]

You may be wondering why *oil*, which is generally categorized as a non-count noun, has a countable counterpart, *oils*. This is an example of what we can call a *crossover noun*.

*What is a crossover noun?*

### 3.2.3 Crossover Nouns

The term *crossover noun* refers to nouns that have both count and non-count meanings. In the sentence above, *flavored oils* refers to different oils that are flavored by a variety of herbs and spices. *A spoonful of oil* refers to the general liquid and is preceded by the quantifying phrase *a spoonful*.

Similarly, when we refer to *gas* as in *The car needs gas*, we are using this noun in its non-count sense. When scientists refer to the different types of this substance, they talk about *gases* and use this noun in a count sense as in the phrase *the gases surrounding Jupiter*.

In short, a crossover noun is a count noun when used to describe **members** of a set, category, class, or group. It is non-count noun when used in its **general sense** to name a set, category, class, or group.

*Does this explanation cover all examples of crossover nouns?*

In some instances, non-count nouns and count nouns may have somewhat different meanings. Speakers may refer to the metal *iron* and be using the word in its non-count sense; however, when they press their clothes, they use *an iron*, which is a count noun.<sup>1</sup>

*Is it easy for ESL/EFL learners to understand crossover nouns?*

- *Learner difficulties*

The difficulty with crossover nouns for learners is that while the grammatical explanations governing count versus non-count usage may be clear, the actual use of count and non-count nouns may be more difficult. With practice, ESL/EFL learners can usually grasp the idea of such countable items as *chair*, *table*, or *sofa* as concrete things comprising part of the non-count category *furniture*. They can usually also understand that a sign in the supermarket advertising *chicken* refers to a type of food while a picture of a barnyard will show the individual creature (*a chicken*).

It becomes more confusing for learners when they encounter less commonly used crossover nouns. While crossover nouns are generally not a concern for beginning- or intermediate-level ESL/EFL learners, as these learners become more proficient and encounter more sophisticated vocabulary, they will encounter more crossover nouns. To take one example, *yarn*, when referring to the material, is a non-count noun, but its use to describe a type of entertaining

<sup>1</sup>Although this meaning of *iron* has little in common with the metal, the count noun is derived from the fact that the original tool for pressing clothes was made of iron.

story or tale is less common. This count meaning of *yarn* is not obviously related to the non-count meaning, even though speakers may refer to the idiom *spinning a yarn*, which has historic roots in the non-count meaning.

Discovery Activity 4 practices distinguishing count, non-count, and crossover nouns. As you complete this activity, think about using the different words in different contexts. The answers are in the Answer Key.

#### Discovery Activity 4: Count and Non-Count Nouns

Look at the series of nouns:

sense coffee hair concern music thunder experience

1. Which ones are only non-count nouns?
2. Which ones can be used as both count and non-count nouns?
  - Discuss whether or not they have different meanings if they have both count and non-count uses.
  - Discuss which phrases could be used before any of the non-count nouns to make them countable.

*Example:* bread

- non-count noun
- We can say *a loaf* or *loaves of bread* to refer to one or more units.
- We can also say *a slice* or *slices of bread* to refer to individual pieces of bread.
- *Bread* can also be used as a count noun and made plural: *That bakery sells breads from around the world*; in this example *breads* refers to the different types of bread baked in different countries.

### 3.3 Section 3: Structure Words that Signal Nouns

#### 3.3.1 Noun Signals

There are certain words that precede nouns and therefore act to signal a noun. In this next section, we will consider some of the structure class words that signal nouns. We begin with articles, then turn to demonstratives, and conclude with quantifiers. All three types of noun signals are often classified as *determiners*.

### 3.3.1.1 Articles: *the*, *a*, *an*

English has two articles, *the* and *a/an*. When articles combine with nouns, they form *noun phrases*:

Article	+	Noun	=	Noun Phrase
a		cat		a cat
an		elephant		an elephant
the		creature		the creature

#### Definite article *the*

English has one definite article: *the*. This definite article signals a noun and tells us that a specific noun is being referred to. It does not refer to something general. For example, compare these two sentences:

We like movies.

We like *the* movies at Cinema 20.

In the first sentence, we do not put *the* before *movies* because we are referring to movies in the general sense of a type of activity we enjoy. In the second sentence, we use *the* before *movies* because we are referring to the specific type or genre or selection of movies shown at this movie theater.

*The* may be used with a singular or plural noun. It may be used before singular count nouns to refer to a type of person or a thing in general when referring to a category or type. *The* is also used with certain place names such as *the United States*, *the City of New York*, *the University of South Florida*, *the Golden Gate Bridge*, and *the Library of Congress*.

Try Discovery Activity 5 and see how well you do in recognizing the function of *the*. Discuss your answers with your classmates.

#### Discovery Activity 5: *the*

Describe how *the* functions in the following excerpts:

**A.**

The boys met **the** professor outside **the** main door of **the** Bristol Library at five p.m., as they usually did. All three of them were hungry, so they went to **the** center of town to find a restaurant. [Bellairs, J. (1990). *The secret of the underground room* (p. 62). New York: Puffin Books.]

**B.**

**The** computer is to **the** typewriter what **the** typewriter was to **the** pencil.

### Indefinite article *a/an*

English also has an indefinite article that speakers use when referring to something that is not specified, vague, uncertain, or undefined. It is used with a singular count noun.

This indefinite article has two forms, depending on the initial vowel *sound* of the word following the indefinite article. If the noun or adjective begins with a vowel sound, then we use the form **an** as in **an icicle** or **an early meeting**. If the word begins with a consonant sound, we use the form **a** as in **a cup** or **a happy girl**.

It is important to point out to ESL/EFL learners that the initial letter of the word does not necessarily indicate that the word has a vowel or consonant sound. Consider these words:

*hour herb home horse*

All four words are written with an initial *h*, which is not pronounced in all of them. In *hour* and *herb*, the *h* is not pronounced in American English and must therefore be preceded by *an*. *Home* or *horse*, on the other hand, are both written and pronounced with the initial *h* consonant.

At lower levels of proficiency, ESL/EFL learners need to practice distinguishing between words spelled with a vowel but pronounced with a consonant sound (e.g., *university*, *one*) so that they can correctly choose between *a* and *an*. While they may make some errors in choosing between *a* and *an*, especially as beginning language learners, these are not major errors. The next Discovery Activity focuses on a greater concern for ESL/EFL learners: When do we use articles and for what purpose?

#### Discovery Activity 6: Articles

Look at the following excerpt.

To drive a nail, hold it upright and tap it gently with a hammer, then take your hand away. Holding the hammer near the end of its handle, simply lift it, swinging your forearm from the elbow and let the weight of the head drop the hammer. [Reader's Digest. (1973). *New complete do-it-yourself manual* (p. 23). Pleasantville, New York: Reader's Digest.]

1. Underline all the articles (*a*, *an*, *the*). Explain the use of each article.
2. Discuss whether or not you could substitute one article for another (e.g., use *the* in place of *a/an*).
  - If yes, discuss how the meaning of the sentence would change.
  - If no, discuss why you cannot substitute one article for another in this instance.

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 6

This excerpt is from a how-to guide. Since the intent is to explain home repair and maintenance procedures, the selection begins with non-specific, general reference to the things used (*a nail, a hammer*) in hammering a nail:

To drive a nail, hold it upright and tap it gently with a hammer, then take your hand away.

Once reference has been made to something, it becomes a specific or definite thing in the mind of the speaker:

Holding the hammer near the end of its handle, simply lift it, swinging your forearm from the elbow and let the weight of the head drop the hammer.

If this “something” has different parts to it (e.g., *hammer*), then these parts are also something specific or definite (e.g., *the end of its handle*).

Because this how-to guide is explaining to the reader how to accomplish a particular task, *the* is also used before anything belonging to the reader’s body used in this task (e.g., *the elbow*).

In this selection, substituting *a* or *an* for *the* would sound strange to a native speaker because of the reference to specific things.

### ***This doesn’t seem that complicated, so why do many ESL/EFL learners have problems with articles?***

To answer this question, compare the use of the articles *a/an* and *the* in Discovery Activity 6 with their use in the following sentences:

A collection of lines in **an** image can narrow **the** odds even further. For example, **a** set of parallel lines or near-parallel is seldom **an** accident. Nonparallel lines in **the** world rarely project near-parallel lines in **an** image. [Pinker, S. (1997). *How the mind works* (p. 244). New York: Norton.]

In the first sentence, *a* and *an* can be replaced with *the*, although the meaning changes:

**The** collection of lines in **the** image can narrow **the** odds even further.

Now, rather than referring to any collection or any image, the writer has a specific collection and image in mind, possibly those found on the page of the text in which this passage appears.

In the phrase *the odds*, *the* cannot be changed because *the odds* is a set expression or idiomatic phrase, adding another potential area of confusion to language learners.

We can also change the next sentence:

For example, **the** set of parallel lines or near parallel is seldom *an* accident.

Notice that *the* can replace *a* before *set*, changing the meaning from general to specific. In the next part of the sentence, we cannot change *an accident* to *the accident* because there is no previous reference to make that accident a specific one. Let's now see how we might change the last sentence:

Non-parallel lines in **the** world rarely project near-parallel lines in **the** image.

As in the previous sentence, *the* can replace *a* before *image* in this new context. *The world*, cannot, however change to *a world*. Here, from a native speaker's perspective, there is a particular world, that is, *the* world in which we live. For non-native speakers of English, particularly for those whose languages do not have articles, this is often a difficult perspective to comprehend and internalize.

Discovery Activity 6 and this discussion illustrate the complexity of information an ESL/EFL learner must keep in mind when trying to use articles correctly—not an easy task, especially when the learner's language does not have articles.

***Are articles only used with count nouns?***

So far we have seen examples of article use with count nouns. For non-count nouns, we can also use an article, but only *the*:

I want fruit.

I want *the* fruit by that sign.

In both sentences, *fruit* is a non-count noun. The first sentence does not include *the* before *fruit*, but the second sentence does. Why is this?

In *I want fruit*, the speaker is referring to the general class or category known as *fruit*. The speaker is using *fruit* in a generic sense. In *I want the fruit by the sign*, the speaker is not referring to any fruit in general but specifying a particular kind or instance of this category, namely *the fruit by the sign*.

- ***Learner difficulties***

Article usage is particularly difficult for ESL/EFL learners whose native language does not have articles, such as Chinese or Russian. These learners face the greatest difficulties in correct article usage in English since they must learn to understand both the concept of articles as well as the nuances and subtleties of article usage. Such learners have great difficulty, even at the most advanced levels, in choosing which article to use in which situation.

There are many books that offer detailed rules governing the use of articles, but learners often find these confusing and hard to learn. Offering learners frequent opportunities to practice the use of articles in a variety of contexts and to discuss their difficulties with them when they make repeated errors of the same type can help learners improve their use of articles.

### 3.3.1.2 Demonstratives: *this, that, these, those*

Demonstratives are another group of words signaling nouns. Demonstratives precede nouns and indicate relative location or position. The class consists of four words: *this, that, these, and those*. The choice depends on two factors:

- Is the noun singular or plural? (Non-count nouns, since they have no plural forms, can only take the singular demonstratives *this* or *that*.)
- How far or close is the noun relative to the speaker's mental and/or physical perception?

When speakers refer to *this book*, they are generally thinking of one book (as opposed to several or many books) physically close to them or of one book in particular which they have been reading or discussing. When speakers refer to *this idea*, they are referring to a mental distance. When speakers refer to *those houses*, they are referring to houses farther away, either physically or mentally.

In addition to referring how far or close something is in the mind of the speaker, demonstratives can also refer to time, to preceding text, and to a new entity.

Discovery Activities 7 and 8 practice demonstratives. The first, Discovery Activity 7, is easier and uses teacher-made sentences. A discussion follows this Discovery Activity. The second Discovery Activity is more difficult since it uses authentic excerpts.

#### Discovery Activity 7: Demonstratives

Look at the sentences.

1. Underline the demonstratives *this, that, these, and those*.
2. Discuss the use of *this, that, these, and those*.
  - (a) I enjoyed reading this book by Brown, but I didn't really like that other one by him because I didn't think the ending was very good.
  - (b) Those boys hanging out by the supermarket are not nearly as friendly as these boys are.
  - (c) Two women looking at the web page of new movie trailers on the IMDB website:

Olivia: Have you seen this new movie? (pointing to one trailer)

Norah: I haven't seen it, but I saw that other movie with Keira Knightly.

(pointing to a different trailer)

#### Discussion: Discovery Activity 7

##### Sentence a

The speaker is differentiating between two things, one physically closer than the other one by *this* and *that*.

Sentence b

The speaker is again indicating relative physical location of two groups of people by the use of *those* versus *these*.

Sentence c

Olivia uses *this* to identify the particular trailer she is looking at.

Natalie uses *that* to indicate a different movie trailer on the same web page.

In Discovery Activity 7, the use of the demonstratives can be easily explained by the notion of distance. Things that are close to the speaker are referred to as *this* (singular) or *these* (plural). Things that are farther away from the speaker are referred to as *that* (singular) or *those* (plural). This is the type of explanation generally presented to low-level language learners and certainly quite effective in that it can be easily demonstrated visually.

As learners become more proficient in English, they need to become aware of the metaphorical uses of these demonstratives. Frequently, they are used to refer to *mental* or *perceived* distance, which refers to the distance in the mind of the speaker. Since this is a psychological reference, it is a subjective type of distance and one that can be more difficult for learners to grasp.

Discovery Activity 8 is more challenging than Discovery Activity 7. For Part I, the answers are in the Answer Key. For Part II, compare your answers with those of your classmates.

### Discovery Activity 8: More with Demonstratives

#### Part I

1. Look at the excerpts and underline the demonstratives *this*, *that*, *these*, and *those*.

#### A.

College does seem to have a substantial net effect in the area of critical thinking. However, research on that topic has often not been controlled for age. [Abbott, A. (2003, October). The Zen of education. *The University of Chicago Magazine*, 96, p. 54.]

#### B.

“There’s no telescreen!” he could not help murmuring. ..“Ah,” said the old man, “I never had one of those things.” [Orwell, G. (1949). *Nineteen eighty-four* (p. 82). New York: Signet.]

#### C.

“Who wants these little pains? We all have them and we’d all be rid of them if we could. By all means, let’s go to this woman if she’s here, and those guards let us pass. [Ishiguro, K. (2015). *The buried giant*. New York: Knopf.]

**D.**

Winston came across to examine the picture. It was a steel engraving of an oval building with rectangular windows, and a small tower in front. "I know that building," said Winston finally. [Orwell, G. (1949). *Nineteen eighty-four* (p. 83). New York: Signet.]

**Part II**

Look at the demonstratives you underlined.

2. Discuss the use of *this*, *that*, *these*, and *those*.
3. Compare the use of *this*, *that*, *these*, and *those* in this activity with their use in Discovery Activity 7.
  - Could you explain the demonstratives in the same way? Explain why or why not.

**3.3.1.3 Quantifiers**

Quantifiers are the last group of words preceding nouns that we will examine. Quantifiers function to indicate a general number or quantity. They include words such as *some*, *many*, *much*, *few*, *a few*, *little*, *a little*, *a lot of*, *no*, and *less*. When we talk about *many books*, we are talking about a large number of books rather than a small number. When a speaker says, "*I have less time than I thought*," the hearer knows that this person is referring to a small quantity or amount of time.

Some quantifiers, such as *many* or *fewer*, can only be used with count nouns and others, such as *much* or *less*, can only be used with non-count nouns. Still others, such as *some*, can be used for plural count nouns or non-count nouns.

This next Discovery Activity asks you to decide on the grammaticality of sentences with *much* or *many* and to think about why you made the decisions you did. The answers for this Discovery Activity can be found in the Answer Key at the end of the chapter.

### Discovery Activity 9: *much, many*

Look at the following sentences.

1. Label the sentences that sound ungrammatical to you with an asterisk (\*).
  - (a) The Botanical Garden has many flowers from all over the world.
  - (b) Did it take much effort to collect these flowers?
  - (c) Much of the plants were donated by collectors.
  - (d) Many time has been devoted to gathering the plants and flowers.
  - (e) Has the Botanical Garden received many support from the town?
  - (f) It is encouraging that many people support the gardens.
  - (g) Much dollars have been raised during the fundraising campaign.
2. Look at all the sentences you considered grammatical that contain *many*.
  - What kinds of nouns follow *many*?
  - What grammatical feature(s) do they have in common?
3. Look at all the sentences you considered grammatical that contain *much*.
  - What kinds of nouns follow *much*?
  - What grammatical feature(s) do they have in common?
4. Revisit all the sentences.
  - What generalization can you make about the use of *many* and *much*?

- ***Learner difficulties***

For ESL/EFL learners, the correct use of *much* and *many* requires understanding the concept of count versus non-count nouns and knowing which noun belongs in which category. The problem is compounded by the fact that *much* and *many* occur far less frequently than do *a lot of* or *lots of*, both of which can be used with count and non-count nouns.

Earlier in this chapter we posed the question of why the distinction between count and non-count nouns is important for ESL/EFL learners. As our exploration of different noun signals in Sect. 3.3 has demonstrated, certain structure words accompany either count or non-count nouns. Understanding this distinction helps learners make appropriate language choices.

We now turn to the last part in this chapter, Sect. 3.4, in which we examine pronouns.

### 3.4 Section 4: Pronouns

The most common definition of a pronoun is a word that replaces a noun or noun phrase. A noun phrase includes a noun and all of its modifiers. These modifiers include determiners and adjectives:

Noun Phrase + Verb	Pronoun + Verb
<i>Jerry</i> reads.	→ <b>He</b> reads.
<i>The boy</i> reads.	
<i>The little boy</i> reads.	
<i>The happy little boy</i> reads.	
<i>The very happy little boy</i> reads.	

As we see here, these noun phrases, regardless of the number of words, can be replaced by the pronoun *he*.

Discovery Activity 10 asks you to change noun phrases into pronouns (the answers can be found in the Answer Key). This is a teacher-made activity with no authentic excerpts, so you may find it very easy. If you are sure you know what noun phrases are and do not feel you need this activity, continue on to the next section.

#### Discovery Activity 10: Pronouns

Look at the following sentences.

1. Underline the noun phrases.
2. Substitute a pronoun for the underlined noun phrases.
  - (a) Lauren was married yesterday.
  - (b) The bride was elegantly dressed.
  - (c) The lovely white gown looked stunning.
  - (d) The nervous bridegroom wore black.
  - (e) The younger sisters and brothers were excited.
  - (f) A cousin was the flower girl.
  - (g) A well-organized, lavish reception was held later.
  - (h) My mother, my father, my older brother, and I were invited.

### 3.4.1 Types of Pronouns

#### *What are the different types of English pronouns?*

There are several different types of pronouns, each type serving a different function in the sentence. In this section, we will look at four types of pronouns: subject, object, possessive, and indefinite.

#### 3.4.1.1 Subject Pronouns

In Discovery Activity 11, you replaced all the noun phrases with *subject* pronouns. Pronouns that are found to the **left** of the main verb are called subject pronouns because they tell us who or what the doer of the verb is, or who or what is described by the verb.

Subject Pronouns	
singular	plural
I	we
you	you
he, she, it	they

In English we use eight subject pronouns, although there are only seven different pronoun forms. The 2nd person pronoun *you* can refer to either a singular or plural person; context indicates whether the singular or plural pronoun *you* is intended. Again, we see that in English form does not equal function.

In southern regions of the United States many speakers frequently use *you all* or its contracted form *ya'll* as a 2nd person plural pronoun. Another dialectal variation for plural *you* found in some parts of the United States is *youse*. While *you all/ya'll* is an accepted variant in the American South, *youse* is considered non-standard and is a stigmatized form.

#### 3.4.1.2 Object Pronouns

Object pronouns are pronouns that replace nouns or noun phrases in the object position in the sentence. Object position means that the noun or noun phrase receives the action of the verb. Compare the following:

Sentence	Description of Noun Phrase	Discussion
The girl reads.	noun phrase in subject position	<i>The girl</i> is subject of verb <i>reads</i>
She reads.	subject pronoun	<i>The girl</i> refers to single female person, so subject pronoun is <i>she</i> . The noun phrase <i>The girl</i> answers the question <i>Who reads?</i> , a question that helps tell us who (or what) the subject of the verb is.
The girl reads books.	noun phrase in object position	<i>books</i> is object of verb <i>reads</i> .
She reads them.	pronoun in object position	<i>books</i> refers to a plural object, so the object pronoun is <i>them</i> . The noun phrase <i>books</i> answers the question <i>What does the girl (or she) read?</i> , a question that helps tell us what (or who) the object of the verb is.

Like the subject pronouns, there are eight object pronouns, although there are only seven different forms. The object pronoun *you* is the same for both singular and plural. The subject and object pronouns *you* and *it* are identical in form, although not in function.

Object Pronouns	
singular	plural
me	us
you	you
him, her, it	them

Because *you* and *it* have the same pronoun form in both subject and object positions, low-proficiency ESL/EFL learners sometimes become confused as to the function of these two pronouns.

### 3.4.1.3 Possessive Pronouns and Possessive Adjectives

Possessives comprise a third group of pronouns. This group is generally divided into two subgroups, based on the function of the possessive pronouns in a sentence. The first subset is generally known as *possessive adjectives* and the second set as *possessive pronouns*.

Possessive adjectives and possessive pronouns are similar because they both refer to possession or ownership. The distinction between the two groups lies in what does or does not follow. Possessive adjectives are followed by a noun or noun phrase. They form *part* of a noun phrase:

This is **my** book.

Possessive adjectives do not replace nouns or noun phrases. In the sentence, *This is my book*, *my* is modifying or describing something about *book*. *My* is not replacing *book*.

Possessive pronouns stand alone. Like any pronoun, possessive pronouns replace a noun or noun phrase:

It is **mine**.

In this sentence *mine* replaces the noun phrase *my book* in the previous sentence.

Possessive Adjectives	Possessive Pronouns
my	<b>mine</b>
your	yours
his	his
her	hers
its	its (rare) <sup>a</sup>
our	ours
their	theirs

<sup>a</sup>*Its* as a possessive pronoun is rare, occurring primarily in expressions with *own* (e.g., *The robot developed a mind of its own*)

Use Discovery Activity 11 to practice distinguishing between the possessive adjectives and the possessive pronouns. The answers are at the end of the chapter in the Answer Key. If you are comfortable in your ability to distinguish them, proceed to the next section.

### Discovery Activity 11: Possessive Adjectives Versus Possessive Pronouns

Look at the following sentences.

The **possessive adjectives** are **bolded**.

The **possessive pronouns** are *italicized*.

Compare the underlined and italicized words in Group A and in Group B.

- How are they similar?
- How are they different?
- Why do you think they are considered two subsets within the same category?

Group A	Group B
I like <b>my</b> car.	I like <i>mine</i> .
You lost <b>your</b> book.	You lost <i>yours</i> .
The man sold <b>his</b> computer.	The man sold <i>his</i> .
That woman knows <b>her</b> priorities.	That woman knows <i>hers</i> .
That dog hurt <b>its</b> paw.	_____
We want <b>our</b> share.	We want <i>ours</i> .
They forgot <b>their</b> appointment.	They forgot <i>theirs</i> .

***Why do ESL/EFL learners have difficulties with possessive adjectives and possessive pronouns?***

- ***Learner difficulties***

For learners of English, difficulties in the use of possessive adjectives and possessive pronouns arise for several reasons. First, there are the similarities in form between the subject and object pronouns. The possessive pronouns and the possessive adjectives are also similar in form, which often make them confusing for ESL/EFL learners.

Second, English pronoun forms distinguish between gender when the pronoun refers back to a female or male subject. In *Amanda sees her brother* or *Tom brought his friend*, the possessive adjectives *her* and *his* refer to *Amanda* (female) and *Tom* (male) respectively. In some languages where all nouns have gender, the possessive adjectives and pronouns change according to the noun they are modifying or replacing and not to the subject as in English. Contrast these English and French sentences:

Amanda sees <b>her</b> book	Amanda = female person The pronoun <i>her</i> agrees with <i>Amanda</i> .
Amanda voit <b>son</b> livre.	<i>livre</i> = masculine noun The pronoun <i>son</i> agrees with <i>livre</i>

Learners whose native languages have patterns similar to French may have trouble choosing the correct possessive adjective form in English.

#### **3.4.1.4 Reflexive Pronouns**

Reflexive pronouns are somewhat different from the pronouns we have explored up to now because reflexive pronouns do not substitute for a noun or noun phrase. Instead, reflexive pronouns are generally used to refer back to the subject:

*The actress admired herself* in the mirror.

Reflexive pronouns are also be used for emphasis:

*I myself* would never do that.  
*I* would never do that *myself*.

When using a reflexive pronoun for emphasis, it can immediately follow the subject as in the first sentence or come at the end, as in the second sentence.

In addition, when a reflexive pronoun is used with *by*, it usually means on one's own, alone, or independently:

*Joe can't answer the question by himself.*

***What are the forms of the reflexive pronouns?***

The reflexive pronouns vary according to person and number (singular/plural):

<b>Reflexive Pronouns</b>	
I	<b>myself</b>
you (singular)	<b>yourself</b>
he	<b>himself</b>
she	<b>herself</b>
it	<b>itself</b>
we	<b>ourselves</b>
you (plural)	<b>yourselves</b>
they	<b>themselves</b>

The singular forms all end in *-self*; the plurals in *-selves*. Note that there are two forms for *you* in the reflexive: the singular *yourself* and the plural *yourselves*. This is one instance where English does make a distinction between the singular and plural *you*.

***What kinds of difficulties do ESL/EFL learners have with the reflexive pronouns?***

- ***Learner difficulties***

Less proficient learners, particularly those who speak languages that do not have the same pronoun distinctions as English, often confuse the use of the object pronoun and the reflexive pronoun, producing such sentences as:

\*She looked at *her* in the mirror.

### 3.4.1.5 Indefinite Pronouns

*Indefinite pronouns* comprise another subclass of pronouns. These pronouns are called indefinite because they do not refer to something or someone known or specific. Some grammar books call these pronouns compound pronouns because they are formed with two words:

<b>Indefinite Pronouns</b>			
	<b>-body</b>	<b>-one</b>	<b>-thing</b>
<b>some-</b>	somebody	someone	something
<b>any-</b>	anybody	anyone	anything
<b>every-</b>	everybody	everyone	everything
<b>no</b>	nobody	no one <sup>a</sup>	nothing

<sup>a</sup>Note that *no one* is the only indefinite pronoun spelled as two words.

Indefinite pronouns take the singular 3rd person verb form, as in this article title:

Is Anybody out There? Detection devices are in the works for rooting out extraterrestrial life [Brownlee, C. (2006, January 21). *Science News*, 16(3), 42.]

Or as in the song title by Citizen:

*Everybody Is Going to Heaven*

And in this quote from the action video game series *Assassin's Creed*<sup>®</sup>:

“Nothing Is True, Everything Is Permitted.”

In prescriptive, formal English, these indefinite pronouns when followed by a possessive pronoun take a singular form. As we discussed in Chap. 1, under the most traditional rules of formal English, the “correct” singular possessive pronoun has been the masculine form, *his*. With the movement toward more inclusive language, there has been acceptance of the use of *his or her* or *his/her*, and even *their* to avoid the awkwardness of using both singular forms. In everyday spoken and less formal written forms of English, the indefinite pronouns have long been followed by the more neutral plural possessive form *their*.

- ***Learner difficulties***

Native speakers and ESL/EFL learners both have difficulty with singular possessive pronoun, although for different reasons. Generally, native speakers require specific instruction in the use of the singular pronoun after the indefinite pronouns in formal English. Because English is a relatively gender-free language, there is a (natural) preference to use the gender-neutral plural form.

For ESL/EFL learners, confusion in the use of possessive pronouns with indefinite pronouns is part of the general difficulties they have with pronoun usage. In addition, learners exposed to casual spoken English may become confused between what they hear and read, and what they may have been taught in terms of appropriate or correct pronoun usage with indefinite pronouns.

For both ESL/EFL learners and native speakers, it is important to draw a distinction between informal and formal language, whether written or spoken. In addition, for test-taking purposes, learners should be aware of “correct” pronoun usage.

### 3.5 Summary

#### Nouns

To identify nouns we use:

- semantic clues
- structural clues
- morphological clues

There are three types of nouns:

- count
- non-count
- crossover

Two functions of nouns discussed in this chapter:

subject	<b>Cats</b> meow. <b>Students</b> study all night long.
direct object	Meg likes <b>books</b> . They have done <b>their assignment</b> .

## Pronouns

<b>Singular</b>					
	<b>subject</b>	<b>object</b>	<b>possessive adjectives<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>possessive pronouns</b>	<b>reflexive pronouns</b>
1st person singular	I	me	my	mine	myself
2nd person singular <sup>b</sup>	you	you	your	yours	yourself
3rd person singular, masculine	he	him	his	his	himself
3rd person singular, feminine	she	her	her	her	herself
3rd person singular, neuter	it	it	its	(not used)	itself
<b>Plural</b>					
1st person plural	we	us	our	ours	ourselves
2nd person plural	you	you	you	you	yourselves
3rd person plural	they	they	they	they	themselves

<sup>a</sup>Remember that although technically possessive adjectives are not pronouns, they are generally classified and taught together with the possessive pronouns because of their closely related function, meaning, and forms.

<sup>b</sup>No change except for reflexive

## Determiners

Determiners tell us:

- how many or which items the noun or noun phrase is referring to.
- signal that a noun or noun phrase is following.

<b>articles</b>	the, a/an
<b>possessive adjectives</b>	my, your, his, her, its, our, their
<b>demonstrative adjectives</b>	this, that, these, those
<b>quantifiers</b>	some, many, much, few, a few, little, a little, a lot of, no
<b>ordinal numbers</b>	one, two, three, fifteen, forty, one hundred

### Common Types of Non-Count Nouns<sup>a</sup>

<b>abstract</b>	information, advice, help, homework, love, hate, health, behavior, work, patience, experience, fun, beauty, democracy
<b>solids</b>	bread, meat, pasta, ice cream, cotton, silk, wool, iron, wood, glass, chalk, soap, detergent, butter, margarine, yogurt, cheese, chocolate, garlic, mustard, marble
<b>liquids</b>	oil, vinegar, soup, water, milk, coffee, juice, wine, beer, shampoo, conditioner, lotion, gasoline, blood, fuel, honey
<b>grains/powders</b>	rice, cereal, wheat, flour, sugar, salt, pepper, curry
<b>gases</b>	air, oxygen, carbon dioxide, smoke, smog, steam
<b>classes or categories</b>	furniture, food, fruit, luggage, baggage, mail, transportation, jewelry, trash, equipment
<b>weather</b>	weather, rain, snow, sleet, hail, ice, fog, haze, wind, thunder, lightning, sunshine, humidity
<b>fields of study</b>	linguistics, education, mathematics, engineering, biology, chemistry, informational technology, business, psychology

<sup>a</sup>Some of these may be crossover nouns (e.g., *democracy*, *meat*)

## 3.6 Practice Activities

### Activity 1: Nouns and Verbs

The words below can function as both nouns and verbs.

1. Write pairs of sentences contrasting their use.
2. Explain the clues we can use to help determine the function of the words in your sentences.

*Example:* badger

A *badger* lives underground.

Parents sometimes mother *badger* their children to clean their rooms.

In the first sentence, *badger* is a noun. There are two clues that *badger* is being used as a singular noun and that it is in subject position: the article *a* before *badger* and the position of *badger* before the verb *lives*. *A badger* is a noun phrase.

In the second sentence, *badger* is a verb. It is to the right of the subject noun phrase, *lives*, in the sentence position usually occupied by a verb.

Note that another clue here is the inflectional *-s*, which is attached to present tense singular verbs in English. Although this *-s* inflection could be confused with the plural *-s* inflection, the placement of *badger* in a sentence helps determine that it is a verb.

Now you try this activity with the following words:

- (a) fall
- (b) mail
- (c) time
- (d) drink
- (e) color

### **Activity 2: Articles**

#### **Part I**

1. Read Excerpt A and Excerpt B.
2. Underline the articles, *a*, *an*, and *the* in the two excerpts.
3. Discuss whether or not you could substitute one article for another, for example, can you use *the* in place of *a/an*?
  - If yes, discuss how the meaning of the sentence would change.
  - If no, discuss why you cannot substitute one article for another in this instance.

#### **A.**

There's much you can do to keep the plumbing in your home functioning well, as this chapter shows. Beginning with an overall description of a home plumbing system, the chapter goes on to describe the basics of repair and maintenance, showing how to deal with everything from a leaky faucet to an overflowing toilet. [Reader's Digest. (1973). *New complete do-it-yourself* (p. 197). Pleasantville, NY: Reader's Digest.]

#### **B.**

... lines that are parallel in the world, such as the edges of a telephone pole, almost always project near-parallel lines. So if there are near-parallel lines in an image, the odds favor parallel edges in the world. [Pinker, S. (1997). *How the mind works* (p. 244). New York: Norton.]

#### **Part II (optional follow-up)**

4. What similarities and/or differences do you see in the use of articles in Excerpts A and B?
5. What do you think would be difficult for learners of English whose native language does not have articles?
6. Discuss how you might use an excerpt such as one of these for teaching purposes.

### **Activity 3: Count, Non-Count, and Crossover Nouns**

As you have seen in this chapter, nouns in English can be classified into two broad categories, count and non-count nouns.

1. Discuss how you might explain the difference between count and non-count nouns to ESL/EFL students at a low to intermediate level of proficiency.

2. There are also many nouns in English that are crossover nouns. These are nouns that have both count and non-count meanings.
  - (a) In a Word document or on a sheet of paper, make three columns. Label the first column **Count Nouns**, the second column **Non-Count Nouns**, and the third column **Crossover Nouns**.
  - (b) Look at the nouns below and put each one into the appropriate column.
  - (c) For those nouns you listed under the column **Crossover Nouns**, discuss the differences between the count and non-count meanings.

experience sense poverty idea fear chalk flour foliage anger  
 difficulty concern blood skylight happiness time

#### *Activity 4: More on Nouns*

The sentences in the excerpts below include count, non-count, and crossover nouns.

1. Underline the nouns in the excerpts.
2. Label the count nouns with **C**.
3. Label non-count nouns with **NC**.
4. Label crossover nouns with **CR**.
5. Discuss why you identified some of the nouns as **CR**. Be specific and provide examples.

*Example:*

**CR** **C**  
Emotions, in particular, are often governed by cultural expectations.

*Emotion* is a crossover noun. When we talk about the general category of strong feelings, *emotion* is non-count noun. When we refer to specific strong feelings such as love, hate, or anger, *emotion* is a count noun. A clue that helps identify the count usage in this sentence is the plural *-s* ending of *emotions*.

#### **A.**

Unlike turkeys, chickens are not native to North America. However, they were easily transported from Europe and became a staple food in early settlements like Jamestown in Virginia. Ubiquitous and easy to raise, chicken became an important part of the Southern diet. [The World of Food. (2006, September 30). *Wine Spectator*, 31(8), p. 68.]

#### **B.**

Like Italian food, Italian olive oil is distinguishable by region. Oils from Tuscany are considered the benchmark. [The World of Food. (2006, September 30). *Wine Spectator*, 31(8), p. 100.]

**C.**

Spain produces an extraordinary range of wines. [The World of Food. (2006, September 30). *Wine Spectator*, 31(8), p. 108.]

**Activity 5: Error Analysis**

The following excerpts were written by learners of English. There are **four** types of errors in each paragraph:

- (a) article usage (*the, a/an*)
- (b) quantifiers (*much vs. many*)
- (c) singular vs. plural
- (d) personal pronoun use

Ignore **any other errors**, even though this may be difficult. Focus only on the four types of errors listed above.

1. Underline and correct each error you find.
2. Compare your responses with your classmates.

When you compare your responses with other native or near-native speakers, you may find some disagreement. For example, native speakers do not always agree in their use of *the*. This underscores again that the use of *the* is difficult for ESL/EFL learners.

*Example:*

Today there is the e-mail and the snail mail.  
Today there is *the* e-mail and *the* snail mail.

In this sentence, the learner is adding the article *the* before a non-count noun that is being used in a very general or generic sense.

**A.**

Snail mail is the nickname of regular mail. In the recent years more and more people use the e-mail. There are advantage and disadvantage of e-mail. Unfortunately, the e-mail also has it bad points because the senders can never send gifts or touchable stuffs to your friend and family.

**B.**

Working women in America face much kind of problems. The pressure from work affects her families. The women don't have as much opportunities as the men do. Men have the more opportunities in the workplace. And the women earn fewer money. But American women have much kind of pressure from work and from her families. The American women must take care of her children and do many houseworks when she gets home from his job.

**C.**

I think there are numerous benefits to traveling in groups with a tour guide. There is many informations about new places, but I need a specific one. Tour guides can give me good advices. People who want to travel alone should have many experiences about traveling before traveling alone. I don't have experiences, so I don't prefer to travel alone.

### 3.7 Answer Key

#### Discussion: Discovery Activity 3

Possible expressions of quantity include:

- a pound of
- a slice of
- an ounce of
- a sheet of
- a cup of
- a piece of
- a bit of
- a great deal of
- a blade of
- a strand of

Note that not all in the above list work with all the different non-count nouns in the activity. For example, *a strand of* may be used with *hair* but not with *butter*.

#### Discussion: Discovery Activity 4

- *Sense, hair, concern, and experience*: both count and non-count. When used as count nouns, they refer to individual faculties, pieces, items, interests, or events, as in:

*Pam has an acute sense of smell.*

The sentence refers to Pam's ability to smell.

*Pam has a sixth sense about trouble.*

The sentence refers to an additional (psychic) sense to people's five senses (see, smell, hear, touch and taste).

- *coffee*: also both count and non-count. It has become common for speakers to use such expressions as *a coffee, two milks, or three sugars*. These expressions have become a shorthand for underlying longer expressions that include the actual descriptive phrases making them countable:

a cup of coffee → a coffee

two containers of milk → two milks

three packets of sugar → three sugars

- *music*: non-count; may be used with a noun phrase such as *type of music* or *piece of music*.
- *thunder*: non-count; may be used with noun phrase *clap of* as in *I heard a clap of thunder*.

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 5**

*Excerpt A*

*the* before *professor*, *main door*, and *center of town* serves to identify each specific or particular noun.

- When the author refers to *the professor*, he is referring to a particular professor, one of the main characters of the book, and not just any person who happens to be a professor.
- *The main door* is a specific door in the author’s (and reader’s) mind.
- *the Bristol Library* is an example of *the + place name*.
- *the center of town* refers to the specific part of town in which the story is taking place.

*Excerpt B*

*the* before *computer*, *typewriter*, and *pencil* serves to identify these nouns as the labels or names for different types or kinds of items.

- *The computer* and *the typewriter* refer not to a specific computer or typewriter but to a specific kind of machine.
- *the pencil* refers not to a specific writing instrument but to a specific kind of writing implement.

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 8**

*Excerpt A*

<i>that</i>	refers to previously mentioned topic from which writer is distancing self, mental distance
-------------	--

*Excerpt B*

<i>those</i>	refers to telescreens, items speaker feels outside of or far away from own personal experience
--------------	--

*Excerpt C*

<i>these pains</i>	refers to pains which speaker identifies as part of own current experience
--------------------	--

<i>this woman</i>	refers to person recently identified or mentioned
-------------------	---

<i>those guards</i>	refers to guards at physical distance from speaker and companion
---------------------	--

*Excerpt D*

<i>that building</i>	reference similar to Excerpt A, where speaker referring to perceived mental distance
----------------------	--

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 9**

English uses *much* with non-count nouns and *many* with plural count nouns. Sentences (c), (d), (e), and (g) are ungrammatical because they violate this rule. In Sentences (c) and (g), *plants* and *dollars* are plural count nouns and need to be preceded by *many*. In Sentences (d) and (e), *time* and *support* are non-count nouns and need to be preceded by *much*.

Consider:

The Botanical Gardens has <i>many</i> flowers.	<i>flowers</i> is a count noun.
The Botanical Gardens has <i>a lot of</i> flowers.	Use <b>many</b> or <i>a lot of</i>
Did it take <i>much</i> effort to collect these flowers?	<i>effort</i> is a non-count noun.
Did it take <i>a lot of</i> effort to collect these flowers?	Use <b>much</b> or <i>a lot of</i>

In spoken English, native speakers prefer *a lot of*. ESL/EFL learners often find it easier to use *a lot of* rather than *much* or *many* since *a lot of* can be used for either count or non-count nouns. In formal writing, *a lot of* is considered informal and generally avoided.

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 10

- (a) *Lauren* was married yesterday.  
**She**
- (b) *The bride* was elegantly dressed.  
**She**
- (c) *The lovely white gown* looked stunning.  
**It**
- (d) *The nervous bridegroom* wore black.  
**He**
- (e) *The younger sisters and brothers* were excited.  
**They**
- (f) *A cousin* was the flower girl.  
**She**
- (g) *A well-organized, lavish reception* was held later.  
**It**
- (h) *My mother, my father, my older brother, and I* were invited.  
**We**

A pronoun may replace a single noun as in Sentence a), but it also may replace noun phrases (see Chap. 8). As Sentences b through h illustrate, regardless of how long the noun phrase is, it can be replaced by a single pronoun. This type of pronoun is called a **subject** pronoun because it is the subject of the verb of the sentence.

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 11

The underlined possessive adjectives in Group A are part of noun phrases. They are describing, or modifying, the nouns they precede.

Since the italicized words in Group B replace noun phrases, they are possessive pronouns, with one exception in Group A (*That dog hurt its paw*). Here, the possessive adjective *its* has no corresponding possessive pronoun form. *Its* as a possessive pronoun is rare and is primarily used when *its* is followed by *own*: *The horse needs a stall of its own*; *Sometimes I think my computer has a mind of its own*.

# Chapter 4

## Adjectives and Adverbs

**Abstract** This chapter focuses on two closely related word classes: adjectives, which we explore in Sect. 4.1, and adverbs, which we explore in Sect. 4.2. The chapter examines the differences and similarities of these two word classes and also considers the issues in categorizing the various subclasses of adverbs. Adjectives and adverbs often differ in form but not always. Some adjectives and adverbs have no “typical” derivational endings, and some adjectives and adverbs have derivational endings typical of the other class. The key to distinguishing between the two classes is their function: adjectives modify nouns. Adverbs, as we saw in Chap. 2 and examine more closely in this chapter, can modify just about anything except nouns and pronouns.

**Keywords** adjectives · adverbs · comparative · superlative · manner adverbs · frequency adverbs · time and place adverbs · other adverbs

### 4.1 Section 1: Adjectives

Adjectives comprise a rich category that gives flavor to the written and spoken language. Unlike structure words, adjectives do not provide grammatical meaning to a sentence. Instead, adjectives are content words that provide imagery and character to discourse by describing the nouns in a sentence.

#### *What clues are there to help identify adjectives?*

As with nouns, we can use semantic, morphological, and structural clues to identify adjectives.

#### 4.1.1 *Semantic Clues*

As you will remember from Chap. 3, when we use semantic clues to help us identify the function of a word, we are using the meaning of a word itself to provide a clue to its use. For example, *long*, *small*, *hot*, and *great* are descriptive words that

describe something. These words are descriptive adjectives that fall into a group of what are referred to as *prototypical adjectives*.

As we saw in Chapt. 3, words that carry core semantic properties for a particular word class are called *prototypical*. Prototypical adjectives are words that are easily identified as adjectives on the basis of their inherent characteristic of describing nouns or pronouns, such as *crazy* or *horrible*. Such adjectives are also called “best example” adjectives and are the kinds of adjectives native speakers will generally think of when they are asked to provide an adjective.

Try Discovery Activity 1 if you would like more practice in identifying prototypical adjectives.

### Discovery Activity 1: Prototypical Adjectives

1. Read the following sentences.
2. Provide one or two adjectives for each underlined noun.

*Example:*

The boy refused to put away his toys. *angry, little*

- (a) The dog bit the man.
  - (b) Birds flew over my head.
  - (c) The engineers failed to realize the impact the project would have.
  - (d) Look at the horses!
3. Compare your adjectives and those of your classmates.
    - Would you consider these adjectives “best example” or prototypical adjectives? Why or why not?

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 1

The purpose of Discovery Activity 1 is to illustrate how much you, as either a native speaker or a highly proficient non-native speaker, know about adjectives. Think about the words you and your classmates provided. What are they telling or describing about each noun?

Whether or not you know all the rules governing the use of adjectives, you intuitively know which words describe nouns. You are relying upon a subconscious knowledge of the semantic properties of adjectives to complete the sentences in this Discovery Activity. However, as we noted in our discussion of nouns and semantic meaning in Chap. 3, it is usually difficult for learners of English to rely on semantic clues; they must use other clues to help them determine which words are functioning as adjectives. We look now at morphological and structural clues, which are more productive for ESL/EFL learners in identifying adjectives.

### 4.1.2 Morphological Clues

Morphological clues, such as the derivational suffixes discussed in Chap. 2, offer clues as to which words are adjectives. You will recall that in Chap. 1 you were able to identify some of the nonsense words in the poem *Jabberwocky* as adjectives based on their derivational suffixes (morphological clues) and/or on their sentence position (structural clues).

*What are some of the typical derivational suffixes for adjectives?*

#### 4.1.2.1 Derivational Clues

In Chap. 2, we saw how certain derivational suffixes provide us with clues to identifying class membership. Some of the suffixes we examined were those that indicate adjective class membership such as *-ous* (e.g., *gorgeous*) and *-ful* (e.g., *helpful*).

Although not all adjectives can be identified on the basis of morphological suffixes, many can be. Discovery Activity 2 reviews some common derivational suffixes of adjectives. If you feel that you are strong in this area, you can move on to the next section.

#### Discovery Activity 2: Adjectives

##### Part I

Look at the following excerpts and underline all the adjectives you find.

##### A.

Love him or hate him—it is impossible to downplay the importance of Columbus’s voyage...[Davis, K. C. (2003). *Don’t know much about history: Everything you need to know about American history but never learned* (p. 4). New York: HarperCollins.]

##### B.

Autocratic and conservative, he tyrannized his workers. Ford’s attitude was that workers were unreliable and shiftless. [Davis, K. C. (2003). *Don’t know much about history: Everything you need to know about American history but never learned* (p. 338). New York: HarperCollins.]

##### Part II

Look at the adjectives you underlined.

1. Discuss which morphological clues helped you identify the adjectives.
2. Were you able to use morphological clues for all the adjectives? Why or why not?

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 2

Discovery Activity 2 demonstrates how many adjectives can be identified by their morphological endings. Below are the common adjective suffixes found in this Discovery Activity (bolded), as well as some additional examples.

<i>-ible/-able</i>	<i>-ic</i>	<i>-ive</i>	<i>-less</i>
<b>impossible/unreliable</b>	<b>autocratic</b>	<b>conservative</b>	<b>shiftless</b>
comprehensible	academic	active	helpless
acceptable	basic	selective	jobless

As we discussed in Chap. 2, learning about derivational endings is very helpful for ESL/EFL learners both in helping them identify word classes and in building their vocabulary. However, learners of English need to be aware that some suffixes can identify words that belong to more than one class. An example of this is *-ive*, included in the above chart, which is also found in nouns. Consider the sentence:

They are *conservatives*.

In this sentence, *conservatives* is a plural noun, meaning people who belong to a conservative party or movement. Likewise, the word *relative* can be either an adjective or a noun as in:

It is a *relative* problem.

I have a *relative* in New York.

Something that is *relative* refers to a type of comparison or relation to something else. A person who is connected to us by blood or marriage is the noun (i.e., a *relative* of ours). The form of the two words is identical, but their function is different, which we can tell from the sentence position of *relative*. In first sentence, *relative* comes before a noun, i.e., in the common sentence position for an adjective position. In the second sentence, *relative* is to the right of the verb, i.e., a common sentence position for a noun object.

***Are there any inflectional clues to help us identify adjectives?***

#### 4.1.2.2 Inflectional Clues

As we saw in Chap. 2, adjectives and adverbs can take the *-er* and *-est* inflections to show the *comparative* and *superlative*. When we compare two things, we use the comparative. When we compare more than two things, we use the superlative. We can identify many adjectives by their ability to take the comparative suffix *-er* and the superlative suffix *-est* (with some spelling changes).

Adjectives and Inflectional Endings		
Adjective	Comparative <i>-er</i>	Superlative <i>-est</i>
cool	cooler than	the coolest
mad	madder than	the maddest
lean	leaner than	the leanest
happy	happier than	the happiest
little	littler than	the littlest

Note that in sentences with comparatives, we must use *than* in addition to the *-er*. For the superlative, we must use *the* before the adjective.

*Sample Sentences:*

- It is **cool** today.
- It is **cooler** *than* yesterday.
- It is *the* **coolest** day of the year.

**Why do we say more beautiful and not \*beautifuler?**

For many adjectives with two syllables and for those with more than two syllables, we add *more* and *most* before the adjective to form the comparative and superlative forms.

Adjectives and More/Most		
Adjective	Comparative <i>more</i>	Superlative <i>most</i>
beautiful	<b>more</b> beautiful than	<b>the most</b> beautiful
gorgeous	<b>more</b> gorgeous than	<b>the most</b> gorgeous
enthusiastic	<b>more</b> enthusiastic than	<b>the most</b> enthusiastic

*Sample Sentences:*

- That is a **beautiful** house.
- That house on the corner is **more beautiful** *than* the one across from us.
- The house over there is *the* **most beautiful** of them all.

Short adjectives with two syllables can form the comparative and superlative either by adding the inflectional ending *-er/-est* or by using *more* or *most*. Often, both forms are used, although one form may be more common than the other. Adjectives that end in the suffix *-le* (e.g., *little*) usually take *-er* and *-est* (*littler*, *littlest*), as do adjectives that end in *-y* (*funny*, *funnier*, *funniest*.)

There are also a few irregular comparative and superlative forms:

Irregular Adjectives in the Comparative and Superlative		
Adjective	Comparative <i>more</i>	Superlative <i>most</i>
good	better than	the best
bad	worse than	the worst
little	less than	the least

*Sample Sentences:*

I have **little** money.  
 She has **less** money *than* Sandra.  
 Alex has *the* **least** amount of money.

Descriptive adjectives can also be used to compare two like nouns or noun phrases. In such cases, we use the form *as* + adjective + *as*:

The man was *as tall as* the door.  
 Avery is *as blonde as* her mother.

The *as* + adjective + *as* form is often used in similes when two unlike things are compared:

My cat is *as loud as* a lion.  
 She has eyes *as clear as* glass.

***Can all adjectives be compared?***

There are some adjectives that cannot be compared. These are generally adjectives from technical fields (e.g., *biological* or *psychological*), or what some grammarians call *absolute terms* (e.g., *chief* or *perfect*). Many grammar books label adjectives that can be compared as *gradable* adjectives to distinguish them from adjectives that cannot be compared.

***What kinds of problems do ESL/EFL learners have with comparative and superlative adjectives?***

- ***Learner difficulties***

Conceptually, ESL/EFL learners usually have little difficulty understanding the comparative and superlative forms of adjectives. In practice, they may confuse which adjectives take the *er/–est* endings and which ones require *more/most*. Sometimes, they add both an inflectional ending and *more/most*:

\*We had a *boringer* class last time.  
 \*Her crying is *the most loudest* of all my babies.

As we will also see in our study of verbs in Chaps. 5, 6, and 7, whenever there are two or more parts to a particular structure, ESL/EFL learners will often omit one or more of these elements. For example, they may omit *the* in the superlative:

\*It is *oldest* book I own.

Or, in comparing two like nouns (*as* + adjective + *as*), learners may forget to use the second *as*:

\*Mr. Jones is *as tall* Mr. Smith.

Errors also occur in spelling changes when the inflectional endings are added to certain adjectives, for example:

\*I am *busyer* this semester than last semester.

Overall, learners have fewer difficulties with the spelling changes (see Appendix C) than they do with the use of *-er/-est*, *more/most*, and *as + adjective + as*.

The next Discovery Activity looks at adjectives that have common derivational endings and adjectives that do not. You can check your answers to Part I in the Answer Key at the end of the chapter. Discuss your responses to Part II with your classmates.

### Discovery Activity 3: More Adjectives

#### Part I

Look at the following excerpts and underline all the adjectives you find.

##### A.

After everyone took a bite of the delicious creamy cake, we looked around to see who had it. [Kline, S. (2003). *Horrible Harry and the holiday daze* (p. 19). New York: Viking.]

##### B.

As Tad walked by the little empty chapel in the woods and past its small, old graveyard, he heard voices...[Young, R. (1993). *The scary story reader* (p. 66). Little Rock, AR: August Horror.]

##### C.

Many museums display giant ant colonies that you can watch through big windows. [Gomel, L. (2002). *The ant: Energetic worker* (p. 21). Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge.]

#### Part II

Look at the adjectives you underlined.

- Discuss whether you were able to use derivational clues for all the adjectives. Why or why not?
- Were you able to use inflectional clues for any of the adjectives you identified? Why or why not?

In addition to the morphological clues we have been discussing, we can also use structural clues to help us in our identification of adjectives.

### 4.1.3 Structural Clues

Consider the sentence:

She killed *a* **big** *mosquito*.

In this sentence, the position of *big* between the article *a* and the noun *mosquito* is a structural clue indicating the adjective function of the word *big*. As you will remember, since word order in English is very fixed, the sentence position of a word tells us what a word is functioning as.

#### *Do adjectives only occur before nouns?*

Adjectives can occur in three positions:

- (a) before a noun
- (b) after certain verbs
- (c) after certain nouns

Adjective Position	Examples
prenominal (before the noun)	Betsy bought a <b>huge</b> <i>house</i> .
after a stative or linking verb	Her house <i>is</i> <b>huge</b> .
postnominal (after the noun)	He needs to do <i>something</i> <b>useful</b> .

The most common position for adjectives is before a noun. Many grammar books refer to this position as *prenominal*. In Excerpt B of Discovery Activity 3, for instance, *little* and *empty* occur before the noun *chapel*. These adjectives give us descriptive information about *chapel*. Their sentence position before *chapel* is an indicator of their function as adjectives.

Adjectives can also come after certain verbs, especially the verb *be*. This position is often referred to as the *predicate* position. Verbs that are followed by adjectives are often called *stative* or *linking* verbs. These verbs refer to mental states, attitudes, perceptions, emotions, or existence. They “connect” the subject with something after the verb (see Chap. 6).

The mosquito *was* **big**.

The water *feels* **cold**.

Adjectives that come after a linking or stative verb describe or modify the noun phrase that is to the left of the verb. In the first sentence, **big** is describing something about *The mosquito*. In the next sentence, **cold** is describing something about *The water*.

Some adjectives occur after the noun they are describing. This is often called *postnominal* sentence position. Often nouns that have adjectives following them have to do with units of measurement:

The quake caused a crack five *inches* **wide**.  
 They have a pool twelve *feet* **deep**.  
 The rapids run two *miles* **long**.

Most adjectives can come either before a noun or after a linking verb. A few, however, can only occur in certain positions. We say *Rob ate the **entire** hamburger* but not *\*The hamburger was **entire***; and *Meg looks **asleep*** but not *\*The **asleep** girl is Meg*.

***Why should I know so much about adjective sentence position?***

For native speakers and highly proficient non-native speakers, adjective sentence position is not an issue. However, ESL/EFL learners need to learn both basic positions and the exceptions. How difficult this will be for learners depends greatly on their native language. If, for instance, normal adjective position is similar to English, as in Chinese, learners will have fewer difficulties than Spanish speakers where the adjective position is different.

In doing Discovery Activity 4, think about ESL/EFL learners and what kinds of things need to be pointed out to them.

**Discovery Activity 4: Adjective Position**

Look at the following sentences.

1. Underline the adjectives.
2. Decide which sentences sound correct.
3. If the sentence sounds incorrect, explain why.
  - (a) He was a mere boy when he left home.
  - (b) He was mere when he left home.
  - (c) She cried out with a sharp shriek.
  - (d) Her shriek was sharp.
  - (e) A cold rain hit their faces.
  - (f) The rain was cold as it hit their faces.
  - (g) The story was an utter fabrication.
  - (h) The fabrication was utter.

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 4**

Sentences b and h are incorrect because the adjectives in these sentences, *mere* and *utter*, are examples of the limited number of adjectives that cannot be used in predicate position (i.e., after the verb).

In Sentences c, d, e, f, the adjectives *sharp* and *cold* can, like the majority of English adjectives, come before the noun (prenominal position) or after the linking verb *be* (predicate position).

Word order is important in English. For the most part, word order is fixed and not very flexible. The vast majority of adjectives in English come before the noun or after a linking verb; therefore, teachers need to focus primarily on these sentence positions, particularly at for English language learners at lower levels of proficiency.

The next Discovery Activity has teacher-created sentences intended for extra practice if you still have questions about identifying adjectives (the answers are in the Answer Key). If you are comfortable with adjectives, move on to the next section.

### Discovery Activity 5: Identifying Adjectives

Look at the following sentences.

- (a) The new students had excellent scores on the tests.
- (b) Some of the concerns we had were important.
- (c) Some parents are unhappy with the current changes in the curriculum.
- (d) Although their home is humble, they are content to live as they do.
- (e) The cold, snowy weather over the long weekend resulted in slow sales for retailers.
- (f) When the viewers saw the movie, they were ecstatic over the ambitious plot and the stupendous special effects.

1. Underline the adjectives and noun or noun phrase each adjective is modifying.
2. What clues helped you identify the adjectives?

*Examples:*

The large dog barked loudly.

*Large* modifies or describes the noun *dog*. It comes between the article *the* and before the noun *dog*.

The salesclerk is busy.

*Busy* modifies or describes the noun phrase *the salesclerk*. An adjective after the verb *be* modifies the noun before the verb; *-y* at the end of a word often indicates membership in the adjective class.

***When there is more than one adjective, do they occur in a certain order?***

### 4.1.4 Order of Adjectives

In Discovery Activity 3 in Excerpts A and B, we saw that two or more adjectives can appear together:

*delicious creamy* cake  
*little empty* chapel  
*small, old* graveyard

The order of adjectives in English is not random. Different types of adjectives occur in a certain order. The exception to this is adjectives of general description and those of physical state (size, shape, color), where their order may be reversed.

They own an **enormous, long-handled** cutting knife.  
 They own a **long-handled, enormous** cutting knife.

She has a **round yellow** sofa.  
 She has a **yellow round** sofa.

When the adjective order is reversed, as in the previous sentences, the speaker generally wants to emphasize or draw attention to the first adjective in the sequence. Native speakers and highly proficient non-native speakers know intuitively the order in which adjectives should occur when more than one is used. The order of adjectives is not something that they have difficulty with, nor generally even think about. For ESL/EFL learners, the order of a string of adjectives is something they need to learn. Much of this knowledge is gained through practice, but a table such as the following one detailing the order of adjectives can be helpful for learners at lower levels of proficiency. Although changes in normal adjective order do not interfere with sentence meaning or comprehension, such changes do lead to awkward and/or strange-sounding sentences. Note that this chart provides only general guidance and not hard-and-fast rules of word order.

Adjective Order								
Opinion	General description	Size	Shape	Color	Place of origin	Material	Use or type	Sample noun
	fierce				Siberian			tiger
			oval			metal		frame
				blue			cutting	board
beautiful						leather	cowboy	boots
		small	round					dish

*Sample Sentences:*

The children admired the **fierce Siberian** tiger.  
 She bought an **oval metal** frame.  
 I have a **blue cutting** board.  
 The visitors bought **beautiful leather cowboy** boots.  
 Her aunt brought the dip in a **small, round** dish.

Discovery Activity 6 provides practice in sorting adjectives into categories. As you will see when you do this activity, it is not always easy to distinguish between some of the categories. Keep in mind that the table above is only meant as a guideline or introduction to the order of adjectives. When you have finished, compare your answers to those in the Answer Key.

**Discovery Activity 6: Adjective Word Order**

Look at the following sentences.

**Part I**

1. Underline the adjectives.
2. In sentences where there are two or more adjectives, discuss whether you could change the word order of the adjectives.

*Example:*

The large spotted dog barked loudly.

The large spotted dog barked loudly.

These two adjectives refer to size and color, so it doesn't matter in which order they occur.

- (a) Do you own any light cotton dresses?
- (b) The pirates' swift ship outran the ponderous tanker.
- (c) Her elderly mother received a box of expensive Swiss chocolates for her birthday.
- (d) Mr. Branch was a little squat man with bushy black hair.
- (e) Rapunzel's long golden hair was wrapped in a priceless silk scarf.
- (f) The flower consists of delicate blossoms on a slender green stalk with broad rectangular leaves.
- (g) The busy young architect displayed his plans on a drawing board.

**Part II**

Make a table like the one below. Place each of the adjectives you have identified in the sentences above into the categories on your chart.

The words from the example in Part I have been done for you.

general description	size	shape	color	place of origin	material	use
large			spotted			

***Is there any special punctuation I need to tell my students about?***

When there are more than two adjectives, a comma may be necessary to separate them, particularly if they are adjectives of opinion, general description, size, shape, or color. As a rule of thumb, we do not use commas between adjectives referring to place of origin or type. In cases where you are not sure whether or not to use a comma, a simple test is to use *and* where you think the comma should go. If you can insert *and* between two adjectives, we usually need to add a comma:

I saw a boisterous, rowdy crowd of boys in the park.  
I saw a boisterous **and** rowdy crowd of boys in the park.

The zoo has clever, mischievous Capuchin monkeys.  
The zoo has clever **and** mischievous Capuchin monkeys.

but not:

\*The zoo has clever, mischievous, Capuchin monkeys.  
\*The zoo has clever **and** mischievous **and** Capuchin monkeys.  
\*The zoo has clever, mischievous **and** Capuchin monkeys.

### ***4.1.5 Special Types of Adjectives***

In this section, we will look at two special types of adjectives: nouns that function as adjectives and participial adjectives.

***One of my students asked me if school in school bus is an adjective like small in small bus. How can it be an adjective if it's a noun?***

#### **4.1.5.1 Nouns Functioning as Adjectives**

In English, as we have seen, class membership is no guarantee of function. Nouns, for example, frequently function as adjectives. In other words, one noun can come before another noun to modify it. Consider the following sentences:

The horse jumped over the **stone** wall.  
The **train** station is near the port.

Here **stone** and **train** are both nouns describing what kind of *wall* and what kind of *station*. **Stone** and **train** are functioning as adjectives because they are modifying the nouns they precede. We know, however, that while they may be functioning as adjectives, **stone** and **train** have not changed word class membership because they do not share the features or characteristics of other adjectives, but rather the features inherent to nouns.

### ***What is an example of a feature or characteristic?***

One feature of count nouns is that they have singular and plural forms. If you remember from our discussion of nouns and inflections in Chap. 3, only regular count nouns can take the plural *-s* inflectional ending. We can use this morphological feature to help identify a noun functioning as an adjective by considering whether we can attach an *-s* to that noun when it stands alone.

The horse jumped over the **stones**.  
The **trains** are near the port.

Adjectives cannot take this inflectional ending. We cannot say *\*stones wall* even though there may be many stones in that wall, or *\*birds coop* even though there are many birds in a bird coop. The *-s* plural inflection can only attach itself to count nouns and only when these nouns are functioning as nouns. When count nouns function as adjectives, they cannot take the plural inflection. Non-count nouns can also function as adjectives, but we cannot use this morphological feature because non-count nouns do not have plural counterparts. With the non-count nouns we must rely on semantic and structural clues.

Try the next Discovery Activity to see how well you are able to identify nouns functioning as adjectives. Remember that nouns modifying other nouns do not change their class membership, only their function. You can find the answers in the Answer Key at the end of the chapter.

#### **Discovery Activity 7: Nouns Functioning as Adjectives**

Underline the nouns functioning as adjectives in the excerpts.

##### **A.**

These are all our issue teams. They're mostly graduate students in climate science, not attorneys. [Crichton, M. (2004). *State of fear*. New York, NY: HarperCollins, p. 78.]

##### **B.**

- (1) I race across the baseball field, past a bunch of houses that line my street, and to my tree house in our backyard.
- (2) Right when I sat down, Vince asked, "Are you wearing a pajama top to school?"
- (3) Then I mess up my hair even worse than Brian's and make a fish face to go with my new, crazy hairdo.
- (4) I'll have the school counselor work with Vince to teach him the skills he needs to be a better friend.

[Ludwig, T. (2006). *Just kidding*. Berkeley, CA: Tricycle Press. No page numbers.]

**C.**

- (1) If you don't have the space for a vegetable garden, or you miss the taste of fresh greens in the middle of winter, growing in containers is a great solution.
- (2) You can design a container garden just like you would a backyard garden, except it's much easier because you can move it around.

[Planet Natural: Growing vegetables in containers | Vegetable Gardening Guru. (n.d.). <https://www.planetnatural.com/vegetable-gardening-guru/container-vegetables/>]

***A noun modifying another noun and thus functioning as an adjective—is this a difficult concept for ESL/EFL learners?***

- ***Learner difficulties***

Conceptually, understanding that the first noun is modifying the second noun is not that difficult for language learners. An error that some ESL/EFL learners make is adding the *-s* plural inflection to the modifying noun. This is especially common if a plural inflection is required in their native language (e.g., Spanish) for adjectives modifying plural nouns. For such learners, *stones walls* would be logical because in their language the adjective (*stones*) has to take a plural inflection because the noun (*walls*) has a plural inflection.

Learners sometimes become confused by nouns that end in *s* that are not plural, such as *news*, *pants*, or *linguistics*. As we saw in Chap. 2, the *s* of these words is not a separate morpheme. Nouns ending in *s* can also modify other nouns as in *news program* or *linguistics program*.

#### **4.1.5.2 Participial Adjectives**

Participial adjectives are adjectives that end in *-ing* or *-ed* (or *-en* in some instances). These are adjectives that are derived from verbs but function as adjectives. Like any other adjective, they modify nouns and can occur in three positions: prenominal, postnominal, or after a linking or stative verb.

The following poem has many examples of adjectives ending in *-ing*. They are bolded to make them easy for you to recognize.

My world is made of things I like:  
**creeping** bugs,  
**wiggling** worms,  
**leaping** frogs,  
**drifting** seashells,

**shifting** stones,  
**singing** birds,  
**swimming** fish,  
**dancing** butterflies,  
**growing** fruit,  
**falling** leaves,  
**blooming** flowers,  
**shining** sun,  
**splashing** rain,  
**glittering** stars,  
**fluttering** moths,  
 and **glowing** moon.

Thank you world for everything.

[Ehlert, L. (2002). *In my world*. New York: Harcourt. No page numbers.]

### *How can we distinguish participial adjectives?*

Sometimes participial adjectives are mistakenly identified as verbs because of the *-ed* and *-ing* inflectional endings. These are the inflections used for past tense verbs and for present participle of the progressive verb phrases (see Chaps. 5 and 6). However, we know that in following sentences, *annoyed* and *irritating* are participial adjectives for several reasons.

The *annoyed* bird squawked.

There was an *irritating* quietness to the landscape.

First, an important structural clue is the sentence position of *annoyed* and *irritating*. Remember that word order is very important in English. Both words come before a noun (*bird*, *quietness*), the most common position for adjectives. Second, the *-ing* form, in order to be considered a verb, must be part of a verb phrase. That is, a verb phrase with *-ing* must include any tense of the helping verb *be* and the present participle *-ing* attached to the main verb, as in *The bird was squawking* or *She is walking*. Likewise, the *-ed* form must also be part of a verb phrase to be considered a verb. Such verb phrases must include any tense of the helping verb *have* and the past participle *-ed*, as in *The bird has squawked* or *She had walked*. (see Chaps. 5 and 6).

A simple way to test whether or not an *-ing* or *-ed* word is an adjective (as opposed to a verb) is to use *very* before it.

<b>The Very Test</b>	
	<b>+ very before participial adjective</b>
The <i>rushed</i> publication had many errors.	The <b>very</b> <i>rushed</i> publication had many errors.
The text supplied <i>confusing</i> explanations.	The text supplied <b>very</b> <i>confusing</i> explanations.

Because we can take our original and add *very* before *rushed* and *confusing*, we know that these are participial adjectives. Now look at these sentences and see what happens when we add *very* before *resulted* or *supplying*:

\*The ambitious project **very** *resulted* in errors.

\*The text is **very** *supplying* confusing explanations for the problems.

Inserting *very* before *resulted* and *supplying* tells us that these are not participial adjectives because it creates ungrammatical sentences. *Resulted* is a past tense verb and *supplying* is part of the present progressive verb tense *is supplying* (see Chap. 6).

While the *very* test is a good clue in determining participial adjectives, it does not always work. If, for example, we take some of the participial adjectives used in the selection at the beginning of this section, we see that inserting *very* works with some of the *-ing* participial adjectives but not with all of them. The insertion of *very* before these participial adjectives sounds strange:

My world is made of things I like:

**very** creeping bugs,

**very** wiggling worms,

**very** leaping frogs,

**very** drifting seashells,

**very** shifting stones,

Discovery Activity 8 asks you to identify participial adjectives. As you do the activity, think about whether or not you can insert *very* and about the sentence position of the words you are trying to identify as participial adjectives. The answers are in the Answer Key at the end of this chapter.

### Discovery Activity 8: Participial Adjectives

Look at the following teacher-created paragraphs.

1. Underline the participial adjectives.
2. Discuss what clues you used to identify the participial adjectives.

**A.**

It is both fun and rewarding to grow your own vegetables. Many people dream of a large sprawling site large enough to grow many different vegetables. But most don't have this option and must make efficient use of a reduced area. One way is to create 3- or 4-foot wide raised beds that make good use of existing garden space. When we increase the width of growing beds, we reduce the growing area that we walk on. Untrammelled soil around plants is better for their roots.

**B.**

Jackie McKenzie sits at her desk with potted plants on the windowsill and describes her life as an archeologist:

“The life of a field anthropologist can be difficult. You may spend hours at a gritty, sweltering excavation. On the other hand, you may encounter exciting finds that may revolutionize traditional scenarios.”

In her forthcoming book, Dr. McKenzie describes some revolutionizing finds. She notes, for instance, that prolonged droughts did not necessarily drive inhabitants off settled areas, but that warfare played a determining role in the abandonment of certain settlements.

### Contrasting Participial Adjectives: *-ing* versus *-ed*

Some participial adjectives have both an *-ing* and an *-ed* form. These are called *contrasting participial adjectives* and are generally derived from verbs that have to do with emotion or mental states. We use the *-ed* participial form when we describe something that **was done by someone or something else**. Consider the sentence:

The girl is bored.

Here the subject noun phrase is *The girl*. This subject is not the one doing the action or the activity resulting in the state of boredom. It is something or someone else who is causing the boredom of *the girl*.

Grammar books often suggest that in many cases, the *-ed* form is related to what we call the passive voice because we can add a *by* phrase (see Chap. 8):

The girl is bored by the book.

However, while the addition of the *by* phrase works with some of the *-ed* adjectives, it does not hold true in all instances. For example:

He's interested in science.

In this sentence, there is no *by* phrase that could connect this sentence to the passive voice.

The *-ing* participial form, in contrast to the *-ed* form, is used when the **subject is the one doing an action or activity that affects others**. Consider the sentence:

The girl is boring the rest of the class.

Here we understand that *The girl* is the one doing an action or activity affecting the state of others.

The following chart lists common participial adjectives that have contrasting meaning in their *-ing* and *-ed* forms

Common Contrasting Participial Adjectives			
amusing	amused	embarrassing	embarrassed
frightening	frightened	interesting	interested
annoying	annoyed	satisfying	satisfied
pleasing	pleased	boring	bored
disappointing	disappointed	comforting	comforted
surprising	surprised	worrying	worried
exciting	excited	confusing	confused

***Do ESL/EFL students find the participial adjectives confusing?***

- ***Learner difficulties***

English language learners, as well as native speakers, often have difficulty recognizing participial adjectives as adjectives rather than as part of verb phrases. They may confuse an *-ing*, which is part of a verb phrase, with the *-ing* of a participial adjective:

The team *is winning* the game.  
My team is the *winning* team.

In the first sentence, *winning* is part of the verb phrase *is winning*. This sentence contrasts with the second sentence where *winning* is a participial adjective modifying the noun *team*.

Recognizing the *-ing* as part of a verb phrase rather than as a participial adjective is even more difficult when it is a more complex verb phrase and/or there are words separating the parts of the verb phrase:

The team *has been winning* all the games.  
The team *was* already *winning* the game when they shot another goal.

Another difficulty ESL/EFL learners have with participial adjectives is distinguishing between those that have contrasting *-ing* and *-ed* forms. It is often difficult for learners to remember and correctly use contrasting participial adjectives such as *bored* versus *boring*.

Finally, learners sometimes become confused when they encounter words that contain *-ing* where it is part of the actual word and not an inflectional ending. Such words include *bring*, *icing*, *everything*, *nothing*, *pudding*, *evening*, *morning*, and *wedding*, among others.

**4.2 Section 2: Adverbs*****Isn't an adverb a word that ends in -ly and something that describes a verb?***

The common definition of an adverb usually defines adverbs as words that generally end in *-ly* and that describe verbs. However, there are many other adverbs that do not end in *-ly* and that describe many other things.

The adverb class is sometimes called the “trash can” class because grammarians have traditionally placed many words that fit nowhere else into this category. Adverbs can describe just about anything, including a verb, an adjective, a clause, or an entire sentence. Because adverbs can describe so many different things, there are many subclasses of the adverb class, which we examine here. Given the variety of adverbs and their functions, not all grammarians agree on the subclasses.

### 4.2.1 *-ly* Adverbs

Adverbs that take the derivational *-ly* ending comprise the largest subclass of adverbs. These adverbs are the easiest to identify and understand. These *-ly* adverbs are generally considered prototypical adverbs. Since these adverbs generally modify verbs, they have strong lexical meaning. They are often referred to as *descriptive* or *manner adverbs* because they answer the question “how” or “in what manner” the verb of the sentence does something:

He responded angrily to their accusations.

**Question:** How did he respond to their accusations?

**Answer:** He responded *angrily* to their accusations.

She answered the question correctly.

**Question:** How did she answer the question?

**Answer:** She answered the question *correctly*.

Many of these *-ly* adverbs are derived from adjectives<sup>1</sup>:

Adjective + <i>-ly</i> → Adverb	
sudden	suddenly
soft	softly
beautiful	beautifully
gracious	graciously
nice	nicely

Unlike nouns and adjectives, the position of these adverbs is flexible. Manner (*-ly*) adverbs can occur in initial or final sentence position, or before or after the verb. In verb phrases, these adverbs can occur between the auxiliary verb (helping verb) and the main verb. Generally, the sentence position of an adverb depends on what the speaker wants to stress or emphasize.

**What do you mean by “what the speaker wants to stress or emphasize”?**

Up until now we have emphasized repeatedly how important word order is in English. Because adverb position, unlike word classes, is not as fixed, speakers can give different nuances of meaning to what they want to say by changing the sentence position of the adverb.

Look at the following examples. As you read each example, think about what difference the speaker is conveying by the different placement of *softly*.

**Softly**, she called to the children.

She called to the children **softly**.

She **softly** called to the children.

<sup>1</sup>See Appendix C for spelling changes after adding *-ly*.

She called **softly** to the children.  
 She was **softly** calling to the children.

***Are all words that end in -ly adverbs?***

Although not all words that end in *-ly* are adverbs, most are. There are some adjectives that also end in *-ly*. These include common adjectives such as *friendly*, *lively*, and *lovely*. English also has some nouns and verbs that end in *-ly*, such as *assembly*, *jelly*, *supply*, and *rely*. These *-ly* nouns are not as difficult for ESL/EFL learners as distinguishing between *-ly* adverbs and *-ly* adjectives.

***Is there anything to help me distinguish between -ly adverbs and -ly adjectives?***

There is a rule of thumb that you can use to help you distinguish between *-ly* adjectives and *-ly* adverbs:

- If a word ends in *-ly* and you remove this ending and discover a *noun*, then the *-ly* word is an adjective.
- If the word ends in *-ly* and you remove this ending and discover an *adjective*, then the *-ly* word is an adverb.

Adjective → Noun		Adverb → Adjective	
heavenly	heaven	quietly	quiet
cowardly	coward	sweetly	sweet
motherly	mother	brutally	brutal

As always, there are exceptions to this rule of thumb. The word *lowly* is an adjective, but when you remove the *-ly*, the word *low* is also an adjective. Nevertheless, this rule of thumb is useful in most instances and can help identify the word class membership of a particular word.

See how well you do in distinguishing between adjectives and adverbs in Discovery Activity 9. Check your answers in a dictionary.

**Discovery Activity 9: Adverb or Adjective?**

Look at the following words.

heavenly	fully	princely	richly	nightly	scholarly	sincerely
brightly	newly	yearly	masterly	bestly	nicely	remarkably

1. Remove the *-ly* ending from each word. Decide if the word is an adjective or a noun. Remember:
  - If it is a noun, then the original word ending in *-ly* is an adjective.
  - If it is an adjective, then the original word ending in *-ly* is an adverb.
2. Place the original word with its *-ly* ending under either **Adjective** or **Adverb**.

*Example:*

heavenly → heaven = a noun

**Adjective**

**Adverb**

heavenly

*In addition to the *-ly* or manner adverbs, what are some of the other subclasses of adverbs?*

## 4.2.2 Subclasses of Adverbs

The subclasses of adverbs are based on the meaning and/or function of the different adverbs in sentences and in discourse. Two commonly accepted subclasses of adverbs are *frequency adverbs* and *time and place adverbs*.

### 4.2.2.1 Frequency Adverbs

Frequency adverbs describe how often an action takes place; some of these also end in *-ly*. One of these frequency adverbs consists of two words, *hardly ever*.

Common Adverbs of Frequency				
always	generally	usually	hardly ever	seldom
frequently	often	sometimes	never	rarely
occasionally				

Because of the semantic meaning of these adverbs, they are often used with the simple present or simple past tenses (see Chap. 6). The most common sentence position of frequency adverbs is before the verb they are modifying, except when they are used with the verb *be*. Whenever the verb *be* occurs, the frequency adverb follows.

Common Sentence Position of Frequency Adverbs	
Curtis <b>generally</b> comes on time. We <b>never</b> traveled to Malaysia.	before the main verb
Julie is <b>seldom</b> late. The students were <b>often</b> rowdy.	after the verb <i>be</i>

Although the chart illustrates the most common sentence position of frequency adverbs, as we observed previously, their sentence position can vary, depending on the speaker's intent. We can change, for instance, the first sentence to: *Generally, Curtis comes on time*, particularly if we want to emphasize a contrast: *Generally, Curtis comes on time, but today he's late*.

### Are these frequency adverbs difficult for ESL/EFL learners?

- **Learner difficulties**

Learners do not have a great deal of difficulty with these adverbs, with the exception of *hardly ever*. First, it consists of two words, *hardly* + *ever*. Second, for many learners the phrase itself does not make sense. Many confuse the *ever* in *hardly ever* with another use of *ever*, meaning *continuously*, as in the sentence *I have lived in this house ever since I was 10*.

Low-proficiency ESL/EFL learners usually require practice in learning the use and the placement of frequency adverbs within the sentence.

Discover Activity 10 asks you to identify the frequency adverbs. Check your answers with a classmate or a friend. If you are unsure about a word, check a dictionary.

### Discovery Activity 10: Frequency Adverbs

Look at the following paragraph and underline the frequency adverbs.

Brianna generally starts her mornings with a cup of coffee. She always has a splash of milk and one teaspoon of sugar in her coffee. Depending on her mood, she sometimes eats a slice of toast with a little jam or a bowl of cereal. On days when she is in a hurry, she frequently skips breakfast. Once she is at work, she is often too busy to eat anything until lunchtime. She rarely misses lunch because she is hardly ever home before 6:30 p.m. She occasionally stops at a restaurant on her way home from work, but she usually prefers to wait until she gets home to eat. She is hardly ever ready for bed before midnight.

### 4.2.2.2 Time and Place Adverbs

Time and place adverbs include both single words and phrases. **Time adverbs** refer to the time at which something occurred. This time reference can be:

- **definite** (e.g., *yesterday, today, tomorrow, last week, next month, a year ago*) or
- **indefinite** (e.g., *now, then, soon, just, before, still, already, next*)

Some of the time adverbs can also function as nouns. We can distinguish their function because when these words are used as nouns, they are the subject of the main verb.

Adverbs of Time versus Nouns	
as adverb of time	as noun
I rode my bike yesterday. I'll ride my bike tomorrow. <i>Yesterday</i> and <i>tomorrow</i> are each modifying the entire sentence.	<b>Yesterday</b> was a sunny day. <i>Yesterday</i> is the subject of the verb <i>was</i> . <b>Tomorrow</b> will be a sunny day. <i>Tomorrow</i> is the subject of the verb <i>will be</i> .

**Adverbs of place** refer to location, direction, or position. They answer the question *where*. Adverbs of place usually occur after the main verb or after the clause they are modifying. These adverbs, unlike many other types of adverbs, do not modify adjectives or other adverbs.

Common Adverbs of Place				
above	back	behind	below	east
down	far	here	there	west
near	inside	outside	inside	north
over	under	towards	away	south

Place adverbs also include those that end in *-wards* or *-ward* (e.g., *backwards* or *westward*) and those that end in *-where* (e.g., *anywhere* or *everywhere*).

Many common adverbs of place also function as prepositions. We can distinguish the function because when these words are used as prepositions, they must be followed by a noun.

Adverbs of Place versus Prepositions	
as adverb of place	as preposition
Maya left her cell phone <i>behind</i> . I am going <i>inside</i> to look for my book. Eva flew Sunday and Adam the day <i>after</i> .  <i>Behind</i> is modifying left. <i>Inside</i> is modifying am going. <i>After</i> is modifying flew.	I'm driving <i>behind</i> a truck. They found the money <i>inside</i> a bag. Ariel had breakfast <i>after</i> her jog.  <i>Behind</i> is modifying <b>a truck</b> . <i>Inside</i> is modifying <b>a bag</b> . <i>After</i> is modifying <b>her jog</b> .

### 4.2.2.3 The “Other” Adverbs

Most grammarians agree on the different subclasses of adverbs that we have considered up to this point. For the remaining categories, there is less general agreement. Both the labels and the number of subclasses vary among grammar texts because there are different ways of interpreting the functions and uses of these adverbs. The subclasses discussed here should provide you with a general feel for and understanding of these adverbs, which are more difficult to classify than manner, frequency, or time and place adverbs. These are also the adverbs ESL/EFL learners have more trouble understanding the nuances of meaning they can convey.

#### 4.2.2.3.1 Degree Adverbs

Adverbs that alter the tone or force of an adjective or adverb are called *degree adverbs*. Degree adverbs are generally divided into two categories, *intensifiers* and *downtoners*.

**Intensifiers** are adverbs such as *very* or *extremely* that strengthen or intensify the meaning of an adjective or another adverb. When these adverbs modify adjectives, they are used with gradable adjectives that can take the comparative and superlative forms (*-er*, *-est* or *more*, *the most*). Intensifiers normally precede the adjective or adverb they are modifying:

Jan writes *extremely* well.  
 Jan is *very* busy.

In the first sentence, the intensifier *extremely* modifies the adjective *well* and emphasizes how well the subject (Jan) writes. In second sentence, *very* modifies the adjective *busy* and emphasizes how busy Jan is.

**Downtoners** are adverbs that decrease or lessen the tone of an adjective or another adverb. Like intensifiers, downtoners modify gradable adjectives. They normally precede the adjective or adverb they are modifying:

Hannah read the book *fairly* quickly.  
 The ending is *somewhat* sad.

In the first sentence, *fairly* is modifying the adverb *quickly* and downplays the force of the adverb *quickly*. In the second sentence, *somewhat* is modifying the adjective *sad* and downplays the force of the adjective *sad*.

#### 4.2.2.3.2 Attitude Adverbs

Attitude adverbs are those adverbs that convey the attitude or opinion of the speaker. These adverbs modify a clause or sentence. Words such as *frankly*, *unfortunately*, *obviously*, and *surprisingly* are some examples of attitude adverbs. Some grammarians also place adverbs that are related to possibility into this category, based on the notion that such adverbs convey the speaker's attitude regarding the degree of truth or probability of an action or event. Such adverbs include *probably*, *perhaps*, *of course*, *maybe*, and *possibly*.

To illustrate the nuance of meaning conveyed by degree and attitude adverbs, try this next Discovery Activity. Discuss your responses with your classmates.

### Discovery Activity 11: Degree and Attitude Adverbs

#### A.

Look at the following sentences.

- Add an intensifier and then a downtowner to the original sentence. Consider how each one changes the tone of the sentence.
- Choose from this list or supply your own:

really very exceedingly especially    barely hardly moderately rather

*Example:*

Janet has written an interesting paper.

Janet has written an *immensely* interesting paper.

Janet has written a *moderately* interesting paper.

- (a) Riley is a capable dog trainer located in southern Florida.
- (b) The *Star Wars* movies have been profitable.

#### B.

One of the most famous movie lines is Rhett Butler's last line in *Gone With the Wind*<sup>2</sup> when Rhett tells Scarlett, "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn."

At the time the movie was released in 1939, the U.S. government exercised strict censorship rules on swearing. The producer of the film was given the choice of paying a \$5,000 fine or changing the script to: "Frankly, my dear, I just don't care." He chose to pay the fine.

<sup>2</sup>If you are unfamiliar with *Gone With the Wind*, you can view a clip of this scene on the Internet.

1. How might deleting *frankly* have altered the impact of this movie line?

“My dear, I don’t give a damn.”

*or*

“I just don’t care.”

2. What conclusions might you draw about the use of the adverbs *frankly* and *just*, and the interjection *damn* here?

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 11

*Excerpt A:*

By adding two different types of degree adverbs to the original sentence in (a) and (b), you alter the tone of the sentence.

*Excerpt B:*

In Rhett’s utterance, both *frankly* and *damn* serve to underscore Rhett’s disgust with Scarlett. *Frankly* is an attitude adverb and *damn* is an interjection, both of which work in tandem to convey forcefully the depth of Rhett’s feelings. *Frankly* is accepted in standard speech, while *damn* is less so, although this has changed significantly in the decades since *Gone With the Wind* first appeared.

When the movie was originally released in 1939, the public use of *damn* was startling in an era of strict censorship rules on swearing, and its use evoked a strong emotional impact in the audience at that time. Even today, the use of choice of *damn* evokes a stronger emotional reaction than the blander *I just don’t care*, even though the latter includes the adverb *just*. Eliminating *frankly* and/or *just* in either version above, with or without *damn*, also lessens the impact of the utterance.

#### 4.2.2.3.3 Focus Adverbs

Focus adverbs such as *especially*, *specifically*, or *merely* serve to draw attention to a sentence element or to add to or restrict another adverb or another construction in the sentence. The sentence position of most focus adverbs is flexible. Different sentence position may change the meaning of the sentence.

Try the next Discovery Activity to see how changing the position of a focus adverb draws your attention to different parts of the sentence. The answers are in the Answer Key.

**Discovery Activity 12: Focus Adverbs and Sentence Position**

1. Look at the following sentences in each group.
2. Discuss how the change in sentence position of the italicized focus adverb affects the meaning of the sentence.

**Group A**

- (a) Lauren *especially* wants to attend this dance.
- (b) *Especially* Lauren wants to attend this dance.
- (c) Lauren wants to attend *especially* this dance.

**Group 2**

- (d) *Only* you can use your skills to fix the problem.
- (e) You can use *only* your skills to fix the problem.
- (f) You have the skills to fix *only* the problem.

***Do ESL/EFL learners find these “other” subcategories of adverbs difficult?***

- ***Learner difficulties***

For learners of English, degree, attitude, and focus adverbs are more difficult to learn than other adverbs. They are often used to communicate nuances and shades of meaning as you saw in the examples and Discovery Activities. These nuances are part of what we call a speaker’s *pragmatic knowledge*. Pragmatic knowledge includes, among other things, making the appropriate word choices in a particular situation to convey a specific meaning. This knowledge becomes increasingly important as learners are exposed to and interact with more complex language, both written and spoken.

Since context and shared knowledge are essential to understanding these subtleties in meaning, exposure to and discussion of authentic excerpts can help ESL/EFL learners at higher levels of proficiency understand the gradations of meaning and intent speakers or writers are conveying.

## 4.3 Summary

Adjectives	Adverbs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>describe nouns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>describe verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, and clauses</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>comprise a large, open class with one main subcategory: participial adjectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>comprise a large, open class with various subcategories</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can be identified on the basis of morphological, semantic, and syntactic clues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>are generally identified on the basis of morphological and semantic clues</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>have three sentence positions: pronominal (before a noun), postnominal (after a noun), or after a linking verb</li> <li>are primarily found in prenominal or predicate position</li> <li>occur infrequently in postnominal position</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>have variable sentence position</li> </ul>

Types of Adverbs	Examples
<b>frequency</b>	always, often, generally, usually, frequently, hardly ever
<b>time</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>definite</b></li> </ul>	yesterday, tomorrow, today, last week, last month, a year ago, the day after tomorrow
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>indefinite</b></li> </ul>	soon, recently, then, now, then, just, before, still, already, next, nowadays, immediately, yet, since, for
<b>place (position or direction)</b>	here, there, up, down, outside, inside, indoors, back, upstairs, forward, backward; words ending in <i>-where</i> (e.g., everywhere)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can combine with prepositions to form adverbial phrases</li> </ul>	down here, down there, up here, up there, over here, over there
<b>movement</b>	words ending in <i>-ward(s)</i> (e.g., backward[s], forward[s], northward[s], onward[s]); words ending in <i>-wise</i> (e.g., clockwise, lengthwise) <b>Note:</b> <i>towards</i> is a preposition, not an adverb
<b>compass points</b>	north, south, east, west
<b>degree</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>intensifiers</b></li> </ul>	very, extremely, totally, completely, really, particularly especially
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>downtoners</b></li> </ul>	fairly, somewhat, rather, quite, slightly, almost, merely
<b>attitude</b>	frankly, unfortunately, obviously, surprisingly
<b>possibility</b>	maybe, possibly, perhaps, of course
<b>focus</b>	especially, specifically, particularly, even, just, only

## 4.4 Practice Activities

### Activity 1: Identifying Adjectives

Underline the adjectives you find in the following excerpts.

#### A.

“The disguise is impeccable,” says the Master dryly. “I’d never have known you but for your dulcet tone.” [Maguire, G. (1999). *Confessions of an ugly stepsister* (p. 43). New York: HarperCollins.]

#### B.

Caspar is here to learn the trade of drafting, but he’s a hopeless fool... He will canter into a low lintel one day and brain himself... He is bereft of any real talent, or...my current rival ...would have taken him in. Casper is almost as useless as you girls. This should make you feel in good company. [Maguire, G. (1999). *Confessions of an ugly stepsister* (p. 43). New York: HarperCollins.]

#### C.

It might seem bizarre that science is using art to learn about the mind—looking for hard facts in the most ethereal of places. But great artists turn out to be the world’s first neuroscientists. [Lehrer, J. (July 1, 2009). Unlocking the mysteries of the artistic mind. *Psychology Today* <https://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200907/unlocking-the-mysteries-the-artistic-mind>]

#### D.

Abstract art seems so bizarre—so unrepresentative of anything at all—but it takes advantage of the innate properties of the brain. The geometric brushstrokes are a nod to the quirks of our visual neurons, which prefer straight lines. [Lehrer, J. (July 1, 2009). Unlocking the mysteries of the artistic mind. *Psychology Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200907/unlocking-the-mysteries-the-artistic-mind>]

### Activity 2: Identifying Adjectives and Adverbs

1. Underline the adjectives and adverbs in the excerpts.
2. Discuss the clue(s) that helped you identify each adjective (e.g., semantic, morphological, structural).

#### A.

In one classic skit from a 1970 episode of *Monty Python’s Flying Circus*, a waitress rattles off the contents of a menu in which all the items contain Spam. As she does this, she is repeatedly drowned out by a table of helmeted Vikings who sing, “Spam, Spam, Spam, Spam! Lovely Spam! Wonderful Spam!” For the techies, that perfectly captured the essence of relentless, annoying, repetitious, unwanted electronic solicitation. [Swidey, N. (October 5, 2003). Spambusters. *Boston Globe*, p. 12.]

**B.**

Consider Leonardo da Vinci's portrait of the Mona Lisa, perhaps the most famous painting in the world. The smile is notoriously enigmatic, a precise summary of an ambiguous emotion. But what is it about those slyly upturned lips that make the portrait so intriguing? [Lehrer, J. (July 1, 2009). Unlocking the mysteries of the artistic mind. *Psychology Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200907/unlocking-the-mysteries-the-artistic-mind>]

**Activity 3: Comparatives and Superlatives**

Create a comparative and a superlative sentence for each adjective.

silly bad delicate fun expensive quiet priceless cold good generous

*Example:* That is a silly joke. That was the silliest joke I've ever heard.

**Activity 4: Contrasting Participial Adjectives: –ing Versus –ed Adjective****Part A**

1. Read the following sentences. Consider the difference in meaning in each pair.
  2. How can you explain the differences in each pair?
- 1(a) The annoyed neighbors moved away.
  - 1(b) The annoying neighbors moved away.
  - 2(a) The worried mother looked for her children.
  - 2(b) The worrying mother looked for her children.
  - 3(a) The amusing boy has many friends.
  - 3(b) The amused boy has many friends.
  - 4(a) The intriguing detective was last seen at a bar.
  - 4(b) The intrigued detective was last seen at a bar.

**Part B**

The samples below were produced by learners.

1. Underline the incorrect uses of participial adjectives.
2. Why do you think the learners made these mistakes? What suggestion(s) could you offer to help avoid such mistakes?
  - (a) The news puzzled the charmed girl I met last night.
  - (b) The test results were disappointed to me but I was cheered up by the news that I could earn extra points on the next project.
  - (c) Their loved mother comforted the frightening children.
  - (d) My disappointed children complained to their surprising father.
  - (e) My friend John is a talented athlete who is interesting in soccer and basketball.

### Activity 5: More Adjectives

1. Underline all the adjectives in the following excerpts.
2. Which ones are participial adjectives (*-ing or -ed*)? Remember, to be a participial adjective, it must modify a noun (prenominally, postnominally, or after a stative/linking verb).

#### A.

Laurence Canter leans forward, scrunches up his sunburned nose, and says with a smile, “I don’t know—do I seem that evil to you?” But in 1994, Canter was the most loathed and feared man on the Internet. Laurence Canter is the father of modern spam. [Swidey, N. (2003, October 5). Spambusters. *Boston Globe*, p. 12].

#### B.

She was very old and small and she walked slowly in the dark pine shadows, moving a little from side to side in her steps, with the balanced heaviness and lightness of a pendulum in a grand-father clock. She carried a thin, small cane made from an umbrella, and with this she kept tapping the frozen earth in front of her. This made a grave and persistent noise in the still air, that seemed meditative like the chirping of a solitary little bird. She wore a dark striped dress reaching down to her shoe tops, and an equally long apron of bleached sugar sacks, with a full pocket. [Welty, E. (1941). A worn path. *The collected works of Eudora Welty*. Retrieved from <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0Byq6h70zkproWGFLc3BwOUFvMUK/edit>]

### Activity 6: Nouns Functioning as Adjectives

Underline the nouns functioning as adjectives.

#### A.

Elizabeth gathered up all the allowance she had been saving and hurried to the pet store. She bought three large fish tanks and hauled them home. [Robinson, R. (2005). *Faucet fish*. New York: Dutton Children’s Books. Picture Book, No page numbers.]

#### B.

[The letters] were not the usual household inventories that occasionally surfaced, like timeworn family flotsam...We pried them open one by one and soon realized there were intimate love letters that dated back to the 1750s. [di Robilant, A. (2003). *A Venetian affair* (p. 4). New York: Alfred A. Knopf.]

#### C.

I work for a company that doles out a paltry amount of sick days and paid time off. Because I was nearing the end of the year and had already put in a holiday vacation request and bought plane tickets, I hung on to one day to last the rest of the year. [Appiah, K. (2015, December 30). The Ethicist. *New York Times Magazine*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/03/magazine/is-it-ok-to-go-to-work-while-sick-and-sneezing.html?ref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Fmagazine>]

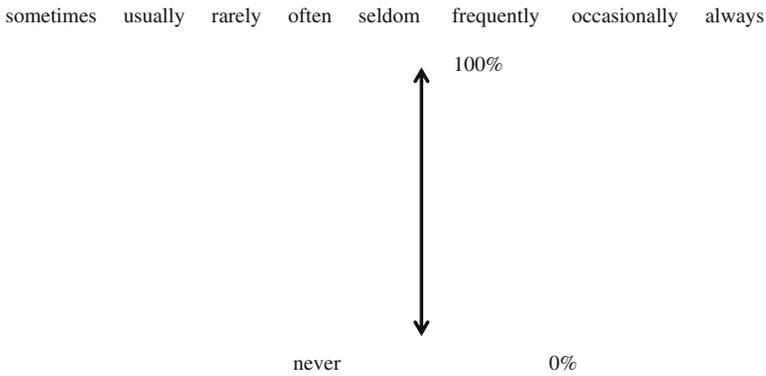
**Activity 7: Finding Nouns Functioning as Adjectives**

1. Find an article in a newspaper, magazine, or from another text.
2. Underline all the nouns you find that are functioning as adjectives, that is, modifying another noun. Be sure to identify the noun being modified.

**Activity 8: Frequency Adverbs**

Frequency adverbs refer to how often an action occurs. These adverbs can be placed on a scale or range from 100 to 0 %, like the one below.

1. Consider the frequency reference of each adverb. How often does it show an action happens?
2. Rank each frequency adverb below on the left side of the scale and add a percentage to the right side of the scale.



3. Compare your placement of adverbs with your classmates. Do you all have the same placement?
4. How could using such a scale help learners of English practice frequency adverbs?

**Activity 9: More Adjectives and Adverbs**

1. Find all the adjectives and adverbs in the excerpts.
2. If you are unsure if a word is an adjective or an adverb, try using one of the test frames discussed in the chapter.
3. Identify any nouns functioning as adjectives, that is, modifying a noun.

**A.**

Over repeated cycles of invention there are rich rewards for those who harness new technologies.... Five hundred years ago the conscious of a middle-aged monk plunged Europe into turmoil.

**B.**

The monk was Martin Luther, by any measure an unlikely revolutionary; until this point he was an unknown professor at one of Europe's more obscure universities. But what made Luther so special, and this too has resonance today, was that he used new media to circumvent the traditional gatekeepers and ordered structures of legitimacy and communication.

**C.**

[I]n a series of bold experiments, Cranach completely re-shaped the Reformation book, clothing Luther's works in a new and utterly distinctive livery... It brought design sophistication previously seen only on the largest and most expensive books to the humble pamphlet.

**D.**

Crucial matters of salvation and church practice were no longer the exclusive preserve of a privileged elite, but freely debated on the market square and in the home.

[Pettegree, A. (2015, December 28). Martin Luther: Revolutionary disruptor and start-up success story. *Literary Hub*. Retrieved from <http://lithub.com/the-unheralded-monk-who-turned-his-small-town-into-a-center-of-publishing/>]

**Activity 10: Error Analysis**

The following excerpts were written by learners of English. There are errors in adjective and adverb use and form.

1. Underline each adjective and adverb error you find. Ignore any other errors.
2. For each error
  - (a) correct it.
  - (b) consider why the learner may have made it.

*Example:*

People, have you ever thought that pandas are very endangered animals?

Pandas are very interested animals.

Confusion between the -ing and -ed participial adjective forms.

**A.**

The giant pandas are more cute than a bear. They are more cuddly than a cat. And they are more big than a tiger. They are unfriend to each other. Some people burn the wood to make houses, so giant pandas' territories are getting more small.

**B.**

For many centuries, they treated women unequal, due to their more weak physical body structure. It took women a long time to gain their rights to work, but social convention holds women back from being more successfully than men. The worse problem facing women is discrimination. Basically, people just don't believe women can be successfully as men. Also, women often get paid lesser than men although they have the same qualifications. So they can work more than men but their pay is more cheaper and they have to work more harder to make as much money the men.

## 4.5 Answer Key

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 3

*Excerpt A:* delicious, creamy

*Excerpt B:* little, empty, small, old

*Excerpt C:* giant, big

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 5

- (a) The new students had excellent scores on the tests.

*New* modifies *students*; *excellent* modifies *scores*.

*-ent* at the end of a word often indicates membership in the adjective class.

Other adjectives ending in *-ent* include *prudent* or *absorbent*.

When teaching *-ent* as an indicator of adjective class membership, it is important to point out that many words that end in *-ent* are not adjectives (e.g., *accident* and *basement* are nouns that end in *-ent* and the irregular past tense of the verb *lend* is *lent*).

- (b) Some of the concerns we had were important.

*Important* follows *be*, modifying the noun phrase *some of the concerns*.

*-ant* at the end of a word generally indicates membership in the adjective class.

Other adjectives ending in *-ant* include *hesitant* or *significant*.

- (c) Some parents are unhappy with the current changes in the curriculum.

*Unhappy* comes after the stative/linking verb *be*, modifying the noun phrase *many parents*.

Many words ending in *-y* are adjectives, and there are many nouns that also end in *-y* (e.g., *essay*, *turkey*, *dictionary*, *story*, *monkey*, *driveway*, *candy*, and the days of the week).

*Current* modifies *changes*.

- (d) Although their home is humble, they are content to live as they do.

*Humble* comes after the verb *be*, modifying the noun phrase *their house*.

*Content* comes after the verb *be*, modifying the noun *they*.

- (e) The cold, snowy weather over the long weekend kept resulted in slow sales for retailers.

*Cold* and *snowy* both modify *weather*; *long* modifies *weekend*; and *slow* modifies *sales*.

- (f) When the viewers saw the movie, they were ecstatic over the ambitious plot and the stupendous special effects.

*Ecstatic* comes after the stative/linking verb *be* and modifies the noun *they*.

*Ambitious* modifies *plot*.

*Stupendous* and *special* both modify *effects*.

The endings *-ic*, *-ous*, and *-ial* generally indicate membership in the adjective class (e.g., *nomadic*, *pragmatic*, *hectic*; *outrageous*, *fabulous*, *sagacious*; and *official*, *martial*, *social*).

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 6

#### Part I

- Do you own any light cotton dresses?
- The pirates' swift ship outran the ponderous tanker.
- Her elderly mother received a box of expensive Swiss chocolates for her birthday.
- Mr. Branch was a little squat man with bushy black hair. OR Mr. Branch was a squat little man with black bushy hair.
- Rapunzel's long golden hair was wrapped in a priceless silk scarf.
- The flower consists of delicate blossoms on a slender green stalk with broad rectangular leaves.
- The busy young architect displayed his plans on a drawing board.

#### Part II

General description	Size	Shape	Color	Place of origin	Material	Use
light	little	squat	black	Swiss	cotton	drawing
swift	long	bushy	golden		silk	
ponderous		slender	green			
elderly		broad				
expensive		rectangular				
priceless						
delicate						
busy						
young						

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 7

#### Excerpt A

issue, graduate, climate

#### Excerpt B

baseball, tree, pajama, fish, school

*Excerpt C*

vegetable, container, backyard

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 8***Excerpt A*

participial adjectives: *rewarding, sprawling, reduced, raised, existing, growing* (two times), *untrammelled*

*Excerpt B*

participial adjectives: *potted, sweltering, exciting, forthcoming, revolutionizing, prolonged, settled, determining*

*played* is the past tense form of the verb *play* and not a participial adjective.

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 12***Group A*

- (a) *especially* focuses on the verb *wants*.
- (b) *especially* focuses on the person *Lauren* (versus some other person).
- (c) *especially* focuses on the noun phrase *this dance* (as opposed to another dance).

*Group B*

- (d) *only* focuses on the person *you* (versus some other person).
- (e) *only* focuses on the noun phrase *your skills* (as opposed to something else).
- (f) *only* focuses on the noun phrase *the problem* (as opposed to something else).

Other interpretations are possible, particularly in spoken English. Intonation and word or phrase stress in combination with different positions of the focus adverb will convey different meanings.

# Chapter 5

## Overview of Verbs and Verb Phrases: The Heart of the Sentence

**Abstract** In this chapter we begin examining verbs. The chapter is divided into five sections, with each section looking at a different aspect of verbs. Section 5.1 discusses how to identify verbs. Section 5.2 explores two main categories of verbs, main verbs and auxiliary verbs. Section 5.3 examines two types of main verbs, transitive and intransitive. Section 5.4 considers infinitives and gerunds, and Sect. 5.5 delves into a special type of verb called phrasal verbs.

**Keywords** auxiliary verb • Transitive • intransitive • di-transitive • phrasal verb

### Introduction

We often think of the verb as being the “heart” of the sentence because it is the verb that provides the central meaning to a sentence. Verbs express what the subject does or describe something about the state or condition of the subject. This, however, is only the beginning. Verbs are complex elements that not only provide crucial sentence meaning but also provide support for other verbs, determine what kinds of sentence elements can come after them, combine with prepositions and adverbs to make special verbs known as phrasal verbs, and show time references (the topic of Chap. 6).

## 5.1 Section 1: Identifying Verbs

### *What makes a verb a verb?*

In the same way we did with nouns, adjectives, and adverbs, we can identify verbs on the basis of semantic, structural, and morphological clues. As we have noted previously, semantic and morphological clues are not as powerful as structural clues in identifying word class membership since, in English, form is not equal to function.

### 5.1.1 Semantic Clues

Earlier we said that a verb tells us something the subject does or something about the subject's state of being. You will notice that this semantic definition is broader than the traditional definition of verbs, which are usually defined as being action words, such as *jump*, *walk*, and *recognize*. While explaining what a verb is or does is useful in introducing verbs to learners, semantic clues only provide limited information in identifying words as verbs, especially for ESL/EFL learners.

### 5.1.2 Morphological Clues

In Chap. 2, we reviewed how derivational endings of verbs can indicate class membership. Common verb suffixes of the verb class include *-ate*, *-fy*, and *-ize*, as in *create*, *classify*, and *realize*.

To some extent, verbs can be distinguished from other parts of speech on the basis of inflections. Although English is a language that does not show much inflection in verb forms, it does have a few:

Subject	Verb + Inflection	Function
he, she, it	walks, laughs, calls	present tense, 3rd person singular <i>-s</i>
he, she, it, I, you, he, she, it, we, they	walk <b>ed</b> , laugh <b>ed</b> , call <b>ed</b>	past tense regular verbs, all persons

As you will recall from Chap. 2, in present tense, 3rd person singular (*he, she, it*) English verbs require an *-s* ending. This is the only inflection in present tense, except for the verb *be*. In the past tense, all regular verbs take an *-ed* ending. Irregular verbs follow different patterns, for example, *drank*, *slept*, *cut*, *came*, and *drove*.

#### ***How is the verb be different from other verbs in terms of inflections?***

The verb *be* is the only verb in English that has more than one inflectional form in present and past tense. In present tense, *be* has three forms: *am*, *are*, and *is*. In past tense, *be* has two forms, *was* and *were*.

### 5.1.3 Structural Clues

The sentence position of the verb, like most sentence elements in English, is highly fixed. In affirmative sentences, the verb comes after the subject:

*The boy **laughed** at the joke.*

*One dark and dreadful night, *Jack's mother* **sent** him to market to sell the cow. [Cecil, R. (2004). *One dark and dreadful night*. New York: Henry Holt. No page number.]*

Even when the sentence is a long, complex one with more than one verb, we still find a verb after a subject:

*The hapless child **went** into the Woods of Woe, where *the dark*<sup>1</sup> **grew** darker, and *the trees* **grew** more twisted, and *all the sharp pointy things* **grew** sharper and pointier. [Cecil, R. (2004). *One dark and dreadful night*. New York: Henry Holt. No page numbers.]*

If you examine the three sentences so far, you will notice that each verb is a single word. Many verbs, however, consist of more than one part:

*Hunky **was watching** the game furtively from the sidewalk on the other side of the chain-link fence. [Langton, J. (2000). *The time bike* (p. 65). New York: HarperTrophy.]*

*The designers **have put** the finishing touches on their outfits. Everyone in Toenail **has bought** a ticket to the event. [McMullan, K. (2005). *Beware! It's Friday the 13. (Dragon Slayers' Academy 13)* (p. 30). New York: Grosset & Dunlap.]*

***Why do you say that these two sentences have more than one part to the verb?***

The answer to this question introduces us to the next section, main verbs versus auxiliary verbs. Main verbs are verbs that do not have any “helping” or auxiliary verbs. Auxiliary verbs are verbs that accompany or “help” another verb. In this chapter and again in Chap. 6, we will be looking at the different auxiliary verbs and their functions.

## 5.2 Section 2: Main Verbs Versus Auxiliary Verbs

Verbs are generally divided into two major categories: main verbs and auxiliary verbs. Main verbs are verbs that can stand alone and that do not need to be accompanied by any other verb. Main verbs also contribute the key semantic meaning in any verb phrase.

*I **walk** to school.*

*Jenny **walks** to school.*

*She **walked** to school yesterday.*

In all three sentences, the main verb is *walk*. In the second sentence, the main verb has the 3rd person present tense *-s* inflectional ending. In the third sentence, the main verb has the past tense *-ed* inflectional ending. In none of these three sentences is *walk* accompanied by an auxiliary verb. There is only the main verb *walk*.

Other verb tenses require auxiliary verbs. Auxiliary verbs accompany main verbs. They are only there to “help” the main verb in some way, and they have no

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<sup>1</sup>*Dark* is functioning here as a noun.

semantic meaning. Different auxiliary verbs have different functions. For example, auxiliary verbs can support the negative in present tense or past tense:

I **do not** (or **don't**) walk to school.

Carlos **did not** (or **didn't**) walk to school.

In these sentences, we have to include the auxiliary *do* before *not* and the main verb to make a negative sentence in present tense. This is a grammatical requirement in Standard American English. We cannot say:

\*I **not walk** to school.

or

\*I **no walk** to school.

Before we continue our exploration of the difference between main verbs and auxiliary verbs, review your knowledge of main verbs by completing Discovery Activity 1. If you feel confident in your ability to identify main verbs, continue on to the following section. The answers to this Discovery Activity are in the Answer Key.

### Discovery Activity 1: Identifying Main Verbs

Look at the excerpts and underline the main verbs.

**A.**

Zhang Jing steps back from her canvas. Surprise lights her features for only a moment before despair sets in... I beckon again, more insistently this time, and Zhang Jing yields her tools... [Mead, R. (2015). *Soundless*. Retrieved from <http://www.rednovels.com/fantasticfiction/u6293.html>]

**B.**

She grabbed Claudius by the collar and looked out the curtain. Light from the kitchen fell on the stoop. Joey Chavez stood there. She jerked the door open. Claudius wriggled free from Annie's clutches. He sniffed Joey's jeans and wagged his tail. [Campbell, A. (2002). *Wolf tracks* (p. 72). New York: Signet.]

**C.**

Sweat trickles down my spine. My bones ache... Thousands of cheering spectators create a dull rumble that I feel in the pit of my belly... Teammates slap my pads, tell me "good game" as I make my way across the field. A few of the guys from the other team seek me out... [Callihan, K. (2015). *The game plan (Game on #3)*. Retrieved from <http://www.rednovels.com/book2/u6393.html>]

**D.**

Like a traveler in a new place, I asked questions, took notes, and began to arrange things in a narrative. I followed the rules diligently for at least a year. [Kumara, A. (2015). Ten rules of writing. *Lunch with a bigot*. Retrieved from <http://lithub.com/ten-rules-of-writing/>]

We now continue with our examination of the three primary auxiliary verbs in English.

### 5.2.1 *The Primary Auxiliary Verbs Have, Be, Do*

As you will recall, auxiliary or helping verbs accompany main verbs. They have no meaning on their own and they do not contribute semantic or content meaning to the sentence but do add grammatical meaning. By grammatical meaning, we mean that auxiliaries tell us something about the verb phrase, such as time reference.

There are three primary auxiliary verbs in English: *have*, *be*, and *do*. They are often confused with their counterparts, the three main verbs, *have*, *be*, and *do*. Although these auxiliary and main verbs look alike, they have completely different meanings and uses.

Compare the main and auxiliary uses of the three verbs in Discovery Activity 2. The answers are in the Answer Key at the end of the chapter.

#### Discovery Activity 2: *have, be, do*

Look at the following sentences.

1. Explain the meaning of *have*, *be*, and *do* under A.
2. Compare these verbs with *have*, *be*, and *do* under B. How are they different?

A	B
1. I have a cat.	1. I have always liked cats.
2. I had a cat for many years.	2. I had liked cats for a long time.
3. Jo is a teacher.	3. Jo is teaching now.
4. Jo was a teacher.	4. Jo was teaching when the bell rang.
5. Emily does her homework carefully.	5. Emily does not like homework.
6. Emily did her homework yesterday.	6. Emily did not like her homework.

This activity should have helped clarify for you the differences between the main verbs *have*, *be*, and *do* and their auxiliary counterparts. Keep in mind that any difficulties you may have had in distinguishing these verbs will be similar to those faced by ESL/EFL learners.

Discovery Activity 3 focuses on helping you practice the different functions of *be* and *have*. These two differ from *do* in that when *be* and *have* function as auxiliary verbs, they work together with a main verb to tell us something about the time reference of the main verb. After you finish, check your answers in the Answer Key.

### Discovery Activity 3: Introduction to Identifying the Different Functions of *be* and *have*

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline all the uses of *be* and *have*.
2. Explain each use of *be* and *have*. Is it the main verb *be* or *have*, or is it the auxiliary *be* or *have*?

*Example:*

Gina is late.

is = main verb 3rd person singular form of *be*, used to describe something about Gina.

#### A.

My wife is somewhere in this house... She is a tall woman with black hair, turning a little grey. Listen, she is going softly up a flight of stairs... I am tall like my wife and my shoulders are a little stooped... My wife has a serious, almost stern look. [Anderson, S. (1924). *The man in the brown coat*. Retrieved from <http://americanliterature.com/author/sherwood-anderson/short-story/the-man-in-the-brown-coat>]

#### B.

I look to the far side of the room, where Elder Lian is examining Zhang Jing's calligraphy. Elder Lian's face is as unreadable as my master's as she takes in every detail of my sister's canvas. I find I'm holding my breath, far more nervous than I was for my own inspection. [Mead, R. (2015). *Soundless*. Retrieved from <http://www.rednovels.com/fantasticfiction/u6293.html>]

#### C.

He had the unguarded curiosity of a child, and like a child his questions never let up. He was wearing his same outfit—white cotton shirt, clean pair of jeans and polished black shoes... only now he was carrying a very worn old leather satchel. The professor who had agreed to meet with us ushered us into the conference room of his department... I was greatly relieved that the meeting had not turned into a fiasco. [Wilson, E. (2015). *The ballad of Steinbjørn Jacobsen*. Retrieved from <http://lithub.com/the-ballad-of-steinbjorn-jacobsen/>]

***Does the do as an auxiliary function just like be and have?***

#### 5.2.1.1 *Do* as Verb Helper

Although *do*, *be*, and *have* are all auxiliary verbs, the *do* auxiliary has a different function from that of the *have* and *be* auxiliaries. As you saw in Discovery Activity

3, *have* and *be* show time information when they combine with main verbs to form verb phrases:

The girls <b>are</b> <i>walking</i> to school.	<b>present</b> progressive
The girls <b>were</b> <i>walking</i> to school.	<b>past</b> progressive
The girls <b>have</b> <i>walked</i> to school.	<b>present</b> perfect
The girls <b>had</b> <i>walked</i> to school.	<b>past</b> perfect

Regardless of the terminology, which you may or not be familiar with, notice the different time conveyed by *be* and *have*.

The *do* auxiliary functions somewhat differently. It is used to form questions and negatives in simple present and simple past tense of all verbs except *be*. The *do* auxiliary “helps” verbs form questions or negative statements in these two tenses.

<b>Do</b> you like grammar?	<b>present</b> question
<b>Did</b> you like grammar?	<b>past</b> question
They <b>do not</b> like grammar.	<b>present</b> negative statement
They <b>did not</b> like like grammar.	<b>past</b> negative statement.

We will discuss *do* in more detail when we look at simple present and simple past in Chap. 6.

### ***What is simple present and simple past?***

We say “simple” present and “simple” past because these two tenses do not use the auxiliaries *be* or *have*. As we will see in detail in Chap. 6, all other verb tenses in English are a combination of *be*, *have*, and the main verb.

### ***Can you explain how do works with verbs in simple present and simple past?***

The auxiliary *do* must be used to ask questions and in negative sentences in simple present and simple past. For questions, it appears in first position. For negatives, *not* comes between *do* and the main verb. Because *do* must be used to create grammatically correct questions and negative sentences in these two tenses, it is sometimes referred to as a “filler” verb.

*Do* has three inflections: *do*, *does*, *did*. When the *do* auxiliary is in a sentence, the main verb loses any inflections it may have; *do* is inflected instead. As you know, only the 3rd person singular (*he*, *she*, or *it*) takes an inflectional ending in simple present tense and only in affirmative statements. When the verb in simple present tense is used in a question or negative statement, the *-s* inflection is dropped from the main verb and is attached to the auxiliary *do*. The main verb keeps its base form with no *-s* ending.

**Do in Simple Present Tense**

Nikki walks to school.	<i>walk + -s</i>
Nikki <b>does</b> not walk to school. Does Nikki walk to school?	<i>do + -s, no -s on walk</i>

As you will remember, there is only one past tense inflectional ending for regular verbs, *-ed*. When we make a question or negative statement in simple past, this *-ed* inflection attaches to the auxiliary *do* (with a spelling change). The main verb keeps its base form with no *-ed* ending. Irregular past tense verbs also stay in the base form with the addition of the *do* auxiliary, for example, *Did you come?* or *I didn't come.*

**Do in Simple Past Tense**

Nikki walked to school. Nikki drove to school.	<i>walk + -ed</i> irregular past tense verb
Nikki <b>did</b> not walk to school. Nikki <b>did</b> not come to school <b>Did</b> Nikki walk to school? <b>Did</b> Nikki come to school?	<i>did, no -ed on walk;</i> irregular verbs stay in base form

Now that you have a general sense of how *do* functions as an auxiliary verb, let us explore more thoroughly what it means to say that *do* functions as a support verb. Look at the chart below and compare how questions are formed with *have*, *be*, and *do*. As you examine the chart, think about why *do* is often called a “filler verb.”

**Question Formation**

			auxiliary verb	main verb	
(a)		Jane	is	walking.	
(b)		Jane	has	walked.	<b>statement</b>
(c)		Jane		walks.	
(d)		Jane		walked.	
	<b>auxiliary verb</b>				
(e)	Is	Jane		walking?	
(f)	Has	Jane		walked?	<b>question</b>
(g)	Does	Jane		walk?	
(h)	Did	Jane		walk?	

What you will notice is that Sentences a and b are composed of an auxiliary + main verb. To make these into questions, we simply move the verb to before the subject noun phrase, as in Sentences e and f. Sentences c and d, in contrast, do not have an auxiliary verb, only a main verb. Therefore, to make these sentences into questions, we need to add something to the initial sentence position before the noun phrase. This “something” is the auxiliary *do*, which functions to “fill” the auxiliary slot before the noun phrase in a question, as in Sentences g and h.

Here we can observe the filler function of *do* in negative statements:

Negative Statements				
		auxiliary verb		main verb
(a)	Jane	is	not	walking.
(b)	Jane	has	not	walked.
(c)	Jane	does	not	walk.
(d)	Jane	did	not	walk.

Again, we observe that in sentences where the verb phrase is composed of an auxiliary + main verb, *not* simply follows the auxiliary, as in Sentences a and b. When there is no auxiliary present, we have to add *do* before *not*, as in Sentences c and d.

In short, if there is already an auxiliary verb present, we do not need to add another auxiliary. Simple present and simple past are called simple tenses because they are not composed of an auxiliary + main verb. However, English requires that:

- all yes/no questions begin with an auxiliary.
- the negative *not* follow the auxiliary (which can attach to the auxiliary in contracted forms).

To fulfill these requirements for questions and negative statements in simple present and simple past, English requires the insertion of the *do* auxiliary. Any other verb tenses are already composed of an auxiliary + verb, so we do not need to insert *do*.

The next Discovery Activity gives you the opportunity to see how well you can identify the different functions of *do*. As you complete the activity, think about which uses of *do* ESL/EFL learners might find confusing and how you might explain *do* to them. You will find the answers to Discovery Activity 4 at the end of the chapter in the Answer Key.

### Discovery Activity 4: Identifying the Different Functions of *do*

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline all the uses of *do*.
2. Label each use of *do*. Is it the main verb *do* or the auxiliary *do*?

*Example:*

She didn't want help. She did her homework by herself.

Two uses of *do*:

*did* + not; *do* is the auxiliary for a negative past tense statement.

*do* main verb, past tense

#### A.

"She was a big part of this studio's reputation, since this is where she started and did a lot of coaching."

"As good as he was to her, she was rude to him."

"People don't usually commit murder simply because someone was rude, Jane."

Shannon said. [Graham, H. (2004). *Dead on the dance floor* (p. 87). New York: Mira.]

#### B.

"Did you run a charter service in Virginia, too?"

"What?" He frowned. "Oh, yeah. I love boats.... Do you like the water?"

"Sure."

"Do you fish? Dive?"

"I fished when I was a kid. And I did some diving in the middle of the state when I was a teenager. I did a few of those dives where you go in with the manatees."

"You didn't like it?"

"I loved it."

"But you don't dive anymore?"

She shrugged. "I don't think I do anything anymore. I've gotten too involved with work." [Graham, H. (2004). *Dead on the dance floor* (p. 102). New York: Mira.]

*What kinds of difficulties do ESL/EFL learners have with the do auxiliary?*

- *Learner difficulties*

Because there are various elements to remember in using *do*, ESL/EFL learners frequently have difficulty forming questions and negatives in simple present and simple past. ESL/EFL learners must learn to use *do*, correctly inflect it, and not inflect the main verb.

One of the common problems ESL/EFL learners confront is remembering to use the *do* auxiliary in negative statements. Learners frequently use *not* alone with the verb as in:

\*I not go.  
*or*  
 \*She not walk.

ESL/EFL learners may use only *no* before the verb:

\*I no go.  
*or*  
 \*She no walk.

Learners may also invert the subject and verb to form a question where *do* is necessary:

\*Want you go home?  
*or*  
 \*Like they this restaurant?

ESL/EFL learners may forget to use the main verb in its base form, producing such sentences as:

\*He does not (doesn't) goes.  
*or*  
 \*Does he goes?

Here, learners are adding the *-s* inflection to both *do* and the main verb. Similarly, ESL/EFL learners may also create past sentences and questions such as:

\*Did she came?  
*or*  
 \*She *didn't* drove me.

In these sentences, ESL/EFL learners are using *did* + the irregular past form instead of the base form of the verb.

Another difficulty for ESL/EFL learners is remembering to use the correct simple present tense form of the auxiliary, *do* or *does*, in negative statements and questions. Learners may produce such sentences as:

\*My brother don't help me much.  
*or*  
 \*Her baby don't cry all the time.

When ESL/EFL learners make errors such as *She live here*, native speakers tend to recognize this as a learner error and will generally ignore it. In case of using *don't* instead of *doesn't*, however, the use of *don't* is a non-standard, stigmatized form in English. This *don't* is frequently characterized as a form used by speakers who are less educated, less intelligent, and so on. It is important that ESL/EFL learners learn to use *doesn't* correctly to avoid negative stereotyping based on their use of this stigmatized grammatical form.

***Can you summarize the main difficulties learners have with the auxiliary verb do?***

<b>Overview: Common Learner Errors With <i>do</i></b>	
*Why you walk every day? *I not walk every day. *He no want walk every day. *Why you walk every day?	no <i>do</i> auxiliary
*Why does she walks every day? *She does not walks every day. *They did no wanted to walk. *They did not wanted to walk. *Why did you walked every day?	<i>do</i> auxiliary + inflection on main verb

We end our initial exploration of the auxiliary verbs in this chapter and turn now to a discussion of two major types of main verbs, transitive and intransitive. We will return to auxiliary verbs in later chapters.

### **5.3 Section 3: Transitive and Intransitive Verbs**

*What are transitive and intransitive verbs?*

#### **5.3.1 Transitive Verbs**

Main verbs (as opposed to auxiliary verbs) can be classified into transitive or intransitive verbs. Transitive verbs are verbs that must be followed by an *object*. The grammatical term *object* means a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase that receives the action of the verb. Compare the following sentences:

A	B
*I mailed.	I mailed a letter.
*Lizzy copied.	Lizzy copied the sentence.
*The boys took.	The boys took a bus.
*We bought.	We bought a new car.

All the sentences under A are ungrammatical because the sentences are incomplete. Even if we add an adverb, for example, *I mailed quickly* or *We bought suddenly*, these sentences remain incomplete. This is because the verbs are **transitive** and must be followed by an object, as we see in the sentences under B. *I mailed* is followed by *a letter*; *Lizzy copied* is followed by *the sentence*, and so on.

**How can I tell what the object of a transitive verb is?**

### 5.3.1.1 Distinguishing the Object of a Transitive Verb

The object of a transitive verb can generally be determined by asking a *what* or *who* question. When we look at the sentences below, we see how making *what* or *who* questions helps determine the object of the verb.

	Question	Response = Direct Object
Pam reads books.	What does Pam read?	books
Mary and Ian drive SUVs.	What do Mary and Ian drive?	SUVs
Silvia mailed some packages.	What did Silvia mail?	some packages
Ruben e-mailed Shirley.	Who did Ruben e-mail?	Shirley
The company helps children.	Who does the company help?	children

Discovery Activity 5 gives you practice in identifying transitive verbs and their objects in authentic excerpts. When you have completed this activity, compare your answers to those in the Answer Key.

#### Discovery Activity 5: Transitive Verbs

Look at the following sentences and underline the transitive verbs.

- If you aren't sure, ask yourself a *what* question to find the object and help you identify the transitive verb.

*Example:*

When they *remodeled* their house, they *added* a second story.

*What questions:*

What did they remodel? (*their house*)

What did they add? (*a second story*)

- (a) He washed the dishes and polished all the silverware. [Asch, F. (1993). *Moondance*. New York: Scholastic. No page numbers.]
- (b) A stiff breeze started up and blew us into the air. Ahead, we saw a big blue circle. [Cole, J. (1999). *The Magic School Bus explores the senses* (p. 12). New York: Scholastic.]
- (c) The woman sat down. She carefully put her red leather bag on the seat to her left. [Adler, D. (1999). *Cam Jansen and the barking treasure mystery* (p. 13). New York: Penguin.]
- (d) I'll tell jokes. And I don't even need the speaker box. [Adler, D. (1999). *Cam Jansen and the barking treasure mystery* (p. 54). New York: Penguin.]

### ***Can the object of a transitive verb consist of more than one word?***

In Discovery Activity 5, there are several examples of objects with more than one word. In Excerpt b, for instance, the object of *saw* is the noun phrase *big blue circle*. In Excerpt c, the object of *put* is the noun phrase *red leather bag*. As you see, the object can be a noun phrase consisting of several words. Let's consider this some more by exploring what we can do with this basic sentence, *Carolyn reads books*. This sentence consists of a subject + verb + direct object. We can expand the object, *books*, as follows:

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Verb</b>	<b>Object Noun Phrase</b>
Carolyn	reads	best-selling books.
		the hottest best-selling books.
		hottest best-selling paperback books.
		the newest, hottest, best-selling paperback books.
		the newest, funniest, hottest, best-selling paperback books.

In each of the expanded sentences, we have added more words to make a longer direct object noun phrase. Yet, regardless of the length of the object, in all the sentences above the direct object can be replaced by the object pronoun *them*. All the different sentences reduce to the identical sentence, *Carolyn reads them*.

You can use such object pronoun substitution as a clue for identifying which words make up the object noun phrase.

### ***Can transitive verbs take more than one object?***

### 5.3.1.2 Di-transitive Verbs (Transitive Verbs with More Than One Object)

Some transitive verbs can take more than one object. These verbs are often called **di-transitive verbs**. When there are two objects, one is called the **direct object** and the other is called the **indirect object**. The direct object is the person or thing that receives the action of the verb:

Taylor hit **the ball**.

In this sentence, the direct object is *the ball* because it receives the action described by the verb *hit*. Now look at this sentence:

Taylor hit **the ball** *to the pitcher*.

Here the verb *hit* has two objects. There is both a direct object (*the ball*) and an indirect object (*to the pitcher*). We can describe an indirect object as the person or thing that is secondarily affected by the action of the verb.

When the indirect object follows the direct object, it is usually preceded by *to* as in our sentence here, *to the pitcher*. Sometimes the indirect object is preceded by *for*, as in *Rick opened the box for me*. This *to* or *for* can help identify the indirect object in a sentence.

Subject	Verb	Direct Object	Indirect Object With <i>to</i>
Pam	reads	books	to children.
Mary and I	are sending	money	to that charity.
You	mailed	packages and letters	to your friends.

Sometimes, speakers place the indirect object before the direct object. In this case, we drop *to* or *for* before the indirect object.

Subject	Verb	Indirect Object Without <i>to</i>	Direct Object
Pam	reads	children	books.
Mary and I	are sending	that charity	money.
You	mailed	your friends	packages and letters.

The structural clue *to* or *for* only indicates an indirect object when the indirect object follows the direct object. When the indirect object precedes the direct object, we cannot use *to* or *for* as a clue. In such instances, we must rely upon word order and semantic meaning to understand which noun phrase is the indirect object and which is the direct object.

***Is this all I need to teach my students about di-transitive verbs?***

There is one more important aspect that we need to consider. All the sentences we have looked at up to now in discussing di-transitive verbs have had object *noun phrases* and not object *pronouns*.

Look at the following sentences and think about word order and the direct and indirect object pronouns.

	<b>Direct Object</b>	<b>Indirect Object</b>	<b>Direct Object</b>
(a) Liz e-mailed	a note	to her friends.	
(b) Liz e-mailed		her friends	a note.
(c) Liz e-mailed	<b>it</b>	<b>to them.</b>	

In Sentences a and b, we see the two options we have in ordering the direct and indirect objects when they are noun phrases. Sentence c illustrates how when the object noun phrases become pronouns, the **direct** object pronoun **precedes** the **indirect** object pronoun.

***Do ESL/EFL learners find the different word order of direct and indirect objects confusing?***

- ***Learner difficulties***

Less proficient ESL/EFL learners often have difficulty with verbs that take both a direct and an indirect object and need practice in remembering the correct order of objects, particularly when the objects occur in pronoun form. ESL/EFL learners may confuse which pronoun takes which position and produce sentences such as:

\*Lynn gave *it them*.

*or*

\*Lynn gave *to them it*.

Discovery Activity 6 is designed to help you practice di-transitive verbs and pronouns. This will help prepare you for the more difficult excerpts in Discovery Activity 7. Be sure to check your answers in the Answer Key at the end of the chapter before you move on to Discovery Activity 7.

### Discovery Activity 6: Di-transitive Verbs and Pronouns

#### Part I

1. Label each *direct* object as **DO**.
2. Label each *indirect* object as **IO**.
  - (a) The college gave the outstanding students awards.
  - (b) The mother baked a chocolate cake for her daughter.
  - (c) The player passed the football to his teammate.
  - (d) The teacher is going to read her young students a different book.
  - (e) The committee granted the applicants an extension.
  - (f) The mother cut the food for the toddler.

#### Part II

Go back to the sentences in Part I and change the objects you identified to pronouns. You may have to change the word order in some of the sentences.

Now try Discovery Activity 7 and see how well you can distinguish the direct versus indirect objects. You will probably find this Discovery Activity with authentic excerpts more challenging than the previous one with teacher-created sentences. You can check your answers in the Answer Key at the end of the chapter.

### Discovery Activity 7: Transitive Verbs and Objects

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline the transitive verbs.
2. Label each *direct* object as **DO**.
3. Label each *indirect* object as **IO**.

#### A.

“I asked my old friend Captain Gil to send me tickets. We’re going today...”  
 “Yay!” Ralpie yelled... “I’ve always wanted to see a real live whale...”  
 “We might see a blue whale,” Ms. Frizzle said. “I can’t promise.” [Moore, E. (2000). *The wild whale watch (Magic School Bus #3)* (pp. 1–2). New York: Scholastic.]

#### B.

Koko was the communicator of the family. He ordered the meals, greeted the guests, told them when to go home and always, always, spoke his mind... [Jackson Braun, L. (2004). *The cat who talked turkey* (p. 9). New York: G.P. Putman’s Sons.]

**C.**

Corinne hit the minivan’s remote, and the back yawned open like a giant mouth. Thomas tossed his bag into the back and took the front passenger seat... Corinne gave him a wave. He waved back. [Coben, H. (2015). In *The stranger (chapter 5)*. Retrieved from [http://www.rednovels.com/mystery/u5778\\_11.html](http://www.rednovels.com/mystery/u5778_11.html)]

**D.**

Corinne wore the diamond studs he’d bought her at that place on Forty-Seventh Street. Adam had given them to her on their fifteenth anniversary at the Bamboo House Chinese restaurant... the waiter simply delivered them to her on one of those plates with a steel covering. [Coben, H. (2015). In *The stranger (chapter 6)*. Retrieved from [http://www.rednovels.com/mystery/u5778\\_11.html](http://www.rednovels.com/mystery/u5778_11.html)]

### 5.3.2 *Intransitive Verbs*

Intransitive verbs, unlike transitive verbs, do not need to be followed by an object. A grammatical sentence with an intransitive verb can consist of only a subject noun phrase and verb:

The train arrived.  
Owls hoot.  
The baby is crying.

An intransitive verb can be followed by something else that is not an object, such as an adverb:

Owls hoot loudly.

We can expand this sentence:

Owls hoot loudly at night.  
*or*  
Owls hoot loudly at night in the woods near their house.

Everything after *hoot* is what we refer to as a *complement*.

#### 5.3.2.1 *Intransitive Verbs and Complements*

We use the term *complement* to refer to words and phrases that follow verbs but that are not objects because they do not receive the action of the verb. A complement can be a single word or a phrase as in the “owls hoot” examples. In Discovery Activity 7, Excerpt B, the first sentence is *Koko was the communicator of the*

*family*. Here the verb is *be*, an intransitive verb, followed by a complement, *the communicator of the family*.

Additional examples of complements are:

Subject	Verb	Complement	Type
Alina	is	my best friend.	<b>noun phrase</b>
Our friends	live	in the corner house.	<b>prepositional phrase</b>
The children	are feeling	sick.	<b>adjective</b>
They	stayed	forever.	<b>adverb</b>

Discovery Activity 8 is designed to practice distinguishing intransitive verbs and their complements. You will find the answers in the Answer Key.

### Discovery Activity 8: Intransitive Verbs

Look at the following excerpts and underline the intransitive verbs.

**A.**

So the home-field advantage is real. It exists. It exists across all sports, during all time periods, in all geographies. [Coben, H. (2015). In *The stranger (chapter 7)*. Retrieved from [http://www.rednovels.com/mystery/u5778\\_11.html](http://www.rednovels.com/mystery/u5778_11.html)]

**B.**

All was ready... Qwilleran had showered and shaved and trimmed his moustache... Playing the genial host, Qwilleran stepped forward... "Mr. Hedges, I presume." [Jackson Braun, L. (2004). *The cat who talked turkey* (p. 63). New York: G. P. Putman's Sons.]

**C.**

...the land unfolds in a gigantic plateau... To the south of the Great Basin, deserts sprawl across the Intermountain regions... At the eastern edge of the Intermountain region, the elevation soars upward into the Rocky Mountains. [Ritchie, R., & Broussard, A. (1999). *American history: The early years to 1877* (p. 23). New York: Glencoe.]

*Are all main verbs either transitive or intransitive? For example, what about a verb such as eat? Can't it be both transitive and intransitive?*

### 5.3.3 Verbs that Are Transitive and Intransitive

Some verbs are both transitive and intransitive, depending on how they are used. In response to the question, *What are you doing?* we can say, *We're eating*. In this

case *eat* is being used intransitively. Even if we add a phrase after the verb, such as *in the dining room*, it is still intransitive. The phrase *in the dining room* is a complement, not an object.

However, if someone asks us, *What are you eating?* we respond by using *eat* in its transitive sense, *We're eating spaghetti* or *We're eating a large gooey chocolate brownie*. In the first sentence, *spaghetti* is the object. In the second sentence, *a large gooey chocolate brownie* is the object.

Some verbs when used intransitively versus transitively have a somewhat different meaning. Discovery Activity 9 illustrates the difference between related transitive and intransitive verbs. When you have finished, compare your answers to those in the Answer Key at the end of the chapter.

### Discovery Activity 9: Related Meanings of Transitive and Intransitive Verbs

Compare the sentences in Column A and Column B. What is the difference in meaning?

A.	B.
Alan teaches.	Alan teaches math.
Sandra drives.	Sandra drives a BMW.
Alexa reads.	Alexa reads novels.

### 5.3.4 Linking Verbs

Linking verbs are a subcategory of verbs that are both transitive and intransitive. They are called linking verbs because in their intransitive sense they “link” the subject noun phrase with something after the verb. This “something” is a complement.

Most linking verbs are related to our senses (e.g., *smell*, *hear*, or *feel*). As you examine the chart below, think about how the verbs differ in their intransitive and transitive use.

#### Linking Verbs: Transitive and Intransitive Use

A. Intransitive	B. Transitive
The rose smelled nice.	I smelled the rose.
The soup tasted salty.	The chef tasted the soup.
He didn't hear well.	He didn't hear the bell.

When you look at these sentences, you will notice that in Column A, the verb is followed by an adjective, which describes something about the subject. The verb “links” the subject and the adjective. Contrast this with Column B, where the same verbs are followed by objects. The complement following a verb or verb phrase can be longer, for example, *He didn’t hear well at all the other night.*

#### Common Linking Verbs<sup>a</sup>

taste	be <sup>b</sup>	become	continue	feel	hear
look	remain	seem	sound	smell	stay

<sup>a</sup>Some of these verbs can also be used transitively

<sup>b</sup>*be* is the most common verb in English

In addition to objects and complements, other types of structures can follow verbs and very phrases, including the topic of the next section, infinitives and gerunds.

## 5.4 Section 4: Verbs Followed by Gerunds and Infinitives

***Why can we say, I want to see a movie but not I want seeing a movie or I enjoy seeing a movie but not I enjoy to see a movie?***

The answer to this question lies in the main verb. As we will see in the following section, certain verbs are followed by the *to* infinitive form of the verb. Many verbs are followed by *infinitive verbs*. Infinitive verbs are verbs that:

- do not show time (or “tense”)
- do not have a subject and
- are preceded by *to* as in *I want to go*.

Other verbs are followed by the *-ing* form of a verb as in *I enjoy seeing movies*. This *-ing* inflection is called a *gerund*. A gerund is not a verb but is derived from a verb.

Remember that, in English, form is not equal to function. In Chap. 2 and earlier in this chapter, we saw the *-ing* functioning as the present participle of main verbs in progressive verb phrases, such as *We are sleeping*. In Chap. 4 we observed that the *-ing* forms participial adjectives, such as *the moving van* or *a growing problem*.

In Chap. 12 we will expand our discussion of gerunds (see also Appendix E). For now, it is enough to understand that some verbs are followed by an *-ing* form of another verb:

They kept *talking* all night long.

In this sentence, the verb *keep* (past tense *kept*) cannot be followed by the infinitive form of a verb:

\*They kept to talk all night long.

Common Verbs Followed by Gerunds					
acknowledge	admit	appreciate	avoid	consider	contemplate
deny	delay	enjoy	finish	keep	imagine
include	mind	mention	miss	omit	postpone
practice	put	quit	recall	recommend	regret
resist	resume	risk	suggest	tolerate	understand

This is not an exhaustive list, but it does include some of the most common verbs that are followed by gerunds. Appendix E provides a more complete list of verbs and other expressions followed by gerunds.

See how easily you recognize gerunds by completing the next Discovery Activity. Check your answers with those in the Answer Key at the end of the chapter.

### Discovery Activity 10: Recognizing Gerunds After Verbs

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline the gerunds.
2. Mark the verbs preceding the gerunds. Be careful not to confusing the *-ing* present participle of a verb phrase with a gerund.

*Example:*

The politician **admitted** telling a lie.

**A.**

“Can I do anything?” Nicky asked. “No.” Anna kept breathing, counting, feeling the pulse. [Barr, N. (2004). *High country* (p. 40). New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons.]

**B.**

I was wondering what it was like upstairs, when Mr. Newbury said in a high voice, “Well speak up, lad. Are you considering lodging here or did you have other business?” [Platt, K. (1966). *Sinbad and me* (p. 90). New York: Tempo Books.]

**C.**

Somewhere in that second day’s night of reflection, Galileo stopped writing so that the conversation among the *Dialogue*’s three characters hung suspended for several years while their author continued thinking through the intricate proofs to be presented... [Sobel, D. (2004). *Galileo’s daughter* (p. 156). New York: Penguin Books.]

**D.**

He encourages trying to fail because it is the only strategy to avoid repeating the obvious... With a delightful combination of feigned naïveté and keen eye for the messy ways that great discoveries occur, he goes so far as to suggest writing a grant proposal in which you promise to fail better. [Burton, R. (2015, December 29). Black box thinking and failure: Why science is so successful. *New York Times Sunday Book Review*. Retrieved from <http://nyti.ms/1JdYx2F>]

**E.**

By the time Galileo finished writing his book about the world systems, just as December 1629 drew to a close, he had established a new closeness with his daughter. [Sobel, D. (2004). *Galileo's daughter* (p. 187). New York: Penguin Books.]

Many verbs take infinitives, some verbs take gerunds, and still other verbs take either. When a verb can be followed by either an infinitive or the gerund, there may be a difference in meaning.

Consider the following pairs of sentences Discovery Activity 11 and see if you can explain the differences in meaning. You can find the discussion in the Answer Key.

**Discovery Activity 11: Infinitive Versus Gerund**

Compare the sentences in Column A and Column B. How do they differ in meaning?

A.	B.
I attempted to solve the problem.	I attempted solving the problem.
She remembered to write me.	She remembered writing me.
He stopped to smoke.	He stopped smoking last year.

• ***Learner difficulties***

ESL/EFL learners confuse which verbs take gerunds and which take infinitives:

\*I finished **to do** my homework.

At times ESL/EFL learners may combine the *to* and a gerund:

\*I finished **to doing** my homework.

When ESL/EFL learners confuse the gerund and infinitive, it is an error that will catch native speakers' attention but that rarely interferes with comprehension. Learners find it helpful to have a list of the most common verbs followed by the gerund since far more verbs are followed by the infinitive than by the gerund.

*If a verb takes a gerund, does the gerund always come immediately after the verb?*

### 5.4.1 Verb/Gerund Variations

Up to now, we have only looked at gerunds that immediately follow verbs. There are other patterns with gerunds, two of which we address here. We will examine additional gerund constructions in Chap. 12.

#### 5.4.1.1 Verb + Preposition + Gerund

Some verbs require a certain preposition after them. After this preposition, a gerund will follow and not an infinitive:

He thought *about leaving* early.  
They settled *on leaving* in the morning.

Gerunds coming after prepositions are considered objects of that preposition.

#### 5.4.1.2 Verb + Object + Preposition + Gerund

Other verbs may take an object between the verb and preposition + gerund, for example:

The police suspected **the tall young man** *of robbing* the bank.  
*or*  
The police suspected **him** *of robbing* the bank.

While these may seem somewhat obscure points to native speakers, they are constructions that more advanced ESL/EFL learners need to become familiar with.

See if you can identify the prepositions followed by gerunds in Discovery Activity 12. The answers are in the Answer Key.

**Discovery Activity 12: Verb + Preposition + Gerund**

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline the verbs followed by a preposition followed by a gerund.

**A.**

[Mrs. Glenn] was firmly resolved on carrying him back to Switzerland for another winter, no matter how much he objected. [Wharton, E. *Her son*. (1990/1933), In A. Brookner (Ed.), *The stories of Edith Wharton* (p. 232). New York: Carroll & Graf.]

**B.**

Where male antifeminists balked at sharing their prerogatives, females feared losing the few they had. [Burrows, E. & Wallace, M. (1999). *Gotham: A history of New York City to 1898* (p. 819). New York: Oxford University Press.]

**C.**

“Your voice is delightful,” my father answered, but I cannot refrain from pointing out that this part of the cycle carries little conviction. [Graves, R. (1982/1955). *Homer’s daughter* (p. 63). Chicago, IL: Academy Press.]

**D.**

I’m not out to hurt people, but I don’t believe in walking on eggshells. [Brown, L. (2006, June/July). *Cosmo girl* (p. 101).]

**5.5 Section 5: Phrasal Verbs**

Prepositions and adverbs combine with a main verb to form a new verb with a different meaning. Verbs that consist of more than one word have different labels, including *multiword verbs*, *two- and three-word verbs*, or *phrasal verbs*. We will refer to them here as **phrasal verbs**. A phrasal verb can have one, two, or even three prepositions/adverbs. Phrasal verbs are among the most difficult structures to teach and learn.

***In the sentence I need to pick up my mail, is the verb pick + a preposition?***

*Pick up* is an example of a verb that consists of more than one word. In this section, we explore how *up* is part of the verb itself and not functioning as a preposition.

***How can a preposition or adverb be part of a verb?***

In a phrasal verb, the preposition or adverb no longer has a literal meaning. The preposition or adverb following the verb is a part of the verb itself and gives it an idiomatic meaning. This is a concept that is difficult for native speakers and

ESL/EFL learners alike, although for different reasons. Native speakers are generally unaware that there is such a category as phrasal verbs. ESL/EFL learners have difficulty learning and remembering the many verb + preposition/adverb combinations. In order to clarify what a phrasal verb is, consider the chart below in which changing the preposition changes the meaning of the verb *take*.

<b>Different Phrasal Verbs Formed With <i>take</i></b>		
Sample sentence: They <i>take</i> the train to work.		
Meaning: use something to get somewhere		
<b>phrasal verb</b>	<b>example</b>	<b>meaning</b>
take <i>off</i>	The plane <i>takes off</i> at 9 p.m.	leaves
take <i>off on</i>	Her husband <i>took off on</i> her.	deserted
take <i>in</i>	They <i>took in</i> the stray dog.	allowed in, adopted
take <i>over</i>	The army <i>took over</i> the building.	took control of, occupied
take <i>after</i>	She <i>takes after</i> her father.	resembles, is similar to

Although the verb *take* occurs in each of the sentences, when we change the preposition/adverb after *take*, we change meaning of *take*. Because the preposition/adverb is integral to the meaning of each of these verbs and cannot be left out without changing the meaning, the preposition/adverb is functioning as part of the verb itself. Many grammar books refer to a preposition or adverb that is part of the actual verb as a *particle*. The term *particle* specifically refers to prepositions and adverbs that have combined with verbs to make new verbs and have thus lost their prepositional or adverbial function.

***How can I tell the difference again between a verb + preposition/adverb and a phrasal verb?***

### **5.5.1 Phrasal Verbs Versus Verb + Preposition/Adverb**

It is not easy to distinguish between a phrasal verb and a verb followed by a preposition or adverb, one reason that makes phrasal verbs difficult for ESL/EFL learners. Let's start by looking at the following pairs of sentences and comparing their meanings.

<b>Verb + Preposition/Adverb</b>	<b>Phrasal Verb</b>
I ran up the hill. adverb <i>up</i> = direction	I ran up a bill at the store. <i>run up</i> = charge an amount or create debt
She ran into the store. preposition <i>into</i> = place, location	She ran into her friends at the mall. <i>run into</i> = meet by accident

To help illustrate the difference between verbs followed by a preposition or adverb versus phrasal verbs, do Discovery Activity 13. Notice that the last three sentences have phrasal verbs with more than one preposition/adverb, which is not uncommon.

Discuss your answers with a classmate and/or check a dictionary.

**Discovery Activity 13: Phrasal Verbs and Meaning**

Look at the sentences below.

1. What are the meanings of the italicized phrasal verbs? What about their meaning makes these phrasal verbs and not verbs + prepositions/adverbs?
  - (a) Alyce *took out* a new life insurance policy.
  - (b) Josh always *brings up* interesting questions.
  - (c) Ben *pointed out* all the sights in the city.
  - (d) They *broke down* when they heard about their father’s sudden death.
  - (e) The professor *held back* the grades until all assignments were completed.
  - (f) Not everyone likes to *keep up on* new fashions.
  - (g) Dieters *cut down on* calories.
  - (h) We need to *get away from* the stress at work.

***Are phrasal verbs and idioms the same?***

Phrasal verbs and idioms are different types of structures. Idioms are figurative language. They are expressions whereby a group of words is used such that the meanings of these words do not relate to their literal or actual meanings:

Idiom	Meaning
He <i>kicked the bucket</i> years ago.	died
Don’t <i>bite off more than you can chew</i> or you’ll have to <i>burn the midnight oil</i> .	take on too much work or too great a task; work many hours
That car must have <i>cost an arm and a leg</i> .	be very expensive

As we have seen, a phrasal verb is not an expression. A phrasal verb, in contrast to an idiom, consists of a verb + a preposition or adverb that has lost its function and is now a particle.

***But what if I’m still unclear if it’s a phrasal verb or not?***

### 5.5.1.1 Testing for Phrasal Verbs

It can be difficult to distinguish phrasal verbs from verbs + prepositions/adverbs. There are some ways to “test” for phrasal verbs. These tests are generally more useful for native English speakers, who can rely upon native speaker intuition, than for learners of English.

#### 5.5.1.1.1 Adverb Insertion

One way to test for a phrasal verb is adverb insertion. Only when a preposition/adverb is **not** part of a phrasal verb, can we insert an adverb between the main verb and the following preposition or adverb.

Adverb Insertion Test				
	verb	adverb	preposition/adverb	complement
The car	turned	quickly	off	the road.
*The music	turned	quickly	off	me.
Rain	runs	slowly	down	this hill.
*I	ran	slowly	down	old friends on Facebook.

The first sentence of each pair allows adverb insertion (*quickly*, *slowly*) because *off* and *down* are not part of the verb itself but indicating direction. When an adverb is inserted into the second sentence in each pair, the sentence is ungrammatical, telling us that *turn off* and *run down* are phrasal verbs and that *off* and *down* are functioning as particles.

#### 5.5.1.1.2 Substitution

Another test that works for determining phrasal verbs in many cases is substituting another verb for what looks like a phrasal verb. Usually there is a single verb synonym, often less colloquial, for a phrasal verb. For example, parents *bring up* (phrasal) or *raise* their children, and John can *fix up* (phrasal) or *repair* the old car.

Discovery Activity 14 will help you practice identifying phrasal verbs using either of these two tests. Discuss your answers with your classmates.

### Discovery Activity 14: Testing for Phrasal Verbs

Look at the following excerpts.

Use either the adverb insertion or substitution test to show how the italicized words are phrasal verbs.

#### A.

It was spring vacation, and we *were hanging out* because we didn't know what else to do. The night before, I *stayed up* till midnight, *working on* my scary story about the Blob Monster. I want to be a writer when I *grow up*. [Stine, R.L. (1997). *Goosebumps: The blob that ate everything* (p. 7). New York: Scholastic.]

#### B.

[Mom and Dad] love crossword puzzles. I'm not sure why. Both of them are terrible spellers... Lots of times, they *end up* fighting about how to spell a word. Usually, they *give up* and rip the puzzle to pieces. [Stine, R. L. (1997). *Goosebumps: The blob that ate everything* (p. 28). New York: Scholastic.]

#### C.

I *burst into* the classroom, eager to tell my spy story, but class had already started. Another spelling bee. I *went down* on the first round with a hoot from Howard... I *struggled with* the class through sentence diagrams, the Revolutionary War, and some word problems involving fractions and percentages. [Nolan, P. (2000). *The spy who came in from the sea* (p. 36). Sarasota, FL: Pineapple Press.]

#### D.

I stared upward and immediately had the disorienting feeling I always did in here: that the ceiling and walls *were closing in* around me... I looked down at my clasped hands and tried to *figure out* how I'd *gotten into* this mess. [Mead, R. (2006). *Last sacrifice (Vampire Academy #6, chapter 1)*. Retrieved from <http://www.rednovels.com/fantasticfiction/u6292.html>]

*Is there more than one type of phrasal verb?*

### 5.5.2 Types of Phrasal Verbs

While all phrasal verbs have the same structure (verb + particle), there are different patterns phrasal verbs follow. Phrasal verbs can be intransitive or transitive and separable or inseparable. Phrasal verbs are classified as:

- intransitive and inseparable
- transitive and inseparable
- transitive and separable

### *Why do we need to know the different types of phrasal verbs?*

The different types of phrasal verbs function differently grammatically, as we will explore.

#### 5.5.2.1 Intransitive Inseparable

Like all intransitive verbs, intransitive phrasal verbs cannot take an object. They can be followed by a complement. These verbs are called inseparable because they do not allow the verb and preposition/adverb to be separated.

Intransitive Inseparable Phrasal Verbs	
no complement	with complement
Fitness buffs <i>work out</i> .	Elena only <i>works out</i> <b>three times a week</b> .
Marc <i>passed away</i> .	He <i>passed away</i> <b>after a long illness</b> .

#### 5.5.2.2 Transitive Inseparable

There are two types of transitive phrasal verbs, inseparable and separable. They are similar in that, like all transitive verbs, these transitive phrasal verbs take an object. They differ in what they do with the object. In transitive inseparable phrasal verbs, the object must come directly after the entire phrasal verb. This is true whether it consists of a verb + one particle or a verb + two particles and whether the object is a noun, noun phrase, or pronoun.

Transitive Inseparable Phrasal Verbs	
with object noun phrase	with pronoun object
Alison <i>ran into</i> Jack at the store.	She <i>ran into</i> <b>him</b> at the store.
The nurse is <i>looking after</i> the new patients.	She is <i>looking after</i> <b>them</b> .
It is important to <i>stand up for</i> your beliefs.	It is important to <i>stand up for</i> <b>them</b> .
They had trouble <i>coming up with</i> the answer.	They had trouble <i>coming up with</i> <b>it</b> .

#### 5.5.2.3 Transitive Separable

Transitive separable phrasal verbs tend to be the most difficult for ESL/EFL learners. Unlike the other two types, these phrasal verbs permit variable sentence position when the object is a noun or noun phrase. However, when the object is a *pronoun*, it must come **between** the verb and particle.



**B.**

“Dude, you should’ve called me, I could have picked you up.”

“No big deal, I knew you were working. It was an easy trip.”

“Well, next time you need something don’t hesitate to ask. Family before work, okay? Are you getting settled in? Is Kent treating you okay?”

“He’s actually taking a nap.”

Lance went silent for a moment. “Yeah, he’s been doing that a lot lately. Are you sure you don’t need anything?... I can come over and talk your ear off to death.” He laughed. [Cherry, B. (2014). *Art and soul*. p. 2. Retrieved from [http://www.rednovels.com/book2/u6383\\_2.html](http://www.rednovels.com/book2/u6383_2.html)]

**C.**

They might have been plumbers on a dinner break but a couple of guys got out, opened up the back, and lugged out a camera, a high-end video job. They spent about fifteen minutes setting it up, then one of them spoke on a cell phone. Ten minutes later, a shiny black van with the show’s log painted on it pulled up and parked on the street, and the cameraman filmed it all. [Vaughn, C. (2009). *Kitty raises hell*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)]

### ***What makes phrasal verbs difficult for ESL/EFL learners?***

- ***Learner difficulties***

Phrasal verbs are difficult for ESL/EFL learners for several reasons. First, the meaning of a phrasal verb is generally not obvious. In addition, phrasal verbs can have multiple meanings.

Another difficulty is producing correct structures with phrasal verbs that are transitive and separable when the object is a pronoun. ESL/EFL learners need to remember that the object must come between the verb and particle. This pattern is not easy for learners to remember.

Given the large number of phrasal verbs, their different meanings and uses, and the different structural patterns they follow, the best way to confirm whether or not a verb is a phrasal verb or not is to use a dictionary geared to learners of English. Dictionaries such as the *Cambridge Phrasal Verbs Dictionary* or the *Longman Dictionary of American English* are useful.

## 5.6 Summary

There are main verbs and auxiliary verbs.

Main Verbs	Auxiliary Verbs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have lexical meaning; add content information to a sentence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have no lexical meaning; provide grammatical information (e.g., time)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• can stand alone in simple present or simple past affirmative sentences; are otherwise accompanied by an auxiliary verb</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “help” main verbs and are followed by the present or past participle form of the main verb</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are transitive, intransitive, or both                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– intransitive = no object can follow, only a complement</li> <li>– transitive = followed by an object (noun, noun phrase, or pronoun)</li> <li>– may be followed by only an infinitive or only a gerund, or either an infinitive or gerund, sometimes with a change in meaning</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are only three in number: <i>have, be, do</i></li> </ul>

### Forms of Regular Verbs

present	present participle	past	past participle <sup>a</sup>
walk walks 3rd person singular	walking	walked	walked same ending, different function as past – <i>ed</i>

<sup>a</sup>Referred to in some grammar books as the *-en* participle because a number of irregular past participles end in *-en* (e.g., *broken, driven, and forgotten*)

Transitive Verbs	Intransitive Verbs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• require at least one object I bought <i>a new car</i>. The instructor assigned <i>homework</i>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• take no objects, only complements She’s resting. She’s resting <i>on the bench</i>.</li> </ul>

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**Phrasal Verbs**


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- consist of a main verb + preposition/adverb
    - this preposition/adverb is referred to as a *particle* because this preposition/adverb is integral to meaning of the verb; removing or changing the preposition/adverb changes the meaning of the verb
  - are intransitive and inseparable: *The lost dog **turned up** the other day.*
  - are transitive and inseparable: *I **came across** a good bookstore.*
  - are transitive and separable: *He **looked me up**.*
- 

**Examples of Common Phrasal Verbs**


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<b>about</b>	come about, see about, throw about
<b>at</b>	come at, get at, go at
<b>away</b>	drive away, get away, peel away
<b>back</b>	keep back, give back, take back
<b>down</b>	break down, knock down, wind down
<b>for</b>	fall for, head for, make for
<b>in</b>	drop in, check in, fill in, phase in
<b>into</b>	crowd into, make into, talk into
<b>off</b>	hold off, put off, write off
<b>on</b>	egg on, keep on, log on, pick on
<b>out</b>	cut out, drop out, find out, rule out
<b>over</b>	blow over, get over, take over
<b>through</b>	pull through, sit through, talk through
<b>to</b>	gear to, resort to, stoop to
<b>up</b>	draw up, give up, talk up, stock up
<b>with</b>	bear with, finish with, go with

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**Auxiliary Rule for Negative Statements and Questions**


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<b>negative statements</b>	<b>questions</b>
• If there is an auxiliary verb, place <i>not</i> after the auxiliary verb.	• If there is an auxiliary verb, invert the subject and the auxiliary verb.
• If there is no auxiliary verb, insert the <i>do</i> auxiliary and add <i>not</i> .	• If there is no auxiliary verb, insert the <i>do</i> auxiliary before the subject and keep the main verb in its simple or base form.

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## 5.7 Practice Activities

### Activity 1: *be, have, do*

1. Underline all the instances of *be, have* and *do* you find.
2. Decide whether *be, have, and do* are being used as main verbs or auxiliary verbs.

- If the verb is being used as an auxiliary verb, explain its function in the sentence.

*Example:*

“Did you see the license plate this time?” Stephen asked. He *was* anxious.

auxiliary—did necessary to form a past tense question

main verb: see—tense is carried by the *did* auxiliary

main verb: *was*—past tense 3rd person singular subject “he”

**A.**

“Obviously, water doesn’t flow backward... “Why don’t you tell the truth? The stuff is coming from that damn storage dump... I was saying it back in seventy and I’ll say it now: Allowing that PCB dump was a big mistake. [Spencer-Fleming, J. (2003). *A fountain filled with blood* (p. 6). New York: ThomasDunne Books.]

**B.**

“Paul,” Clare said, “it’s time. The pilot’s going to warm up the engines now.”... Paul stepped forward. “Did I ask you about taking care of the dogs?” [Spencer-Fleming, J. (2003). *A fountain filled with blood* (p. 15). New York: Thomas Dunne Books.]

**C.**

The bride and bridegroom do not have any etiquette problems that Miss Manners knows of, other than the ones you may cause... Miss Manners congratulates you, both on your daughter and on your realization that parenthood does funny things to objectivity. It also does things to one’s schedule. It is up to the parents to make the necessary compromises without passing the burden on to others. Babies do not belong at wedding receptions... Champagne is not good for them, and it does them no good to catch the bouquet. [Martin, J. (1989). *Miss Manners guide for the turn-of-the millennium* (pp. 228–229). New York: Pharos Books.]

**Activity 2: *be***

The verb *be* is the most common English verb.

1. Choose a paragraph of at least 10 lines in a newspaper, magazine, or book.
2. Circle all the instance of the verb *be*.
3. Count how many instances of the verb *be* you find.
4. Identify which ones are auxiliary uses of *be* and which ones are main uses.
5. Discuss how you could use an activity such as this for learners of English.

**Activity 3: *Transitive and Intransitive Verbs***

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Label the transitive verbs with a **T**.
2. Label the intransitive verbs with an **I**.



**B.**

Historic Speedwell in Morristown is the scene of one of the most important American achievements. It was here that Samuel Morse and Alfred Vail spent years perfecting the electromagnetic telegraph.... [Hudson, B. (1998). *New Jersey day trips: A guide to outings in New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania & Delaware* (8th ed., p. 47). Green Village, NJ: Woodmont Press.]

**C.**

Dear Miss Manners: A few months ago, I got a job at a wonderful company. I admire the pleasant group of people with whom I work, people who would never consider hurting others under normal circumstances. However, I have just discovered that every year, the members of my company go on a retreat where they are required to discuss what they really think about one another... How can I handle this horrible situation and avoid hurting others or getting my feelings hurt? [Martin, J. (1989). *Miss Manners guide for the turn-of-the millennium* (pp. 128–129). New York: Pharos Books.]

**Activity 5: Phrasal Verbs**

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline the phrasal verbs.
2. Discuss how you identified them.

**A.**

Infections caused by viruses, fungi and other assorted critters never respond to antibiotics. As special drugs are developed for them, new foes such as bird flu crop up. [Simon, H. (2006, December 11). Old bugs learn some new tricks. *Newsweek*, p. 74.]

**B.**

Somehow we got tricked into blowing up the VNS systems, pretty much shut the whole thing down. Sarah's parents—who'd been kidnapped, mind you—show up out of the blue to rescue us from jail... [Dashner, J. (2015). *The game of lives (The mortality doctrine)*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from amazon.com]

**C.**

I had one little glimpse of another thing... It was just what I needed, in order to carry out my project of escape... you get my idea; you see what a stunning dramatic surprise I would wind up with at the palace. It was all feasible, if I could only get hold of a slender piece of iron which I could shape into a lock-pick. [Twain, M. (1972 edition). A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court. In *The Family Mark Twain* (vol. 2), (p. 841). New York: Harper & Row.]

**D.**

"Well, we should be getting back, I guess?" Nancy said... There's just something about MLA, I think. Everybody goes into a kind of bizarre state. It brings out the worst in people." "Could it bring out murder?"... "Well, you know, there *is* a person I would just love to see done away with," she told him crisply... It's a certain 'Sharon'... And the reason I'm almost sure to do her in—Nancy was looking straight at Boaz—has to do with the conniving she did to get her son hired at Boston... I was with Ruth last year when she ran into this Sharon jerk." [Jones, D. H. H. (1993). *Murder at the MLA* (pp. 132–133). Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.]

**Activity 6: Error Analysis A: Do and Gerunds/Infinitives**

The following excerpts were written by learners of English. There are different types of errors because these are samples taken from actual students. However, **only pay attention** to the errors relating to:

- the *do* auxiliary and
- verbs requiring gerunds or infinitives

For each error:

- correct the error.
- discuss why the writer may have made the error (remember to ignore any other errors).

**A.**

When we chat with others, we usually use our own nicknames. They are not real names and we no like to becoming known; that's why many anonymous crimes happen.

**B.**

"Snow White" or "Cinderella" is one of the most popular fiction stories for children. Why most people know these stories? In "Snow White" the princess ate an apple that she got from stranger. This story means that you should avoid to talk or get something, especially food, from stranger.

**C.**

I believe that people study at college or university to expanding their knowledge, to obtaining a better job, and to networking with people of same area of interest. In college or university you don't not pick your classmate, but you pick your class.

**D.**

The king is not a fair person. He don't want the princess marry the young man, so he fails following the law. The princess didn't want to seeing her lover's death by the tiger. She already had lost him so she pointed out to him the wrong door because she doesn't wanted his happiness with the lady.

**5.8 Answer Key****Discussion: Discovery Activity 1***Excerpt A*

steps, lights, sets, beckon, yields

*Excerpt B*

regular past tense verbs: grabbed, looked, jerked, wriggled, sniffed, wagged

irregular past tense verbs: fell (fall), stood (stand)

*Excerpt C*

trickles, ache, create, feel, slap, tell, make, seek (someone) out

*Excerpt D*

asked, took, began, followed

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 2**

In this discussion, you may see terms that are unfamiliar to you. Don't worry if you don't understand all the terms. The important point to take away from this activity is the ability to distinguish between main verbs and auxiliary verbs.

**A.**

*Be, have, and do* are main verbs. They are main verbs because they contain lexical or content information.

*have*

In Sentences 1 and 2, *have* refers to possession. Sentence 1 is present tense, and Sentence 2 is past tense.

*be*

In Sentences 3 and 4, *be* is telling us something about Jo. Sentence 3 is present tense, 3rd person singular, and Sentence 4 is past tense.

*do*

In Sentences 5 and 6, *do* means "perform" or "execute." Sentence 5 is in present tense 3rd person singular form, and Sentence 6 is past verb tense.

**B.**

Remember, you will find a complete discussion of the different verb tenses in Chap. 6. This is intended only as an introduction and much of the terminology may be unfamiliar.

*Have, be, and do* are functioning as auxiliary verbs. *Have* and *do* indicate time references; *do* supports present and past tense negation, and question formation.

*have*

In Sentences 1 and 2, *have* carries no semantic meaning but indicates time; it shows whether something is present or past and combines with the *past* participle (*-ed*) of the main verb to form a verb phrase.

Sentence 1: *have* part of verb phrase *have liked*, present perfect tense.

Sentence 2: *had* part of verb phrase, *had liked*, past perfect tense.

*be*

In Sentences 3 and 4, *be* carries no semantic meaning but indicates time and person/number; it shows whether something is present or past and combines with the *present* participle (*-ing*) of the main verb to form a verb phrase.

Sentence 3: *is* part of verb phrase *is teaching*, present progressive tense, 3rd person singular.

Sentence 4: *was* part of verb phrase *was teaching*, past progressive tense, 3rd person singular.

### do

In Standard American English, all present tense verbs except *be* require the use of the *do* auxiliary to form negative statements in present tense and past tense. *Do* carries no semantic meaning but indicates time and person/number. The main verb does not change its form when the *do* auxiliary is present because *do* carries the time inflection (present or past). In the case of the simple present, *do* also inflects for 3rd person singular (*does*).

Sentence 5: *does* part of negative verb phrase *does not like*, present tense.

Sentence 6: *did* part of negative verb phrase *did not like*, past tense.

### **Discussion: Discovery Activity 3**

The name of the tense with *be* or *have* as an auxiliary verb is provided, but not something you are expected to be able to know at this point. The purpose of the activity is to be able to distinguish *be* and *have* as main verbs versus when they are functioning as auxiliary verbs. The verb tenses are labeled. For a full discussion of verb tenses, see Chap. 6.

#### *Excerpt A*

Main verb: My wife *is*; She *is*; I *am*; my shoulders *are*; my wife *has*  
 Auxiliary verb *be*: She *is + going* (present progressive)

#### *Excerpt B*

Main verb: Elder Lian's face *is*; I *was*  
 Auxiliary verb *be*: Elder Lian *is + examining*; I'm *+ holding* (I'm = I am; present progressive)

#### *Excerpt C*

Main verb: He *had*; I *was*  
 Auxiliary verb *be*: He *was + wearing*; he *was + carrying* (past progressive)  
 Auxiliary verb *have*: The professor who *had + agreed*; the meeting *had + not turned* (past perfect)

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 4***Excerpt A*

*did* main verb, past  
*don't (usually) commit* auxiliary *do*, negative, present

*Excerpt B*

*Did you run* auxiliary *do*, question, past  
*Do you like* auxiliary *do* question, present  
*Do you fish* auxiliary *do* question, present  
*didn't like* auxiliary *do*, negative, past  
*don't dive* auxiliary *do*, negative, present  
*don't think* auxiliary *do*, negative, present  
*did some diving* main verb, past  
*did a few* main verb, past  
*do anything* main verb, present

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 5**

Transitive verbs: washed, polished, blew, saw, put, tell, need

Intransitive verbs: started up, smiled, sat

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 6****Part I**

Direct objects: awards, a chocolate cake, the football, a different book, an extension, the food

Indirect objects: the outstanding students, her daughter, his teammate, her young students, the applicant, the toddler

**Part II**

The college gave them to them (correct but awkward).

The mother baked it for her.

The player passed it to him.

The teacher is going to read it to them.

The committee granted it to them.

The mother cut it for him *or* her (We don't know the gender of the toddler, so either object pronoun is correct).

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 7***Excerpt A*

transitive verbs: asked, send, see  
 direct objects: old friend Captain Gil, tickets, a real live whale, a blue whale  
 indirect object: me (The sentence could be changed to... *to send tickets to me*)

*Excerpt B*

transitive verbs: ordered, greeted, told, spoke  
 direct objects: the meals, the guests, them, his mind

*Excerpt C*

transitive verbs: hit, tossed, took, gave  
 direct objects: the minivan's remote, his bag, the front passenger seat, a wave  
 indirect object: him (The sentence could be changed to... *gave a wave to him*)

*Excerpt D*

transitive verbs: wore, bought, had given, delivered  
 direct objects: the diamond studs, her, them, them,  
 indirect objects: to her, to her

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 8***Excerpt A*

Intransitive verbs: is, exists, exists

*Excerpt B*

Intransitive verbs: was, showered, shaved, stepped, presume

- *shave* is both intransitive and transitive verb. Here it is used intransitively. It can also be used transitively, as in *The barber shaved Quilleran*

*Excerpt C*

Intransitive verbs: *unfolds, sprawl, soars*

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 9**

The verbs in Column A express a general fact or truth, while the verbs in Column B describe something specific about this general fact or truth. The direct object after the verb limits or restricts the verb to describe a particular type of action.

*Alan teaches* refers to his profession, while *Alan teaches math* specifies what he teaches.

*Sandra drives* is a statement of an action she is capable of performing, while *Sandra drives a BMW* tells us what kind of car she drives.

*Alexa reads* tells us about her ability, while *Alexa reads novels* describes what type of book she reads.

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 10**

*Excerpt A*

kept (irregular past form of *keep*) breathing, counting, feeling  
 anything any + thing (single morpheme, not *-ing* ending)

*Excerpt B*

are considering lodging  
 are considering are (auxiliary verb) considering (present participle) = present progressive verb phrase  
 Examples such as this one are confusing. Both the present participle and the gerund have an *-ing* inflection, but the grammatical function of this inflection is different.

*Excerpt C*

stopped writing, continued thinking

*Excerpt D*

encourage trying, avoid repeating, suggest writing

*Excerpt E*

finished writing

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 11**

<i>Column A</i>	<i>Column B</i>
• describes a mental effort with a hoped-for conclusion	• describes a process engaged in, but not completed successfully
• describes a particular action	• describes a mental process or state
• describes a single event	• describes a habit

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 12**

In Excerpts A, B, C, and D, one example in each of a verb + preposition + gerund:

- A. resolved on carrying
- B. balked at sharing (Note: *feared losing* is an example of a verb + gerund.)
- C. refrain from pointing out
- D. believe in walking (Note: *walk on eggshells* is an idiom)

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 15***Excerpt A*

transitive, inseparable: turn into + a couch potato; settles for + golf or tennis

transitive, separable: packs up + her surfboard (*She packs it up.*)

*Excerpt B*

transitive, separable: picked *you* up

intransitive, inseparable: settled in, come over

*talk your ear off* is an example of an idiom

*Excerpt C*

intransitive, inseparable: got out, pulled up

*got out* can be either intransitive as here or transitive separable as in *I got my wallet out*

transitive, separable: opened up + the back (*opened it up*), lugged out (*lugged it out*), setting + it + up

# Chapter 6

## Time, Tense, and Aspect of Verbs

**Abstract** In the previous chapter, we began our observation of verbs as a class. In this chapter, we will be examining how English verbs function to express the time of an event (tense) and information regarding the duration or completion of an event (aspect). The chapter is divided into five sections. Section 6.1 reviews verb inflections one more time and introduces the concept of time, tense, and aspect. Sections 6.2–6.5 delve into the different English verb tenses: Sect. 6.2 looks at the present; Sect. 6.3 the past; Sect. 6.4 the future; and Sect. 6.5 the perfect.

**Keywords** verb tenses • present tenses • progressive tenses • aspect • perfect tenses

### 6.1 Section 1: Verbs and Inflections

You may recall our discussion in Chap. 1 of how early English grammarians attempted to impose Latin and Greek grammatical concepts and terminology onto English and how these are often inadequate for describing the structure of English. This is particularly true in the case of verbs because English is a language that does not inflect to show tense to the degree that Latin, Greek, and many other European languages do. Traditional descriptions of English verb tenses are often unsatisfactory, complicated, and confusing. This chapter attempts to present clearly the essentials of English verbs and time reference in view of what ESL/EFL learners need to know when learning English.

We have examined verb inflections in various chapters previously. Each time we have emphasized that in English form is not equal to function. We have also observed repeatedly that although English has only eight inflections, these inflections cause many of the difficulties ESL/EFL learners encounter. The following chart summarizes again the inflections for English verbs.

English Verb Inflections			
he, she, it	–s	simple present tense, 3rd person singular	walks
I, you, we, they, he, she, it	–ed	simple past tense	walked

### *Are you saying that these inflections show all the verb tenses?*

As you look at this chart, you may be thinking to yourself that there is something missing. How can only these two inflections reflect all the possible time references in English? They cannot, which leads us to a key point of this chapter: Verbs show little inflection in English, but there are many ways to show time references. Most commonly, verbs combine with the auxiliaries *have* and *be* to show what is known as *aspect*.

## 6.1.1 Time, Tense, and Aspect

### *What does aspect mean? Why can't we just say tense?*

In English, the grammatical labels *past* and *present* do not necessarily correspond to time in the real world, but rather to grammatical features of the verbs. English uses a variety of structures to express different time references. One important structure that functions together with tense is *aspect*. Aspect refers to how English indicates temporal features such as duration, frequency, and completion.

Aspect is indicated by composite tenses. This means that the verb phrase is composed of an auxiliary verb + a main verb. There are two different aspects in English: the progressive and the perfect. In the previous chapter in our discussion of the auxiliary verbs *have* and *be*, we saw how these two auxiliaries help main verbs.

When *be* combines with main verbs, the verb phrase shows the *progressive* aspect.<sup>1</sup> We use the label *progressive* because the verb phrase describes the ongoing nature of an event or action. A progressive verb phrase consists of the auxiliary *be* in either present or past tense + the present participle of the main verb.

Progressive Aspect			
subject	auxiliary <i>be</i>	present participle (verb + <i>-ing</i> )	time reference
Taylor	is	walking.	<b>present</b>
Taylor	was	walking.	<b>past</b>

<sup>1</sup>Some grammar texts use the term *continuous* rather than progressive.

When *have* combines with a main verb, the verb phrase shows the *perfect* aspect. The perfect aspect describes the relationship between an earlier event or action with a later event or action. A perfect verb phrases consists of the auxiliary *have* in either present or past tense + the past participle of the main verb.

<b>Perfect Aspect</b>			
<b>subject</b>	<b>auxiliary <i>have</i></b>	<b>past participle (verb + <i>-ed</i>)<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>time reference</b>
Taylor	has	walked.	<b>present</b>
Taylor	had	walked.	<b>past</b>

<sup>a</sup>There are numerous irregular past participles. See Appendix A

Because the regular past tense *-ed* and the past participle *-ed* inflections look identical, some grammar books refer to the past participle inflection as the *-en* inflection to differentiate it from the past inflection. This reference is derived from the fact that a number of common irregular past participles take an *-en* inflection on the verb (e.g., *eaten*, *driven*, *written*).

Try the next three Discovery Activities and see how much you already know about time, tense, and aspect. Be sure to check your answers after you complete each Discovery Activity in the Answer Key before you move on to the next Discovery Activity. This will help you if you are having problems with any of the activities.

In this chapter, all the discussions and answers are in the Answer Key.

**Discovery Activity 1: Time 1**

1. Look at the following pairs of sentences.
2. All the sentences refer to present time. Try to explain the differences.

<b>A.</b>	<b>B.</b>
The children walk to school.	The children are walking to school.
The dog barks.	The dog is barking.
She is sick.	*She is being sick.

**Discovery Activity 2: Time 2**

1. Look at the following pairs of sentences.
2. All the sentences refer to past time. Try to explain the differences.

<b>C.</b>	<b>D.</b>
The children walked to school.	The children were walking to school.
The dog barked.	The dog was barking.
She was sick.	*She was being sick.

**Discovery Activity 3: Time 3**

1. Look at the following pairs of sentences.
2. All the sentences refer to past time. Try to explain the differences.

<b>E.</b>	<b>F.</b>
The children walked to school.	The children have walked to school.
The dog barked.	The dog has barked.
She was sick.	She had been sick.

Now that you have a general idea of time, tense, and aspect, we will explore the different verb tenses of English and the different ways English refers to time and aspect.

## 6.2 Section 2: Present

### 6.2.1 *Simple Present*

The first thought many people have when seeing the phrase *simple present tense* is that this refers to something taking place now. Yet, as illustrated by the sentences in Discovery Activity 1: Time 1, present time generally does not refer to events taking place now. Instead, the label *present time* refers to general habits, customs, characteristics, or truths. If speakers wish to refer to an action occurring at the moment of speaking, they use the *present progressive*. An important exception to this is the *narrative present*, that is, when a speaker describes in narrative form a series of events such as in a play-by-play account of a sporting event.

The simple present tense consists of the main verb in its simple form, except in 3rd person singular when the *-s* inflection is added to the main verb. You will recall from Chap. 5 that for questions and negatives in the simple present and past, we need to add the *do* auxiliary. As we observed in that chapter, the *do* auxiliary is a filler verb. It must be there to fulfill a grammatical requirement of English but has no semantic meaning. The sentence types in present tense are summarized in the chart below.

Sentence Types: Simple Present Tense				
auxiliary	subject	auxiliary (+not)	verb	sentence type
	The girl We		walks. walk.	affirmative
	The girl We	does not do not	walk. walk.	negative
Does Do	the girl we		walk? walk?	question

*What can I tell my students about when to use the simple present tense?*

### 6.2.1.1 Uses of Simple Present

The simple present is frequently explained as describing *timeless* events, that is, referencing something that has no terminal point. Often frequency adverbs, such as we saw in Chap. 4, are used in conjunction with the simple present to express the frequency of an event or action:

- Maggie and Katie *always* drink coffee at breakfast.
- I *never* take the bus home.
- George *usually* calls before he comes.

Guidelines: Simple Present	
<b>Simple present is used to:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• describe repeated actions, customs, habits</li> </ul>	Nick <i>leaves</i> for school at 8:00. Casey and her brother <i>work</i> at a bank.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• describe general truths or facts</li> </ul>	The sun <i>rises</i> in the east. The president and his family <i>live</i> in the White House.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• describe certain characteristics, mental states, emotions, senses</li> <li>• <i>feel, smell, taste</i> used intransitively, with the idea of using one of the “five senses”</li> <li>• <i>hear, see</i> used transitively with the idea of using one of the “five senses”<sup>24</sup></li> </ul>	Gina <i>is</i> thin. The sky <i>looks</i> gray. Good teachers <i>understand</i> their students. Ma <i>loves</i> pizza. Helen <i>seems</i> happy. A baby’s skin <i>feels</i> smooth. The soup <i>smells</i> delicious. The noodles <i>taste</i> salty. The audience <i>hears</i> the orchestra tuning up. The worshippers believe God <i>sees</i> everything.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• narrate stories and events</li> </ul>	“And the batter hits the ball into the outfield for another home run for the Yankees.” “She gets up, turns on the oven, leaves the room, and the next thing you know, there’s smoke coming out of the kitchen.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• summarize stories, articles</li> </ul>	The president addresses the soldiers and asks for their continued support in the fight against terrorism. The reviewer argues that the conclusions presented by the researchers are erroneous.

<sup>24</sup>These are the linking verbs, introduced in Chap. 5. *Feel, smell, taste, hear,* and *see* are also called verbs of perception or sensory verbs

- **Learner difficulties**

A common problem among ESL/EFL students is using simple present tense when referring to something happening now when native speakers would prefer the present progressive.

More significantly for ESL/EFL learners are problems using the *do* auxiliary correctly, an issue explored in the previous chapter. To recap briefly, learners frequently forget to insert *do* in questions and negatives and/or to inflect *do* and the main verb correctly.

*If the present tense doesn't refer to something happening now, which tense does refer to current events or happenings?*

## 6.2.2 Present Progressive

The progressive aspect shows the ongoing nature of an event. Progressive verbs are composite verbs. We call them composite verbs because they have more than one part. All progressive verbs require *be* + present participle. This means we need the *be* auxiliary in the appropriate tense (present or past) plus the present participle (*-ing*) of the main verb. The auxiliary tells us the time, and the present participle indicates the aspect or the duration of an event or action. The *present progressive* describes events occurring now, at the moment of speaking. Because it describes present time, the auxiliary verb *be* must be either *am*, *is*, or *are*.

As we saw in Chap. 5, when an auxiliary verb is already part of the verb phrase, it is not necessary to use *do* to form questions or negatives. Instead, we invert the subject and the auxiliary verb to form questions. For negatives, we place *not* after the auxiliary. The sentence types are summarized below.

Sentence Types: Present Progressive				
auxiliary	subject	auxiliary (+not)	present participle	sentence type
	Jenny	is	leaving.	affirmative
	Jenny	is <b>not</b>	leaving.	negative
<b>Is</b>	Jenny		leaving?	question

*Don't we sometimes use the present progressive to refer to events that take place over a relatively long period of time?*

The concept of *now* is subjective in the mind of the speaker. Generally, when teaching the present progressive to beginning learners of English, teachers emphasize the aspect *now* or *at this moment*. As learners become more proficient,

it is necessary for them to be exposed to more subjective uses of *now* reflecting longer periods of time, yet still temporary and contrasting with the timeless sense of the simple present. For example, consider these sentences:

He is studying at Cornell University.  
They are living in Europe.

*He is studying at Cornell University* can refer to a time period of four years and *They are living in Europe* can refer to a decade. So while these are current events in the mind of the speaker, they are not “current” or “now” in the sense often conveyed by ESL/EFL grammar texts.

In summary, the present progressive is used to describe temporary events and actions that have a beginning and an end. Although this time period may be relatively long, the key point is that it is temporary and limited. By using the progressive aspect, speakers emphasize the duration of an event or action, whether this duration is momentary, short, or relatively long.

### ***What is difficult about the present progressive for ESL/EFL learners?***

- ***Learner difficulties***

A key difficulty with composite verbs such as the present progressive is remembering both parts of the verb phrase: *be* and the present participle. ESL/EFL learners often forget the *be* auxiliary in attempting to form the present progressive and will produce incomplete verb phrases such as:

\*We **going** home.  
\*I **e-mailing** you about my problem.

If you are not confident that you can clearly identify the present progressive, you will find it helpful to complete Discovery Activity 4. Note that many of the examples use the contracted forms of *be*, which we saw in a previous chapter.

#### **Discovery Activity 4: Present Progressive**

1. Read the following excerpts.
2. Underline the verbs in the present progressive. Be sure to underline all parts of the verb phrase.

#### **A.**

“What are they doing?”  
... They’re putting down their names,” the Gryphon whispered in reply, “for fear they should forget them before the end of the trial.” [Carroll, L. (1865). *Alice’s adventures in Wonderland*. Available at [https://www.adobe.com/be\\_en/active-use/pdf/Alice\\_in\\_Wonderland.pdf](https://www.adobe.com/be_en/active-use/pdf/Alice_in_Wonderland.pdf)]

**B.**

Dean asked Leach, “Chief, how come everybody’s hanging around in the barracks?”...

Leach grinned broadly at him. “Well, Dean, nobody’s doing any work because this is Saturday. We’re all on liberty.” [Sherman, D., & Cragg, D. (1997). *Starfist: First to fight. Book I* (pp. 117–118). New York: DelRey.]

**C.**

“I’m taking a few days off, to see an old friend who’s dying of cancer,” said Joe Burner. “I have at this date twenty-seven friends who are dying of cancer.” [Cheever, J. (1959). *The wapshot scandal* (p. 188). New York: Harper & Row.]

The next Discovery Activity allows you to see how the simple present tense is used in narratives. The purpose of this activity is to help you to clarify your thinking so that you can better explain to your learners why in certain situations we use the simple present and not the present progressive, even though the events are occurring now.

**Discovery Activity 5: Simple Present, Not Present Progressive**

Read the following excerpts.

1. Underline the verbs in the excerpts.
2. Explain why the simple present tense is used in these two excerpts. For example, in Excerpt A, we see the present tense used with *now*, even though *now* is generally associated with the present progressive. Why is this so?

**A.**

You *now* face a new world, a world of change. The thrust into outer space of the satellite spheres and missiles marks a beginning of another epoch in the long story of mankind... We deal *now*, not with things of this world alone, but with the... unfathomed mysteries of the universe. [MacArthur, D. (1962, May 12). General Douglas MacArthur reminds West Point cadets of duty, honor, Country. In W. Safire (Ed.). *Lend me your ears: Great speeches in history* (rev. ed., p. 72). New York: Norton.]

**B.**

I run into Jane on the street. We speak of a woman we both know whose voice is routinely suicidal. Jane tells me the woman called her the other day at seven a.m. [Gornick, V. (1996). Approaching eye level. In P. Lopate (Ed.), *Writing New York: A literary anthology* (p. 137). New York: The Library of America.]

***Can we use all verbs in the present progressive?***

### 6.2.2.1 Verbs not Used in Present Progressive

Some verbs are not usually used in the present progressive. These are usually non-action verbs, also called *stative* verbs (think “state” as in “state of mind”) because they describe:

- states
- attitudes
- perceptions
- emotions
- existence

These verbs are used in the present tense, even when describing something taking place now. The following chart lists some of the more common stative verbs.

Common Stative Verbs					
believe	hear	know	please	see	think
feel	(dis)like	love	prefer	smell	understand
hate	guess	mean	recognize	suppose	want
have	imagine	need	remember	taste	wish

#### *Are stative verbs difficult for ESL/EFL learners?*

- *Learner difficulties*

ESL/EFL learners may not know or forget which verbs are generally not used in the present progressive and produce sentences such as:

- \*I'm preferring to go home now.
- \*She's not believing me.

An area of confusion for ESL/EFL learners lies in the different meanings certain stative verbs have when they are used in the simple present versus when they are used in the present progressive. Some stative verbs have different and often idiomatic meanings when they are used in the present progressive.

Consider, for instance, the common greeting card line, *I'm thinking of you*. Here the present progressive form emphasizes that you are keeping that person in your thoughts at this time. Contrast this with the statement, *I think he's right*. In this instance, you are stating a thought.

Discovery Activity 6 focuses on distinguishing the meaning of some of the stative verbs when used in the present tense and in the present progressive.

### Discovery Activity 6: Simple Present, Present Progressive, and Change in Meaning

1. Look at the following pairs of sentences in A and B.
2. Explain the differences in meaning.

A	B
1a. A rose smells sweet.	2a. The children are smelling the rose.
1b. The noodles taste salty.	2b. The chef is tasting the noodles.
1c. I see without glasses.	2c. They are seeing their father this weekend.
1d. What do you think of Brad Pitt?	2d. I'm thinking of going to Moscow.
1e. Joe is a bad boy.	2e. Joe's being a bad boy.
1f. Connor has a girlfriend.	2f. Scott is having a sandwich.

## 6.3 Section 3: Past

### 6.3.1 Simple Past

The simple past is used to describe completed past actions or events. As we have seen, there is only one past inflection for all regular past tense verbs, the *-ed* added to the verb. There are many irregular past tense forms, including some of the most common verbs in English: *went*, *had*, *ate*, *drank*, *wrote*, *drove*, *was*, and *were*.

To form questions and negatives, simple past tense verbs require the past form of the *do* auxiliary, *did*, as we saw in Chap. 5. Remember also that the main verb is in simple or base form, that is, with no inflections or *to* before it.

The different sentence types in simple past are summarized below.

Sentence Types: Simple Past				
auxiliary	subject	auxiliary (+not)	verb	sentence type
	Sue		walked.	affirmative
	Sue	did not	walk.	negative
Did	Sue		walk?	question

*Do ESL/EFL learners have problems with the did auxiliary?*

• **Learner difficulties**

The *did* auxiliary is difficult for many ESL/EFL learners. They have the same problems using this auxiliary in the simple past that they have with using it with the simple present. These problems include:

- forgetting to insert *did* for questions and negative statements.
  - \*They **no wanted** her help.
- using *did* together with the *-ed* inflection or the irregular form of the verb, rather than leaving the main verb in its base form.
  - \*She **didn't liked** that story.
  - \***Did** he **went** home already?
- using *do* instead of *did*.
  - \*They **don't** want to come last night.

*If all regular past tense verbs take the same –ed inflection, why does the ending sound different? We pronounce walked with a “t” sound but pronounce called with a “d” sound.*

**6.3.1.1 Pronunciation of –ed**

Although there is only one past tense inflection for regular verbs, there is a difference in pronunciation when the *-ed* inflection is added. The change in pronunciation depends on what **sound** the verb ends in. The different pronunciations of *-ed* are not reflected in written English. Be careful not to confuse the *spelling* with the *pronunciation* of the final sound of a verb before the addition of the *-ed*. The following chart shows the different pronunciations of the *-ed* inflection.

Pronunciation of <i>-ed</i>		
final sound of verb	pronunciation of <i>-ed</i>	examples
verbs that end in the sounds <i>p, k, f, s, sh,</i> and <i>ch</i>	<i>t</i> sound	help <b>ed</b> , bak <b>ed</b> , cough <b>ed</b> missed, wash <b>ed</b> , pitch <b>ed</b>
verbs that end in the <b>sounds</b> <i>d</i> or <i>t</i>	<i>id</i> sound, extra syllable added	want <b>ed</b> , need <b>ed</b>
all other verb <b>sound endings</b> <i>b, g, v, z, zh, th, j, m, n, ng, l, r,</i> or vowel sound	<i>d</i> sound	rob <b>bed</b> , drag <b>ged</b> , shav <b>ed</b> , buzz <b>ed</b> , garag <b>ed</b> , breath <b>ed</b> , rag <b>ed</b> , blam <b>ed</b> , ruin <b>ed</b> , ping <b>ed</b> , call <b>ed</b> , order <b>ed</b> , ow <b>ed</b> , play <b>ed</b> , ralli <b>ed</b>

It is important to emphasize with ESL/EFL learners that the pronunciation of *-ed* depends on the final **sound** of a verb, and **not the spelling** of the verb. The verb *cough*, for instance, is not spelled with an *f* but has an *f* sound; the verb *fix* is written with an *x* but has a final *s* sound. Both *cough* and *fix*, therefore, take the *t* pronunciation of the *-ed* past tense inflection.

Discovery Activity 7 provides practice both in identifying past tense verb and in recognizing the different pronunciation patterns of *-ed*. You may need to refer back to the chart above to help you remember the pronunciation rules.

### Discovery Activity 7: Past Tense Identification and Pronunciation

Look at the excerpts.

#### Part I

1. Underline the past tense verbs. There are regular and irregular verbs.
2. For the irregular verbs you underlined, write the base form.

#### A.

Gently, I tugged at the knot, pulling it carefully apart... Her shiny brown hair was thick, but the brush glided down... Her shoulders relaxed, and then she sighed deeply. [Shapiro, R. (2004). *Miriam the medium* (p. 81). New York: Simon & Shuster.]

#### B.

He ran across the lawn and leaped over the three white wood steps. His heel struck the slate floor of the porch. He skidded but righted himself without having to grab the railing. He looked back at Danny and Encyclopedia and grinned cockily. When he got no answer to the doorbell, Bugs walked a step to the window that faced onto the porch. He rapped on the glass. [Sobol, D. (1996). *Encyclopedia Brown finds the clues* (p. 19). New York: BantamSkyllark.]

#### C.

When Mrs. Frederick C. Little's second son arrived, everybody noticed that he was not much bigger than a mouse. The truth of the matter was, the baby looked very much like a mouse in every way... Mr. and Mrs. Little named him Stuart, and Mr. Little made him a tiny bed out of four clothespins and a cigarette box.... Every morning before Stuart dressed, Mrs. Little went into his room and weighed him on a small scale. [White, E. B. (1945). *Stuart Little* (pp. 1–2). New York: HarperCollins.]

#### Part II

3. List the verbs you underlined and label their pronunciation. Explain the pronunciation rule for each labeled verb.

4. Check your answers with those in the Answer Key at the end of the chapter.

- If you made any mistakes, review the *-ed* pronunciation rules above.

*Example:*

My sister watched me  
watched pronounced with t sound because base verb ends in ch sound.

***Do ESL/EFL learners have problems remembering the different pronunciation patterns?***

- ***Learner difficulties***

ESL/EFL learners have difficulty remembering whether the *-ed* should be pronounced with a *t* or a *d* sound and whether the extra syllable needs to be added in spoken English. Since the differences are not reflected in written English, oral practice is an important means for helping students master the different pronunciations of *-ed*. In addition, since there are many different irregular past tense forms, learners need extensive opportunities, both oral and written, for practicing these forms. There are spelling changes for many of the regular verbs, which learners also need to become familiar with and practice (see Appendix C).

***Are there other past verb tenses?***

For one, English has the past progressive, to which you were briefly introduced earlier in the text.

### **6.3.2 Past Progressive**

The past progressive describes ongoing events or actions in the past. The past progressive is a composite verb consisting of the auxiliary *be* + the present participle of the main verb. It is formed just like the *present progressive* except *be* is now in past form (*was/were*). The auxiliary *was/were* indicates time (past), and the present participle indicates the ongoing nature (aspect) of the event or action.

Since the past progressive is a composite verb with an auxiliary, we form questions by simply inverting the subject and auxiliary. To make a sentence in the present progressive negative, we place the *not* after the auxiliary. The sentence types are summarized below.

Sentence Types: Past Progressive				
auxiliary	subject	auxiliary (+not)	present participle	sentence type
	Jenny	was	leaving.	affirmative
	Jenny	was <b>not</b>	leaving.	negative
<b>Was</b>	Jenny		leaving?	question

### *When do we use the past progressive?*

Some general guidelines for the past progressive are:

Guidelines: Past Progressive		
Past progressive is used when:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>an event or action that was happening when another event or action interrupted it</li> </ul>	<p>She <i>was driving</i> home when the rain started.</p> <p>My computer crashed while I <i>was e-mailing</i> you.</p>	<p><i>when</i> before clause containing the simple past verb phrase <i>rain</i> indicates action interrupting another one, <i>was driving while</i> introduces the ongoing action <i>was e-mailing</i> interrupted by <i>crashed</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to emphasize the ongoing nature of an event or action in the past</li> </ul>	<p>She <i>was working</i> all morning.</p> <p>It <i>was raining</i> the whole night.</p>	<p>focus on the long duration of <i>was working</i> and <i>was raining</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>an event or action that was already happening at a particular time in the past</li> </ul>	<p>Nathan <i>was studying</i> at midnight.</p>	<p><i>was studying</i> underscoring Nathan studying before, at, and probably after, midnight</p>

### *Why do we often use the past progressive + the simple past together?*

The past progressive and simple past are often used together to contrast two actions or events. The past progressive emphasizes the ongoing nature of the one event or action. The simple past emphasizes the single occurrence of the other. When both the past progressive and simple past occur in a sentence, the order in which the two verb phrases occurs can vary, usually with *when* and *while*. *When* is used with the simple past and *while* is used with the past progressive.

	Past Progressive		Simple Past
	We were eating	<b>when</b>	Joyce called.
<b>While</b>	we were eating,		Joyce called.

The order of these sentences can be changed to:

	Simple Past		Past Progressive
<b>When</b>	Joyce called,		we were eating.
	Joyce called	<b>while</b>	we were eating.

*I often hear people using when and not while before the past progressive. Is that wrong?*

According to the rules of prescriptive grammar, *while* must occur before the past progressive and *when* before the simple past. Native speakers, however, will commonly substitute *when* for *while* before the past progressive. ESL/EFL learners need to be aware of the usage rule, particularly in formal writing, but they should also be aware that this rule is often ignored, particularly in casual writing and speech.

The next Discovery Activity provides practice in recognizing the past progressive and the simple past. If you are confident in your knowledge of these two verb tenses, you may wish to skip this activity.

### Discovery Activity 8: Past Progressive and Simple Past

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline the past progressive verb phrases and label them **PProg**.
2. Underline the simple past verb phrases and label them **SP**.
3. Explain the time represented by each of the past progressive verb phrases.

*Example:*

When he entered the room, he didn't see anyone at first, but then he noticed that I was sitting in the corner with Cecily and James.

entered = SP

didn't see = SP

noticed = SP

was sitting = PProg

was sitting describes action happening when something else (*he noticed*) occurred

**A.**

... I remember the time last fall we were playing kickball. We were losing, like, nine to nothing. We scored a bunch of runs in the last inning. And you kicked a grand slam to win it, ten-nine. [Fletcher, R. (1998). *Flying solo* (p. 101). New York: Yearling.]

**B.**

... I saw Cara and Rory in my mind. I knew Cara was sitting on her bed and Rory in the rocking chair. He was leaning forward, his elbows at his knees. He looked in control. I blinked away the vision. I didn't want to interfere ... I had to sing "The Star-Spangled Banner" in my head ... By the time I reached "The rocket's red glare," Cara was screaming, "I hate my life! I can't live like this!" As I ran to the steps, Rory was coming down. [Shapiro, R. (2004). *Miriam the medium* (p. 139). New York: Simon & Schuster.]

The next section explores how we talk about future time in English. English does not have a verb that inflects for future time but makes use of different structures to refer to future time.

## 6.4 Section 4: Future

Some languages have no future tense and rely on other means such as time expressions (e.g., *tomorrow*) to express future events. Other languages have specific inflectional endings attached to the verbs to express future tense. English is a language that relies on a variety of structures to express future time. These different structures, all of which have different nuances of meaning, are often confusing to ESL/EFL learners. There are rules to guide learners in their choice of structures, but it is important to stress that these rules are not absolute rules. Rather, they are general guidelines of use, depending upon the meaning the speaker wants to convey. Learning the different structures for expressing future time is not as difficult for ESL/EFL learners as is mastering which structure to use in which context.

### *How is the future usually expressed in English?*

The most common ways to refer to future time in English are *will* and *be going to*. Neither construction is a simple tense. *Will* is an auxiliary verb, which must be followed by a main verb in its base form:

We *will* study.

There are no inflections on either *will* or the main verb.

Another very common way to refer to the future is the structure *be going to*.

They *are going to* come.

Although *will* and *be going to* are similar in meaning, they are not identical and cannot always be used interchangeably.

### 6.4.1 Will<sup>2</sup>

This future structure is the one traditionally referred to as the English future tense, although it is less commonly used than *be going to + verb*.

Because *will* is an auxiliary verb, we follow the first auxiliary rule for questions and negative statements. When *will* and *not* are contracted, the form changes to *won't*.

Sentence Types: Will				
auxiliary	subject	auxiliary (+not)	simple verb	sentence type
	The students	will	study.	affirmative
	The students	will <b>not/won't</b>	study.	negative
<b>Will</b>	the students		study?	question

#### *Do we ever use shall to refer to the future?*

ESL/EFL learners who have had exposure to British English will have learned that *shall* is the preferred form for *I* and *we*. In American English, however, *shall* is used primarily in questions requiring agreement or permission, such as *Shall we go?* *Shall I turn off the lights*, or found in legal terminology with the meaning of obligation or duty.

#### *What are the rules for using will?*

There are some general guidelines, not rules, for the use of *will*:

Guidelines: Will and Future Time	
Will is used to:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>refer to planned future events, arrangements, schedules.</li> </ul>	Nordstrom's <i>will begin</i> holiday shopping hours tomorrow. A formal dinner <i>will conclude</i> the meeting. Northbound trains <i>will depart</i> at 10 min past the hour.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>make predictions that are not completely certain or definite.</li> </ul>	Gas prices <i>will drop</i> soon. The center of the hurricane <i>will continue</i> to gain strength.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>express immediate decisions or intention.</li> </ul>	Neil: "I forgot my wallet." Bart: "I'll <i>get</i> the check." Jack: "And then I'll <i>take</i> you home to get it."
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>make a promise.</li> </ul>	We'll <i>review</i> the material again before the test. I'll <i>invite</i> them over next week.

At this juncture we return to the other future time construction, *be going to*.

<sup>2</sup>The future auxiliary *will* is different from the main verb *will* meaning bequeath, as in *She willed her estate to her grandchildren*.

## 6.4.2 *Be Going To*

While some grammar texts focus on *will* as the future tense in English, the most commonly used future form is *be going to*. We only use *will* under the relatively limited circumstances listed above. *Be going to* is generally considered a “fixed” structure with a particular meaning, although some texts describe *be going to* as the present continuous form of *go* plus the *to* infinitive of the verb.<sup>3</sup>

Since *be* is an auxiliary verb in the structure *be going to*, we follow our first auxiliary rule in forming negative statements and questions:

Sentence Types: Future <i>Be Going To</i>				
auxiliary	subject	auxiliary (+not)	going to + verb	sentence type
	Jackie and Sam	were	going to stay.	affirmative
	Jackie and Sam	were <b>not</b>	going to stay.	negative
<b>Were</b>	Jackie and Sam		going to stay?	question

### *When do we use be going to?*

Guidelines: <i>Be Going To</i> and Future Time	
<i>Be going to</i> is used to:	
• predict an event, happening, action.	<i>It's going to rain</i> tomorrow.
• express a prior plan, that is, something speakers intend to do in some future time that they planned or decided to do previously.	Mr. Jones is tired of all the cold weather in New York. <i>He's going to retire</i> to Florida next year.

Note that *It will rain* could be substituted for *It's going to rain*. Either *will* or *be going to* can be used to make a prediction that is true or that is likely to happen in the future. In the next sentence, on the other hand, only *He's going to retire* can be used. When we refer to a prior plan or intention about a future event, we prefer to use *be going to*. As you see, the distinctions between *will* and *be going to* are not exact and are only approximate guidelines to help ESL/EFL students understand and use the two structures.

Discovery Activity 9 will provide you with more insights into the use of *will* and *be going to*. When you have completed both Parts I and II of this Discovery Activity, check your answers.

<sup>3</sup>The term *infinitive* in English is used to describe *to* + verb when the *to* is part of the verb.

### Discovery Activity 9: *Will* versus *Be Going To*

#### Part I

1. Look at Excerpts A and B.
2. Try substituting *be going to* for *will*.
  - Is the meaning the same? Why or why not?

#### A.

“Sir, under the constitution of our Confederation, you have the right to a fair and speedy trial. As the supreme judicial power in this quadrant of Human Space, I guarantee you will get one ... The Fleet Judge will assist you in finding counsel ... ” [Sherman, D., & Cragg, D. (1997). *Starfist: First to fight. Book I* (p. 149). New York: DelRey.]

#### B.

“You will have a substitute teacher tomorrow,” Mrs. North told her third-grade class ... “I will be gone for one week,” said Mrs. North. “I won’t be back until next Thursday ... ” “I will leave detailed instructions for the substitute,” she warned. “And if any of you misbehave, I will know about it ... ” [Sachar, L. (1994). *Marvin Redpost: Alone in his teacher’s house* (pp. 1–2). New York: Random House.]

#### Part II

1. Look at Excerpts C and D.
2. Now try substituting *will* for *be going to*.
  - Is the meaning the same? Why or why not?

#### C.

“I have to meet Mrs. North in the parking lot. She’s going to drive me in her car...”  
 “She’s going to pay me to take care of her dog while she’s away [said Marvin].”  
 [Sachar, L. (1994). *Marvin Redpost: Alone in his teacher’s house* (p. 5). New York: Random House.]

#### D.

The sea thundered loudly, and a large wave rose up like a hand. It seemed to grab the tiny boat and hurl it right at the shore. Right at the jagged rocks. “Oh, no! Galen’s going to hit the rocks! He’s going to crash!” [Abbott, T. (2000). *The secrets of Droon: Quest for the queen* (p. 12). New York: Scholastic.]

***Do ESL/EFL learners have trouble remembering which future construction to use?***

- ***Learner difficulties***

There are several difficulties ESL/EFL learners have with the two future constructions. For one, they may use one structure when the other is preferred. When referring to a prior plan or intention about a future event, native speakers use *be going to*. When referring to a person's willingness to do something in the future, native speakers use *will*. When one future structure is substituted for the other, a different meaning may be conveyed:

meaning: willingness	meaning: plan or intent
Abbey: We need more milk.	Abbey: We need more milk.
Nancy: I'll get it.	Nancy: I'm going to get it.

Although native speakers have no difficulty understanding the future meaning learners are trying to convey, they may be struck by the "oddness" of the use of one construction over the other in a particular context.

Another difficulty for learners of English is remembering to include all parts of the future with the *be going to* verb phrase. They may leave out the *be* auxiliary and produce such sentences as:

\*I *going* to write him.

Adding *to* after *will* rather than using just the main verb alone is something ESL/EFL may also do:

\*They will *to* change the law.

***Are there any other ways to express future time?***

### 6.4.3 ***Present Progressive for Future***

English also uses the present progressive with a time expression to indicate close future time, especially with verbs of direction or motion.

Present Progressive for Future		
subject	present progressive	time expression
The plane	is leaving	tonight at 8:00.
We	are coming	tomorrow.
Her parents	are visiting	next Monday.
I	am starting	next week.

### 6.4.4 Future Progressive

The future progressive consists of *will + be + the present participle*. The future progressive is not used nearly as often as *will* or *be going to*, but ESL/EFL learners should be aware of this tense and its use.

Future Progressive	
Future progressive is used to:	
• emphasize the ongoing nature of an event or action in the future.	We <i>will be working</i> on this project for a long time.
• indicate the duration of a future event or action at a future point in time.	The children <i>will be sleeping</i> by 10 p.m.
• emphasize closeness to present time, especially when used together with <i>soon</i> .	Vacation <i>will be starting</i> soon.
• indicate a good guess or a supposition regarding an upcoming event or action.	If we don't get back to work soon, they'll <i>be docking</i> our pay again.

#### *What happens to our auxiliary rule for questions and negatives when there is more than one auxiliary?*

You will notice that the future progressive has two auxiliaries: *will* and *be*. Earlier we said that whenever there is an auxiliary, this auxiliary takes the initial position in questions:

We *are* sleeping. → **Are** we sleeping?  
 He *will* leave soon. → **Will** he leave soon?

We now have to refine our rule to state that whenever there is more than one auxiliary verb present, **only the first auxiliary** is moved to the initial position:

The children **will** *be* sleeping by 10 p.m. →  
**Will** the children *be* sleeping by 10 p.m.?

We also said previously that in forming a negative statement, we place *not* after the auxiliary (or attach it if it is a contraction). We now need to refine this rule to state that when there is more than one auxiliary, *not* comes after the **first** auxiliary (or attaches to it if it is a contraction).

<b>First Auxiliary Rule for Negative Statements and Questions</b>	
<p><b>Negative statements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If there is more than one auxiliary verb, place <i>not</i> after the <b>first</b> auxiliary verb.</li> <li>• If there is no auxiliary verb, insert the <i>do</i> auxiliary and add <i>not</i>.</li> </ul>	<p>She <b>hasn't</b> <i>been</i> sleeping well.</p> <p>They <b>will not</b> <i>be</i> helping us after all.</p> <p>Esther <b>doesn't</b> <i>like</i> fried green tomatoes.</p>
<p><b>Questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If there is one or more auxiliary verb, invert the <b>first</b> auxiliary verb and the subject.</li> <li>• If there is no auxiliary verb, insert the <i>do</i> auxiliary before the subject and keep the main verb in its simple or base form.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Has</b> she <i>been</i> coming to class regularly?</p> <p><b>Will</b> you <i>be</i> taking any final exams?</p> <p><b>Does</b> Serena <i>play</i> tennis?</p>

In the next section, we will be examining the perfect tenses, all of which have at least one auxiliary, *have*. All questions and negatives in the perfect tenses follow the rules we have just refined. Because perfect tenses refer to less specific times than the tenses we have explored up to now, they are often referred to as indefinite tenses. These indefinite tenses are also more difficult for many ESL/EFL learners to understand and master.

## 6.5 Section 5: The Perfect

### 6.5.1 Present Perfect

You will recall that the present perfect consists of the auxiliary verb *have* + past participle of the main verb. Regular past participles are the same as the past tense of the verb (e.g., *walked*, *camped*, *loaned*). Irregular past participles have various forms (see Appendix A). To form negative statements and questions, we follow our first auxiliary rule.

<b>Sentence Types: Present Perfect</b>				
<b>auxiliary</b>	<b>subject</b>	<b>auxiliary (+not)</b>	<b>past participle</b>	<b>sentence type</b>
	Sue	has	walked.	affirmative
	Sue	has <b>not</b>	walked.	negative
<b>Has</b>	Sue		walked?	question

*When do we use the present perfect?*

### 6.5.1.1 Uses of the Present Perfect

Traditionally, the present perfect is described as referring to indefinite time, that is, to events or actions that start in the past and extend into the present and even possibly into the future. The present perfect is generally presented in contrast to the simple past, which describes events that are over and completed.

The present perfect tense can be difficult for ESL/EFL learners because there is much variation as to when it is used. However, learners will have fewer problems if we regard the present perfect as occurring in two primary ways: **stable** and **variable** (Marshall 1989). By stable usage, we mean that there are two instances when the present perfect is always used.

#### 6.5.1.1.1 Stable Time

The present perfect is used to express *continuative* or *durative* time, that is, to describe an event or action that occurs over a period of time. This is stable time. The present perfect often co-occurs with such expressions of time as *for* and *since*.

I *have lived* here **for** 10 years.  
 She *has studied* English **since** 2003.

#### *When do we use for and when do we use since?*

The table below outlines when *for* and *since* are used.

<b>For</b>	
• precedes a length of time: 10 years, 2 months, 5 days, a long time	They've wanted to move to a new house <i>for</i> many years.
• tells <b>how long</b> an event or action has continued up to the present	Dorothy has played the violin <i>for</i> years.
<b>Since</b>	
• precedes a point in time: 2010, last month, Saturday, 8 p.m.	They've waited for him to call <i>since</i> last night.
• tells <b>when</b> the event or action began	Margot has had allergies <i>since</i> she was a child.

The present perfect is also used to express *repeated* time, that is, an event or action that occurs more than once. Frequency or time expressions often co-occur with this use of the present perfect. In this sentence, the speaker is telling us about the repetition of the event by using the frequency adverb *always*:

Andy *has always lived* in New York.

In the following sentence, the speaker is indicating the repeated nature of the action by including *at least 20 times*:

That's my favorite movie. I *have seen* it **at least 20 times**.

In this last example, the speaker uses *numerous* to give us a sense of the repetition of the event and the frequency:

Florida *has had* **numerous** hurricanes.

All three sentences are examples of stable time.

#### 6.5.1.1.2 Variable Time

The present perfect is also used for what is commonly called *indefinite* time. Here the present perfect is used to describe events or actions that ended in the recent past but *without a specific time marker* to indicate when they ended or occurred. The time is unspecified. It is *variable* time because we can choose either the simple past and present perfect with little or no change in meaning. Choice of one tense over another when referring to one event or action occurring in the recent past is dependent on context, the region of the United States, and the speaker.

Group A	Group B
Cleo just took her exams.	Cleo has just taken her exams
Ethan already took his exams.	Ethan has already taken his exams.

Both sets of sentences in Groups A and B include the time adverbs *just* and *already*. The time indicated by these adverbs does not specify anything about when or how often these actions or events occurred. This differs from the adverbs we saw used in the examples under stable time.

Note also that unlike *for* and *since*, *just* and *already* can occur with either the past tense or the present perfect. Although *just* and *already* are often taught together with the present perfect, ESL/EFL learners need to be aware that these adverbs can occur with the simple past, depending upon the context and intent of the speaker.

Discovery Activity 10 is designed to help you identify the present perfect. If you do not need to practice this, move on to the next section.

#### Discovery Activity 10: Identifying the Present Perfect

Look at the excerpts and underline the present perfect verb phrases.

##### A.

“An armed man need not fight. I haven’t drawn my gun for more years than I can remember.” “Come to think about it, I haven’t pulled mine in four years or more.” [Heinlein, R. (1942/1997). *Beyond this horizon* (p. 276). New York: ROC Books.]

**B.**

The evidence provided by radioactive dating, along with observations of long-term geological processes, has enabled geologists to compile a remarkably accurate history of life on our planet. Using these data, scientists have determined that the Earth is about 4.5 billion years old. By combining radioactive dating, relative dating, and observations of important events in the history of life on Earth, scientists have divided the 4.5 billion years into larger units called eras ... Unlike the periods of time we use daily, the components of geological time do not have standard lengths. [Miller, K., & Levine, J. (2000). *Biology* (p. 276). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.]

**C.**

Researchers have documented many cases of evolution in action, some of which involve organisms that have devastating effects on the lives of humans ... Certain insect pests have evolved resistance even to the very latest pesticides. [Miller, K., & Levine, J. (2000). *Biology* (p. 303). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.]

***Is the present perfect difficult for ESL/EFL learners?***

- ***Learner difficulties***

The present perfect requires extensive practice in authentic contexts since learners often have difficulty using this tense correctly. In many cases, they will substitute the simple past, the simple present, or the present progressive for the present perfect. This arises in part because these other three tenses seem more “logical” to them in terms of time progression and sequence.

ESL/EFL learners may overuse present perfect, partly because they associate certain expressions such as *for*, *since*, *just*, *already*, and *How long...* ? exclusively with the present perfect. They also have trouble using *for* and *since* correctly.

In addition, the subject pronouns, *he*, *she*, and *it*, when contracted with the auxiliary *has* may be confused by ESL/EFL learners with the contracted auxiliary *is*. Both *has* and *is*, when contracted, are written as *'s*.

He's come. He *has* come.  
He's here. He *is* here

In spoken American English, *has* and *is* are reduced to a “z” sound and sound identical. In addition, in spoken American English the *'s* contraction is a reduced sound and does not receive any stress in speech. Learners, therefore, may not even hear it and be unaware of the *'s*; they will need oral practice in learning to distinguish these contractions.

***Does the auxiliary have or has only contract with subject pronouns?***

Subject pronouns and also noun phrases are often contracted in spoken English:

<i>My friend's</i> eaten.	My friend <i>has</i> eaten.
<i>The dogs've</i> jumped over the fence.	The dogs <i>have</i> jumped over the fence.

These contractions are less common in written English. When such contractions do occur in written English, they are generally used in dialogues.

***What is the past perfect and when do we use it?***

## 6.5.2 Past Perfect

The past perfect consists of the past form of the auxiliary *had* (past form of the verb *have*) and the past participle of the main verb. The past perfect tense indicates an event or action completed prior to another point of time in the past. Since *had* is an auxiliary verb, it follows our first auxiliary rule in forming negative statements and questions.

Sentence Types: Past Perfect				
auxiliary	subject	auxiliary (+not)	past participle	sentence type
	Lily	had	listened.	affirmative
	Lily	had <b>not</b>	listened.	negative
	Lily		listened.	question
<b>Had</b>	Lily		listened?	

### 6.5.2.1 Past Perfect Versus Simple Past

The past perfect is generally used in conjunction with a past tense verb phrase:

We carefully *walked* through the dirt that *had accumulated* on the floors.  
 It *had stopped* raining, so we *didn't take* our umbrellas.

In these two sentences, the past perfect occurs together with the simple past in order to clarify which action happened first. Both actions took place in the past, but one occurred before the other, regardless of the order of the clauses. In the first sentence, *we walked* occurred after *the dirt that had accumulated*, even though it is earlier in the sentence. In the second sentence, *we didn't take our umbrellas*, took

place after *It had stopped raining*. Despite the fact that the clause order differs, the sequence of events is still clear because the past perfect (*had accumulated, had stopped*) indicates which action took place first, while the simple past (*walked, didn't take*) indicates the later action.

***Do speakers always use the past perfect to indicate the earlier action or event?***

When time sequence is not important, speakers may substitute simple past for past perfect:

Cindy *called* when I left.

Often when there is a time indicator, speakers do not use the past perfect.

Scott *e-mailed* me **before** I left.

The word *before* indicates which action was the first past action, and the use of the past perfect is not required to establish the sequence of events. We see this also occurring with the use of *after*.

Some native speakers rarely use the past perfect, especially in casual spoken and written English and use the past tense only, relying on the surrounding context to make the meaning clear.

Discovery Activity 11 asks you to identify the past perfect verb phrases. As you do this activity, think about the time reference of the different verb phrases.

**Discovery Activity 11: Identifying the Past Perfect**

Look at the excerpts and underline the past perfect verb phrases.

**A.**

Forty-eight thousand dollars was still a lot of money. More than he'd ever had in his life. And since he had never intended to split it with Earl, it was all his. But his bad luck hadn't stopped there. Earlier today, he had learned through Rose's cousin in Toledo that Arturo Garcia had showed up at her house, put a knife to her throat and demanded to know where Ian was. Marie, who was afraid of her own shadow, had claimed to have had no choice but to tell him the truth. [Heggan, C. (2003). *Deadly intent* (p. 95). Ontario, Canada: Mira.]

**B.**

Her rounds finished, Abbie returned to the kitchen, feeling much more relaxed than she had been twenty minutes earlier. Agonizing over a man who had apparently vanished from sight was stupid and nerve-racking. Whoever had attacked her was gone, and so was Ian. [Heggan, C. (2003). *Deadly intent* (p. 164). Ontario, Canada: Mira.]

### *Are there any other perfect tenses?*

There are several more perfect tenses that we will now look at. These occur less frequently than the other verb tenses, particularly the last three in this section.

### **6.5.3 Future Perfect**

The future perfect consists of two auxiliaries, *will* and *have*, plus the past participle of the main verb. Based on our first auxiliary rule, we know that questions are formed by inverting the first auxiliary, *will*, and the subject. The negative is formed by placing *not* after *will*.

<b>Future Perfect</b>					
<b>auxiliary</b>	<b>subject</b>	<b>auxiliary (+not)</b>	<b>auxiliary</b>	<b>past participle</b>	<b>sentence type</b>
	The dance	will	have	ended.	affirmative
	The dance	will <b>not</b>	have	ended.	negative
<b>Will</b>	the dance		have	ended?	question

The future perfect is used to refer to events or actions in the future that will take place before another future point in time. *By* or *before* phrases are often found with the future perfect. The future perfect is not a very commonly used tense, but ESL/EFL learners still need to become familiar with this structure. Discovery Activity 12 asks you to find the future perfect verb phrases and discuss it in conjunction with the other verb tenses in the excerpt.

#### **Discovery Activity 12: Identifying the Future Perfect**

Look at the excerpt.

1. Underline the future perfect verb phrase.
2. Discuss how the other verb tenses in the excerpt function together to describe the events or actions.

On the way down over coffee and Krispy Kremes, Parks went over the attack plan: “We’re going to send one of the trucks down to the house after we disguise it as a county survey vehicle ... Some of our men will be inside the truck. The others will have surrounded the place and set up a perimeter ... with any luck no shots are fired, and we all go home happy and alive.” [Baldicci, D. (2004). *Split second* (p. 326). NY: Warner.]

### 6.5.4 *Present Perfect Progressive, Past Perfect Progressive, and Future Perfect Progressive*

We will discuss these three verb forms together because they occur relatively infrequently. All three tenses form questions and negatives according to the first auxiliary rule. Recall also from our earlier discussion of the present progressive that certain verbs are generally not used in the progressive sense. Since they are less common verb forms and ESL/EFL learners will have less exposure to them, they may have difficulty remembering and recognizing their uses.

#### 6.5.4.1 Present Perfect Progressive

The present perfect progressive consists of **three** parts: *have + been +* present participle of the main verb. It is used to:

- stress the ongoing nature or duration of an event or action that is indefinite with no specific beginning or end.
- indicate an event or action that began in the past and continues into the present and possibly the future.

Our earlier discussion of stable and variable time in conjunction with the present perfect also applies to the present perfect progressive.

Often the present perfect and present perfect progressive are interchangeable. When speakers wish to emphasize that an event or action is repeated or ongoing, they will use the present perfect progressive. The following sentences do not significantly differ in meaning:

*We have been living* here for 15 years.

*We have lived* here for 15 years.

The first sentence, however, emphasizes the length of the event more than does the second sentence.

#### 6.5.4.2 Past Perfect Progressive

The past perfect progressive consists of **three** parts: *had + been +* present participle of the main verb. Like the present perfect progressive, it is used to stress the ongoing nature or duration of an event or action and often co-occurs with the simple past.

*I had been living* in the house for many years when I *decided* to move to something smaller.

### 6.5.4.3 Future Perfect Progressive

The future perfect progressive consists of **four** parts: *will + have + been +* present participle of the main verb. Like the present perfect progressive and the past perfect progressive, the future perfect progressive is used to stress the ongoing nature or duration of an event or action. The future perfect progressive is often used with expressions that begin with *for*.

By the time Kirsten finishes her dissertation, she *will have been working* on it **for seven years**.

The following Discovery Activity provides practice in recognizing different perfect progressive tenses. If you feel confident in your ability to recognize these tenses, you may wish to do only some, not all, of the excerpts.

#### Discovery Activity 13: Identifying the Present Perfect and Past Perfect Progressive

Look at the excerpts.

1. Underline the present perfect progressive and past perfect progressive verb phrases.
2. Label each verb tense.

#### A.

When Skelton had had a good sleep, a bath, and a read, he went out on to the veranda. Mrs. Grange came up to him. It looked as though she had been waiting. [Maugham, W. S. (1977). *Flotsam and jetsam*. In *W.S. Maugham: Sixty-five short stories* (p. 308). New York: Heinemann.]

#### B.

“I could see Ritter like I said, and there was the man behind him, real close.” Baldwin stared hard at her.

“That’s right. You say that like you know the man.”

“Never met him. But I’ve been doing a lot of research.”

[Baldicci, D. (2004). *Split second* (p. 80). New York: Warner.]

#### C.

The paper said that Lord Mountdrago had been waiting in a Tube station, standing on the edge of the platform, and as the train came in was seen to fall on the rail .... The paper went on to say that Lord Mountdrago had been suffering for some weeks from the effects of overwork, but had felt it impossible to absent himself while the foreign situation demanded his unremitting attention. [Maugham, W. S. (1977). *Lord Mountdrago*. In *W.S. Maugham: Sixty-five short stories* (p. 359) New York: Heinemann.]

**D.**

“When I found out it was once owned by the United States Army, I started wondering why Scott might want to own a spread like that. He’d been living in Montana for a while, real militia person, I guess, so why the move? Well, I’ve been pouring over maps, blueprints and diagrams, and I found out the damn property has an underground bunker built into a hillside.” [Baldicci, D. (2004). *Split second* (pp. 322–323). New York: Warner.]

**Can you summarize what ESL/EFL learners find difficult about the verb tenses in English?**

- **Learner difficulties**

The difficulties ESL/EFL learners with English verb tenses have fall into two types: structural problems and semantic problems.

Structural Problems	Semantic Problems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remembering to use the correct inflections. English only has a few inflections, but learners often forget to use them, for example: *The children <b>color</b> a picture yesterday. *She <b>like</b> to read many <b>book</b> to her son.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choosing the correct verb tense. Explanations of and guidelines for use are not exact and do not reveal the nuances of meaning. There are often subtle differences when choosing between related verb tenses, for example, <i>will</i> versus <i>be going to</i>; <i>simple past</i> versus <i>present perfect</i>.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inserting the <i>do</i> auxiliary when necessary <b>and</b> remembering the appropriate inflections, for example, *He no go home. *Do he went home?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remembering all the elements of composite verbs: the present progressive has <b>2</b> elements; the present perfect progressive has <b>3</b> elements; the future perfect progressive <b>4</b>. *We <b>going</b> to the movies. *We <b>have going</b> to the movies every week.</li> </ul>	

You will notice that the list is shorter under “semantic problems,” but keep in mind that choosing the correct verb tense is as important as knowing how to form a correct verb phrase.

## 6.6 Summary

### Time and Tense

- English has two tenses, *present* and *past*.
- Other time references in English consist of *time* (indicated by the tense of the auxiliary verb *be* or *have*) + *aspect* (indicated by the main verb in either progressive participle or past participle form).

Time		Subject	Verb
present	simple verb except <i>-s</i> in 3rd person singular	I, You, We, They He, She, It	walk. walks.
	negative with <i>do</i> auxiliary	I, You, We, They He, She, It	<b>do not (don't)</b> walk. <b>does not (doesn't)</b> walk.
	question with <i>do</i> auxiliary	<b>Do</b> I, you, we, they <b>Does</b> she, she, it	walk?
past	<i>-ed</i> attached to verb	I, You, We, They, He, She, It	walked.
	negative with <i>do</i> auxiliary	I, You, We, They, He, She, It	<b>did not (didn't)</b> walk.
	question with <i>do</i> auxiliary	<b>Did</b> I, you, we, they, he, she, it	walk?

English has no real future tense but makes use of other constructions to refer to future time:

- *will* + simple verb
- *be going to*

### Simple Verb Tense Formation: Past and Present

**Compound Tense Formation: Progressive and Perfect (Affirmative Statements)**

ASPECT →	Progressive	Perfect	Perfect Progressive
	<i>Be</i> auxiliary + present participle	<i>Have</i> auxiliary + past participle	<i>Have</i> auxiliary + been + present participle
TIME ↓			
<b>present</b>	am/is/are + Verb + <i>-ing</i> I <b>am</b> walking. We, They, You <b>are</b> walking. He, She, It <b>is</b> walking.	have/has + Verb + <i>-ed</i> (regular verbs) I, We, They, You <b>have</b> walked. He, She, It <b>has</b> walked.	have/has + been + Verb + <i>-ing</i> I, We, They, You <b>have been</b> walking. He, She, It <b>has been</b> walking.
<b>past</b>	was/were + Verb + <i>-ing</i> I, He, She, It <b>was</b> walking. We, They, You <b>are</b> walking. He, She, It <b>is</b> walking.	had + Verb + <i>-ed</i> I, We, They, You, He, She, It <b>had</b> walked.	had + been + Verb + <i>-ing</i> I, We, They, You, He, She, It <b>had been</b> walking.
<b>will (future)</b> <i>Will</i> is a special type of auxiliary verb, called a modal (see Chap. 7). To refer to the future, it is followed by the simple verb: I, We, They, You, He, She, It <b>will</b> walk.	will + be + Verb + <i>-ing</i> I We, They, You, He, She, It <b>will be</b> walking.	will + have + Verb + <i>-ed</i> I, We, They, You, He, She, It <b>will have</b> walked.	will + have + been + Verb + <i>-ing</i> I, We, They, You, He, She, It <b>will have been</b> walking.

## All Verb Tenses: Negative Statements and Questions First Auxiliary Rule

Negative Statements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If there is one or more auxiliary verb (a form of <i>be</i> or <i>have</i>), place <i>not</i> after the <b>first</b> auxiliary verb.</li> </ul>	
Casey <i>is</i> not walking.	1 auxiliary
Casey <i>has</i> not <i>been</i> walking.	2 auxiliaries
Casey <i>will</i> not <i>have been</i> walking.	3 auxiliaries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In simple present and simple past, insert the <i>do</i> auxiliary + <i>not</i>.</li> </ul>	
Casey <i>does not</i> like tea.	simple present
Laura <i>didn't</i> come early.	simple past
Questions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If there is more than one auxiliary verb, invert the <b>first</b> auxiliary verb and the subject.</li> </ul>	
<i>Is</i> Casey walking?	1 auxiliary
<i>Has</i> Casey <i>been</i> walking?	2 auxiliaries
<i>Will</i> Casey <i>have been</i> walking?	3 auxiliaries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In simple present and simple past, insert the <i>do</i> auxiliary before the subject and keep the main verb in its simple or base form.</li> </ul>	
<i>Does</i> Casey like coffee?	simple present
<i>Did</i> Lauren come late?	simple past

## 6.7 Practice Activities

### Activity 1: The Parts of the English Verb

A. Complete the table below to help you clarify your understanding of English verb forms. The first one has been done for you as an example.

base verb	present 3rd person singular	past	present participle	past participle
walks	walks	walked	walking	walked
clean		cleaned		
make			making	
eat				eaten
ride		rode		
study				
sing	sings			sung
write			writing	
speak			speaking	
teach	teaches			
learn		learned		
cut			cutting	
bring	brings			
love				loved
buy			buying	
buzz	buzzes			
feel				felt

**B.** Now make your own table for all the forms of the verb *be*. You should have a total of seven different forms, more forms than any other English verb.

**Activity 2: Verb Tense Practice**

**A. Regular Verb**

Take the phrase *Chloe paints* and create a sentence for each of the following tenses. You may need to add words (e.g., a time expression or another clause) to make a good sentence. The first sentence is done for you as an example.

1. present Chloe paints every week.
2. past
3. future
4. present progressive
5. past progressive
6. future progressive
7. present perfect
8. past perfect
9. future perfect
10. present perfect progressive
11. past perfect progressive
12. future perfect progressive

**B. Irregular Verb**

Take the phrase *Chloe drives a car* and create a sentence for each of the following verb tenses. You may need to add words (e.g., a time expression or another clause) to make a good sentence.

1. present
2. past
3. future
4. present progressive
5. past progressive
6. future progressive
7. present perfect
8. past perfect
9. future perfect
10. present perfect progressive
11. past perfect progressive
12. future perfect progressive

### Activity 3: Distinguishing Between Participial Adjectives and the Present Participle in Verb Phrases

1. Mark all the participial adjectives.
  - Label them PartAdj.
2. Underline the present and past progressive verb phrases.
  - Label the present participle PresPart .

*Example:*

PartAdj	PresPart	
The <u>crying</u> baby	was <u>lying</u>	in its crib.

[W]hen ABC newsman Sam Donaldson stands up on the White House lawn ... on display is the fading glory of the well-coiffed balding man. “Twenty years ago, of the guys who were balding, I’d say 50% combed over,” says Sal Cecala ... “My advice,” Mr. Henson says, “to guys like me who are losing a little: Wash it, blow it dry. Use a fine-tooth comb and comb it and wrap it around ... ” Though on the trailing end of fashion, the comb-over remains unbeatable in its versatility ... “I’m covering nine miles of scalp with six miles of hair,” boasts late-night television host Tom Snyder... [Bailey, J. (2004). Domes of resistance. In K.Wells (Ed.), *Floating off the page: The best stories from the Wall Street Journal’s “Middle Column”* (pp. 61–63). New York: Simon & Schuster.]

### Activity 4: Identifying Auxiliary Verbs

1. Find the verbs in the following excerpt and underline them. Be sure to underline the entire verb. (You can ignore the verb *said*, which appears repeatedly.)
2. Label the *auxiliary* verbs Aux .
3. Label the *main* verbs V .
4. Identify the tense of the verb.

*Example:*

Jane was drinking tea because she didn’t want coffee. She had been drinking water earlier.

was (Aux V) drinking (V)	past progressive
didn’t (Aux + not) want (V)	past, negative
had been(2 Aux) drinking (V)	past perfect progressive

Snooping had rewarded him well .. He wasn’t snooping, however, when he came into the Brown Detective Agency. He was drooping. “I nearly had it all,” he moaned and sagged against the wall ...

He whipped out a piece of cloth. The colors had run together, making one large red smear ...

“I’ll bet Pete first made a copy of the map ... ” said Winslow angrily. “After he brought me home, he probably returned to the islands.”

“He won’t find anything there but a sunburn,” said Encyclopedia. He pointed to a tiny black smudge on the back of the map .. “It was writing,” replied Encyclopedia. “It said ‘New York World’s Fair ..’”

[Winslow’s] face lit up. “Peter’s off digging for treasure—he thinks ..!”

“We don’t know that Pete ruined your map on purpose,” Encyclopedia said.

“I’ll hire you,” said Winslow .. Encyclopedia agreed, and two hours later the boys were heading toward the islands in a skiff ..

“Pete will be digging by a group of three coconut trees,” said Winslow ... [Sobol, D. (1970). *Encyclopedia Brown saves the day* (pp. 57–60). New York: Bantam.]

### Activity 5: Analyzing Verb Tenses

1. Identify the tense of each bolded verb.
2. Discuss why each tense is used.

When [Eric] **woke up**, light **was streaking** across his face .... [The planet’s] sun **crossed** over the mouth of the pit. “Holy crow!” he cried. “I’ve **been** here all night. Oh, man!” ... Eric **felt** a sharp pain in his stomach ... It **had been** a day since he’d **eaten**. His stomach **was empty** ... He **felt** something round and hard under his foot. It **was** one of those smelly fruits he’d **found** in the garden .... “No way!” he cried. “I’m **not going to** eat it ..” But he couldn’t stop himself. The fruit **tasted** sweet! It **was** delicious. “This **is** the most delicious food I’ve **ever eaten!**” he cried. “I’ve **never tasted** anything so—”

“Please keep it down,” whispered a voice ...

“You’re **talking** too much,” said another voice.

“How can I understand you?” Eric asked.

“The tangfruit... Its taste **is** magic ...” “You **are now speaking** our language. The effect **will wear off**, of course ...” [Abbot, T. (2001). *The secrets of Droon: The hawk bandits of Tarkoom* (p. 27). New York: Scholastic.]

### Activity 6: Choosing Verb Tenses

In the following excerpt some of the verbs are given only in their base form.

1. Change the base verb into the tense that you feel fits best here.
2. Compare your answers with your classmates.
  - Explain why you chose the tenses you did (e.g., what sentence clues did you use to help you make your choice)?

When Mendanbar (1. **get back**) to the castle, the first person he (2. **see**) was Willin, standing in the doorway looking relieved. By the time Mendanbar (3. **get**) within earshot, however, the elf’s expression (4. **change**) to a ferocious scowl.

“I (5. **be**) happy to see that Your Majesty (6. **return**) safely,” Willin said stiffly. “I (7. **be**) about to send a party to search for you ..”

“What’s happened?”

“Your Majesty (8. **have**) an unexpected visitor.” He paused. “At least, I (9. **presume**) he (10. **be**) unexpected ..”

“Who is it?” Mendanbar asked. “Not another complaint from the Darkmoring Elves, I (11. **hope**)? If it (12. **be**), you can tell them I (13. **see, not**) them. I (14. **have**) enough of their whining and I’ve got more important things to attend to right now.”

“No,” Willin said. “It (15. **be**) Zemanar, the Head Wizard of the Society of Wizards.”

“Oh, lord,” Mendanbar said. He (16. **meet**) the Head Wizard once before, at his coronation three years earlier, and he (17. **not, like**) the man much then.. “How long (18. **he, wait**)? What (19. **he, want**)?”

“He only has only been here for a few minutes,” Willin reassured him.. “As I (20. **recall**), he (21. **have got**) an exaggerated idea of his own importance...

Oh (22. **not, worry**), I (23. **not, say**) anything improper when I (24. **talk**) to him. Where (25. **he, be**)? [Wrede, P. (1991). *Searching for dragons: The enchanted forest chronicles book II* (pp. 42–44). New York: Scholastic.]

### Activity 7: Finding and Analyzing Verb Tenses

1. Look at the following excerpts.
2. Underline the verbs and identify their tense.

#### A.

As one of the brightest objects in the night sky, the planet Jupiter has been a source of fascination since the dawn of astronomy. Now a cuneiform tablet dating to between 350 and 50 B.C. shows that Babylonians not only tracked Jupiter, they were taking the first steps from geometry toward calculus to figure out the distance it moved across the sky. [Emspak, J. (2016, January). Babylonians were using geometry centuries earlier than thought. *Smithsonian*. Retrieved from <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/ancient-babylonians-were-using-geometry-centuries-earlier-thought-180957965/>]

#### B.

“I was working a case in the neighborhood and I decided to pop by for a quick hello ...”  
 “I’ll pick you up tomorrow at seven ... and we’ll drive out to my folks together. “That doesn’t give me much time.” [Levine, L. (2015). *Death by tiara*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from Amazon.com]

#### C.

“Taylor is going to compete in the local division of the Miss Teen Queen America pageant this weekend, and I need you to write her some snappy lyrics...”

“That doesn’t give me much time.” [Levine, L. (2015). *Death by tiara*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from Amazon.com]

#### D.

A knot tightened in Alyssa’s stomach. She’d grown up seeing how high her mother had set the bar in journalistic endeavors. [Carroll, R. 2008). *Bayou corruption*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from Amazon.com]

**Activity 8: Error Analysis**

The following excerpts were written by ESL and EFL learners. There are errors in verb forms and tense.

1. Underline each verb form and tense error you find. **Ignore all other errors.**
2. Correct the error focusing *only* on verb tense errors.
  - Explain the problem. For example, the writer should have used tense X and not tense Y because...

**A.**

Rabbit's name is Len. Her nose and mouth is red. Her eyes are orange. She like carrots. She is not like onions.

**B.**

My sister mess up my room. My sister write on my work. She rip my folder.

**C.**

I had felt the freedom from the army three months ago before my mind began to bothers me about no work. I made my appointment with the boss of the jewelry shop and on an early Monday morning I go to meet my future place. There were ten workers and the boss who were wore warm smiles.

**D.**

Dear Mayor,

I just heard you thinking about different ways to solve the traffic problem. People drive cars and they got late to work because they have only one road. For example, in front of my building, people working construction and people has to go around to come to the highway. If there is more roads, then people comes different ways and don't got late to work. If our city has many different ways to go, then people won't accidents. Therefore I think improving the streets and highways will to solve the traffic problem that we have.

**E.**

Today, we are living in Global Village. The Global Village means the world become smaller, like a small town. I think internet, TV, movies is making world be a Global Village. By using the internet, we can chat with many different people and I am downloading whatever I want and I am send message using e-mail. By watching TV, we will hear about world news so we know what happen in this world now. We can learn about other cultures. In my case, I learn about many cultures through TV programs.

**F.**

I am wishing you Happy Holidays. When Christmas is coming, I am becoming a child again. I am wanting to believe in Santa Claus because it makes the magic of Christmas.

**Activity 9: Reviewing Tense and Aspect—Questions for Discussion**

This is a long activity to review verb tenses. A good way to do this activity is to have the class divide into groups, with different groups preparing different questions to share with the rest of the class.

1. When do we use present tense in English?
  - How are simple statements formed?
  - How are questions formed?
  - How is the negative formed?
  - Are the rules governing statement, question, and negative formation prescriptive grammar rules or fundamental rules of English? Explain your choice.
2. What is the present progressive?
  - How does this contrast with simple present, that is, what is the general rule governing the use of present progressive?
  - What exceptions are there? Are these exceptions rule-governed? Explain your reasoning.
  - How are questions formed?
  - How is the negative formed?
  - Are there any verbs not generally used in the progressive? If so, which ones?
3. When do we use simple past?
  - How are simple statements formed?
  - How are questions formed?
  - How is the negative formed?
  - Are the rules governing statement, question, and negative formation prescriptive grammar rules or fundamental rules of English? Explain your choice.
4. What is the present perfect?
  - What do we mean when we say *stable* and *variable* time?
  - How does the present perfect contrast with simple present, present progressive, and simple past?
  - How are simple statements formed?
  - How are questions formed?
  - How is the negative formed?
5. Why do we say that English does not have a future tense?
  - Explain how English expresses future time and the different meanings associated with the different possibilities for expressing future time.

## 6.8 Answer Key

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 1

#### Column A

- The sentences refer to facts, truths, or characteristics.
- They are in present tense.

#### Column B

- The sentences refer to actions that are occurring now or at the moment of speaking.
- They are in the present progressive. This verb tense is composed of the auxiliary verb *be* + present participle.
- The auxiliary *be* is inflected for tense and works together with the present participle to form indicate time (present) and aspect (ongoing).
- The last sentence *\*She is being sick* is not a grammatical English sentence here because *be* used to describe a characteristic or fact cannot used in this form.<sup>4</sup>

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 2

#### Column C

- The sentences are in the simple past tense. They refer to single, completed actions.

#### Column D

- The sentences are in the past progressive. They refer to past ongoing actions.
- This verb tense is composed of the auxiliary verb *be* + the present participle. The participle form in Column D is identical to the one used in the sentences in Column B, Discovery Activity 1, but the time reference has changed because the auxiliary *be* is now inflected for past tense.
- The meaning, use, and function of the past progressive differ from the present progressive, which we discuss in greater detail later in this chapter.

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 3

#### Column E

- The sentences are the same sentences as those in Column C, Discovery Activity 2. They are in the simple past.

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<sup>4</sup>There is an idiomatic use of *be + being + sick*, which means vomiting, but this is different from the general meaning where *be + sick* refers to a person's health.

*Column F*

- These sentences are in the present perfect. This verb tense is composed of the auxiliary *have* or *has* + the past participle.
- The auxiliary works together with the past participle to form verb phrases that indicate time (past) and aspect (completion), as we will see later in this chapter.

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 4**

A brief discussion is provided to help you.

*Excerpt A*

What are <u>they doing</u> ?	<i>wh</i> -question asking for object of sentence; auxiliary <i>be</i> inverts with subject pronoun <i>they</i> and is followed by present participle <i>doing</i>
They're <u>putting down</u>	<i>put down</i> = phrasal verb

*Excerpt B*

everybody's <u>hanging around</u>	contraction of <i>everybody is hanging around</i> , phrasal verb
nobody's <u>doing</u>	contraction of form <i>nobody is doing</i>

*Excerpt C*

I'm <u>taking... off</u>	contraction of <i>am taking off</i> , phrasal verb
who's <u>dying</u>	contraction of <i>is dying</i>
<u>are dying</u>	

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 5***Excerpt A*

The simple present tense is being used with *now* even though the speaker is not referring to a specific event or action going on at the moment. He is referring to fact or truth.

*Excerpt B*

Simple present is used to narrate events in the story. It is a rhetorical device that gives readers a sense of participating in or being a part of a story as it takes place. The tone of the narration would change significantly if the author used present progressive in place of simple present.

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 6***Sentences 1a and 1b*

*smell* and *taste* used intransitively, followed by adjectives.

Both *smell* and *taste* refer to characteristics of a subject noun phrase, *a rose* and *the noodles* respectively.

*Sentences 2a and 2b*

*smell* and *taste* used transitively to refer to actions (*are smelling, is tasting*).

*Sentence 1c*

refers to fact

*Sentence 2c*

a more idiomatic use of verb *see*, referring to impending action (e.g., upcoming visit)<sup>5</sup>

*Sentence 1d*

asking about fact or opinion

*Sentence 2d*

referring to something occurring now

*Sentence 1e*

describing something about Joe's personality

*Sentence 2e*

referring to Joe's behavior at the moment

*Sentence 1f*

*has* refers to possession; it is a fact

*Sentence 2f*

idiomatic use of *have*, meaning to eat

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<sup>5</sup>There is another idiomatic use of *see* in present progressive: *Miles is seeing Kim*. In this case, *is seeing* refers to dating.

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 7****Excerpt A**

tugged	ends in a <i>g</i> sound; pronounced with the <i>d</i> sound
was	irregular past tense form of <i>be</i> , pronounced with a <i>z</i> sound
glided	ends with a <i>d</i> sound; pronounced <i>id</i>
relaxed	ends with an <i>s</i> sound; pronounced with the <i>t</i> sound
sighed	ends with a vowel sound; pronounced with the <i>d</i> sound

**Excerpt B**

ran	irregular past tense form of <i>run</i>
leaped	ends in a <i>p</i> sound; pronounced with the <i>t</i> sound
struck	irregular past tense form of <i>strike</i>
skidded	ends in a <i>d</i> sound; pronounced <i>id</i>
righted	ends in the <i>t</i> sound; pronounced <i>id</i>
looked back	ends in a <i>k</i> sound; pronounced with the <i>t</i> sound
grinned	ends in an <i>n</i> sound; pronounced with the <i>d</i> sound
got	irregular past tense form of <i>get</i>
walked	ends in a <i>k</i> sound, pronounced with the <i>t</i> sound
faced	ends in an <i>s</i> sound, pronounced with the <i>t</i> sound
rapped	ends in <i>p</i> sound; pronounced with the <i>t</i> sound

**Excerpt C**

arrived	ends in an <i>v</i> sound, pronounced with the <i>d</i> sound
noticed	ends in an <i>s</i> sound, pronounced with the <i>t</i> sound
was	irregular past tense form of <i>be</i>
was	irregular past tense form of <i>be</i>
looked	ends in a <i>k</i> sound, pronounced with the <i>t</i> sound
named	ends in an <i>m</i> sound, pronounced with the <i>d</i> sound
made	irregular past tense form of <i>make</i>
dressed	ends in an <i>s</i> sound, pronounced with the <i>t</i> sound
went	irregular past tense form of <i>go</i>
weighed	ends with a vowel sound, pronounced with the <i>d</i> sound

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 8**

The past progressive forms stress the ongoing nature of the events. The simple past verbs indicate single past actions

*Excerpt A*

were playing, were losing	past progressive
scored, kicked	simple past

*Excerpt B*

was sitting, was leaning, was screaming, was coming down	past progressive
saw, knew, looked, blinked, didn't want, had to, reached, ran	simple past

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 9***Excerpt A*

Use of *will* versus *be going to* stresses promise or guarantee that events described will happen; substitution of *be going to* instead of *will* conveys idea of fact rather than promise

*Excerpt B*

Substitution of *be going to* for *will* in first four sentences possible with no change in meaning; all sentences refer to future facts

In last sentence, *will* conveys sense of promise or threat; *be going to* not appropriate

*Excerpt C*

Substitution of *will* not appropriate; *be going to* conveying idea of prior plan about future events that speaker (Marvin) is recounting

*Excerpt D*

Substitution of *will* for *be going to* not appropriate; speaker referring to a very immediate and almost certain future event.

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 10**

A brief discussion for each answer is provided to help you.

*Excerpt A*

- *haven't drawn* and *haven't pulled*
- Both are negative verb phrases where *not* is contracted with the auxiliary *have*.
- The past participle *drawn* is the irregular past participle of the verb *draw*; the past participle *pulled* is the regular past participle of *pull*.

*Excerpt B*

- The first present perfect verb phrase is *has enabled*. The subject of *has enabled* is “The evidence provided by radioactive dating.”
- The next examples are *have determined* and *have divided*. In each sentence the subject of the verb phrase is “scientists.”
- In the final sentence *do not have* is not the present perfect, but the negative present tense of the verb *have* in the sense of “possession.”

*Excerpt C*

- The first sentence includes the present perfect *have documented*.
- The second part of the sentence with *have devastating* may be confusing. This is the use of the main verb *have* in the sense of “cause.” *Devastating* is functioning as a participial adjective describing *effects* (see Chap. 4).
- In the last sentence, we see the present perfect *have evolved*.

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 11***Excerpt A*

- *he'd ever had* (contraction, with adverb *ever*)
- *had never intended* (with adverb *never*)
- *hadn't stopped* (negative contraction)
- *had learned* and *had showed up*. Note that *show up* is a phrasal verb. (See Chap. 5.)
- *had claimed*
- Note: *to have had* is a perfect infinitive. (See Chap. 12.)

*Excerpt B*

- *had been*
- *had apparently vanished* (with adverb *apparently*)
- *had attacked*

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 12**

The excerpt begins with the simple past (*went over*) to introduce the events described by a character named Parks.

- *went over* is a phrasal verb (see Chap. 5).
- Parks begin his narration with the *be* + *going to* future (*we're going to send*).
- The next sentence has the future, *will be*.

- We see the future perfect in the next sentence, *will have surrounded*. This refers to an action occurring after another action in the future (*will be inside*).
- The rest of the excerpt is present tense narrative.

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 13***Excerpt A*

- past perfect progressive: *had been waiting*
- No substitution of another verb tense possible.

*Excerpt B*

- present perfect progressive: *I've been doing*.
- In this context it would be possible to substitute the simple past, *I did*, without a significant change in meaning.

*Excerpt C*

- two past perfect progressive forms, *had been waiting* and *had been suffering*.
- It would be possible to substitute the past perfect (*had waited*, *had suffered*), but the length or duration of the action would no longer be emphasized.

*Excerpt D*

- past perfect progressive: *He'd been living*
- present perfect progressive: *I've been pouring*.
- In either case, the non-progressive form could be substituted (*He'd lived*, *he poured*).

# Chapter 7

## Modal Auxiliary Verbs and Related Structures

**Abstract** This chapter focuses on modal auxiliary verbs and related structures. The chapter is divided into two sections: The first section examines modals, both “pure” modals and related structures. The second section focuses on one particular modal with many uses, *would*, and includes an introduction to the conditional, which we will explore in greater depth in Chap. 9.

**Keywords** pure modals · structures related to modals · semantic meanings of modals · time and modals · negation and modals

### 7.1 Introduction

In Chap. 5 we introduced the concept of auxiliary verbs and examined the three primary auxiliary verbs, *be*, *have*, and *do*. Chapter 6 explored how *be* and *have* act as helping verbs in forming different verb tenses and how *do* acts as a helping verb to form questions and negatives in present and past tense. This chapter examines another type of auxiliary verb, the modal auxiliaries, referred to as *modal auxiliary verbs*, *modal auxiliaries*, or simply *modals*. Modals affect the meaning of the main verb in many different ways. Modals are used to make requests, ask for permission, offer suggestions, give advice, make logical deductions, and to fulfill many other social functions. Also included in our discussion are structures closely related to the modals.

### 7.2 Section 1: Meanings and Use

*How do the modal auxiliaries differ from the primary auxiliaries?*

Like the three primary auxiliary verbs, the modals must accompany a main verb. Unlike the primary auxiliary verbs, the modal auxiliaries *should*, *must*, *can*, *could*, *would*, *may*, *might*, *will*, and *would* do not change form or inflect for tense or person. They have only one form that generally does not change. When modal

auxiliaries do change, they may have a different meaning or use. For example, *can* changes to the past form *could* but only when *can* is used in the sense of “ability.”

A significant difference between the primary auxiliaries and the modal auxiliaries is that the primary auxiliaries add grammatical information. You will recall, for instance, that *was* or *were* together with a present participle indicates a past ongoing action or event. The past form of *be* tells us time and the *-ing* tells us that something is continuous. Modals, on the other hand, do not give us grammatical information. Instead, they convey semantic and what we call *pragmatic* information. Consider the difference between these sentences:

Could you pass the salt, please?  
Pass the salt, please.

Chances are, you will have noted something along the line that the first sentence is more polite and less direct or abrupt than the second sentence. Why is this so? The answer lies in the choice of the modal *could* + *you* versus the imperative or command form *Pass*. We can say *could* conveys a different intended meaning than *pass*. This difference in speaker intent is what we mean by *pragmatic* information. This pragmatic information is what modals convey. The modal auxiliaries suggest possibility; grant permission; make deductions, judgments, and assessments; indicate obligation, necessity and ability; advise; and express speakers’ attitudes.

The modals differ from the primary auxiliaries in other ways. The modals do not always have parallel meanings either for negation or tense. By this we mean that the meaning of a modal can change when it is used with *not*. What exactly this means will become clearer as we delve into the different modals. The meaning of a modal may also change with a different time reference. While the modals themselves do not inflect for tense, they can have different time references. For these different time references, we use modals together with the primary auxiliaries, *have* or *be*:

I **should** *be doing* my homework.

Here the modal *should* is followed by the auxiliary *be* + present participle. In this sentence, *should* is conveying semantic and pragmatic information. *Be doing* is conveying what action *should* is referring to and the time reference. We can think of the meaning this sentence conveys as:

I am not doing my homework at this time.  
I am supposed to be doing my homework now.  
A strong suggestion for me is to do my homework now.

As you see from these sentences, *should be doing* is conveying a great deal of information that is not necessarily immediately obvious to ESL/EFL learners.

In this section, we will examine the modals based on their semantic meaning. We will also explore semi-modals and structures with related semantic meanings and/or function where appropriate.

## The “Pure” Modals

<b>can</b>	<b>could</b>	<b>may</b>	<b>might</b>	<b>must</b>	<b>should</b>	<b>would</b>	<b>will</b>
------------	--------------	------------	--------------	-------------	---------------	--------------	-------------

These modals are often referred to as “pure” modals because they consist of only one word and generally one form. Other constructions function similarly but are not considered “pure” modals. For example, *ought to* is very similar in meaning to *should*, but is not considered a “pure” modal because it consists of two words (*ought + to*) and is referred to as a “semi-modal.” As we will see in our exploration of the “pure” modals, there are various structures that are generally discussed together with these modals because they are closely related in meaning and/or structure.

The modals and related structures are some of the most difficult for ESL/EFL learners to master because of their varied meanings and uses. To help learners understand and use the modals, semi-modals, and related structures, it is important that teachers themselves are clearly aware of the different meanings these can convey and how these meanings may change according to context.

### 7.2.1 Ability

#### 7.2.1.1 Modals

<b>could</b>	<b>can</b>
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One of the first modals introduced to learners of English is *can* in the sense of expressing either present or future ability and its past tense counterpart *could*.

Since *can* and *could* are modal auxiliaries, we follow our first auxiliary rule introduced previously. We make negative statements by adding *not* after *can/could* and form questions by inverting the subject and *can/could*.

The negative of *can* and *could* is parallel in meaning to affirmative statements with *can* and *could*. In other words, when *can* and *could* are used with *not*, they mean the opposite of what they mean in affirmative statements. As we will observe later, this is sometimes not the case with other modals where adding *not* to a modal may give it an entirely different meaning.

***Do these sentences mean the same thing: I can go and I’m able to go?***

### 7.2.1.2 Related Structure

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#### be able to

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*Be able to* is a non-modal counterpart of *can/could* in the sense of “ability.” *Be able to* is not considered a modal because *be* inflects for person and tense.

At lower levels of proficiency, ESL/EFL students are generally taught that *can/could* and *be able to* are identical in meaning. Although these structures are often interchangeable, there are some differences in use.

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#### *Can/could* versus *be able to*

<b>Can/could or be able to</b>	<b>only be able to</b>
“general ability” She <i>could</i> read at an early age. She <i>was able to</i> read at an early age.	“ability for single action or event” She <i>was able to</i> get tickets yesterday for the show.

*Can/could* and *be able to* are interchangeable when we refer to a general ability. When we refer to a single action or event, we use only *be able to*. We do not say \**She could get us tickets yesterday for the show.*

- **Learner difficulties**

As learners of English become more proficient, they are generally introduced to the concept that *can/could* and *be able to* are not always identical in all cases. Nevertheless, even at higher levels of proficiency, learners may confuse the use of *can/could* and *be able to*.

Try Discovery Activity 1 to see how well you do in finding *can/could* and *be able to*. If you feel confident in your knowledge of these two structures, you may choose to continue on without completing this activity. The answers to this Discover Activities are in the Answer Key.

#### **Discovery Activity 1: *Can, Could, Be able to***

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline the verb phrases containing *can, could, and be able to*. Be sure to underline the entire verb phrase, not just the modal or related structure.
2. Decide whether or not another one of the verbs above could be substituted with no change in meaning.

**A.**

I went a couple miles out of my way, but I was able to reach Pancek's house without running into Morelli. [Evanovich, J. (2004). *Ten big ones* (p.146). New York: St. Martin's Press.]

**B.**

"It was only after her marriage to this Englishman that I was able to find out where she was. I lived in that farm, where I had a room down below, and could get in and out every night and no one the wise." [Doyle, S. C. (1959). The adventure of the dancing men. In G. Bennet (Ed.), *Great tales of action and adventure* (pp. 150–151). New York: Dell.]

### 7.2.2 *Permission and Polite Requests*

may	can	could	would
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#### ***Is it May I leave? or Can I leave?***

There are three modals that are used in asking for permission: *may*, *could*, and *can*. Of the three, *may* is the most formal and, among traditional prescriptive grammarians, is considered the correct form to use when asking for permission. From this traditional point of view, *can* refers to ability rather than permission; only *may* should be used when asking for permission and not *can*. Nevertheless, *can* has increasingly become the preferred form over *may*.

#### ***How do I explain the difference between Could you help me? and Can you help me? And what about Would you help me?***

In spoken American English, *can* is more commonly used, especially between people who know each other. *Could* and *would* are considered identical in terms of politeness, but *can* is considered somewhat less polite.

*May*, *could*, *can*, and *would* all refer to present or future time when used to ask for permission or to make a polite request. Note that *may* is only used with *I* or *we*. You will also notice that these polite requests all follow our first auxiliary rule where we invert the subject and verb to form a question.

Although earlier we discussed *could* as being the past form of *can*, this is only true when it is used in the sense of ability. When *could* is used in asking for permission or in making a request, it is a polite form and not considered a past form. Often *could* and *would* used in the sense of permission or request are referred to as conditional forms.

<i>May, Can, Could, Would</i>		
	meaning	time reference
May I leave, please? Could I leave, please? Can I leave, please?	permission	present  or
Could you pass the salt, please? Can you pass the salt, please? Would you pass the salt, please?	polite request	future time

- *Learner difficulties*

A common problem among learners of English is the overuse of *can* in making requests. In many situations, native speakers find *could* or *would* to be less abrupt and more appropriate than *can*.

### 7.2.3 Possibility or Probability Present Time

<b>may</b>	<b>might</b>	<b>could</b>	<b>must</b>
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Speakers use these modals to indicate their level of certainty about something. These modal meanings range from slight possibility (*may, might, could*) to a high degree of certainty (*must*). A good way to help learners visualize the difference in probability reflected by these modals is to use a scale:

<b>Present Situation</b>	<b>Speaker A:</b> Brian is always in class, but he's not here today.
↓	<b>Speaker B:</b> He <i>may be</i> sick. OR He <i>might be</i> sick. OR He <i>could be</i> sick.
<b>low certainty</b>	
↓	<b>Speaker C:</b> He <i>must be</i> sick.
<b>high certainty</b>	
<b>Future Situation</b>	<b>Speaker A:</b> It's the end of October, but it's going to be a beautiful sunny and warm weekend.
↓	<b>Speaker B</b> We <i>may drive</i> to the country. OR We <i>might drive</i> to the country. OR We <i>could drive</i> to the country. <sup>1</sup>
<b>low certainty</b>	
↓	<b>Speaker C</b> It <i>must be</i> Indian summer.
<b>high certainty (logical deduction)</b>	

<sup>1</sup>Although the context will usually indicate whether the speaker means possibility or ability, the distinction between the two meanings is not always clear-cut

The use of *must* to indicate degree of probability is often discussed in terms of a **logical deduction**. The speaker is making an inference with a high degree of certainty about a situation or event.

*What about referring to past situations?*

### 7.2.4 Possibility or Probability Past Time

In referring to **past possibility**, *may*, *might*, *could*, and *must* are followed by *have* + the past participle of the main verb. This is the same way the present perfect is formed, but with a modal verb, there is no “perfect” meaning.

<b>Past Situation</b>	<b>Speaker A:</b> Brian is always in class, but he didn't come yesterday.
↓	<b>Speaker B:</b> He <i>may have been</i> sick. OR He <i>might have been</i> sick. OR He <i>could have been</i> sick.
<b>low certainty</b>	
↓	<b>Speaker C:</b> He <i>must have been</i> sick.
<b>high certainty (logical deduction)</b>	

When *may* and *might* are used with *not*, they mean negative possibility:

Alex *may be* sick. He *may not come* to school.

Alex *might be* sick. He *might not come* to school.

***Does could not refer to negative past possibility?***

When *not* is added to *could*, *could not* refers to lack of possibility. It often includes an element of surprise or disbelief or something contrary to fact. When there is this element of surprise or disbelief, *couldn't* generally receives stress in the sentence.

He couldn't come because he was sick.	<b>lack of ability</b>
He couldn't be sick! I just saw him.	<b>negative possibility</b>

Although you may think this next Discovery Activity is somewhat long, you will see that each excerpt has different modals. Be sure you can find and explain all of modals before going on to the next section. For this Discovery Activity, the discussion follows the excerpts.

**Discovery Activity 2: *May, Might, Might, Have, Can, Could, Could have***

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline the modal verb phrase. Be sure to underline the entire verb phrase, not just the modal.
2. Explain the meaning and time reference of the modal verb phrase. Is it possibility, ability, or a logical deduction? Is it past or present time?
3. Decide whether or not one of the above modals could be substituted with no change in meaning.

**A.**

Before your next long run, you might fuel up by toasting a few frozen waffles. You might also pack an energy bar if you're going especially far. [Fuel. (2005, January), *Runner's World*, p. 47.]

**B.**

These hieroglyphics have evidently a meaning. If it is a purely arbitrary one, it may be impossible for us to solve it. This particular sample is so short that I can do nothing and the facts which you brought me are so indefinite that we have no basis for an investigation . . . [Doyle, S. C. (1959). The adventure of the dancing men. In G. Bennet (Ed.), *Great tales of action and adventure* (p. 124). New York: Dell.]

**C.**

“Why, Mr. Holmes, the crime was only committed at three this morning. How could you hear of it in London and get to the spot as soon as I?”

“I anticipated it. I came in the hope of preventing it.”

“Then you must have important evidence, of which we are ignorant.” [Doyle, S. C. (1959). *The adventure of the dancing men*. In G. Bennet (Ed.), *Great tales of action and adventure* (pp. 137–138). New York: Dell.]

**D.**

Of course, the uptick in productivity growth might have been just another bubble. With the end of the bull market and the economic expansion of the 1990s, the end of the productivity miracle may be near as well. [Gerseman, O. (2004). *Cowboy capitalism* (pp. 34–35). Washington, DC: Cato Institute.]

**E.**

“No one remembers seeing him at the briefing,” Collins continued, “but he could have been listening outside of the tent.” [Brockmann, S. (2004). *Hot target* (p. 11). New York: Ballantine.]

***At the end of Excerpt D, we saw a sentence that ended with “the end of the productivity miracle may be near as well.” Do ESL/EFL learners confuse may be and maybe?***

- ***Learner difficulties***

A common problem, even among more advanced learners of English, is distinguishing between *may + be* and *maybe*. While both express possibility, *maybe* is an adverb. *May + be* is the modal *may* and the simple form of the main verb *be*. Because *may + be* and *maybe* belong to different word classes, they function differently in sentences:

*Maybe* we’ll go to the beach tomorrow.

We *may be* at the beach tomorrow.

*Maybe* is an adverb and comes before the subject and verb phrase (*we + will + go*). *May be* is the verb phrase of the sentence and follows the subject (*we*).

In spoken English, there is also a difference in pronunciation. The adverb *maybe* is pronounced together as one word, with stress upon the first syllable, *may*. In the verb phrase *may + be*, the modal *may* receives stress and is spoken as a separate word unit from *be*.

***Why haven’t you mentioned must not have? Is it different?***

When *not* is added to *must have*, where *have* is an auxiliary verb and refers to past time, it implies a negative high certainty or logical deduction:

Jack didn't pass the course. He <i>must not have studied</i> .	<b>negative high probability/logical deduction</b>
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*Must not have* also has another meaning, which we will explore later.

## 7.2.5 Necessity or Obligation

### 7.2.5.1 Modal

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#### must

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Another use of *must*, in addition to that of logical deduction, is to express **necessity** and **obligation**. When *must* is used in this meaning, there are two related structures that convey this same meaning, *have to* and *have got to*. All three structures express necessity, but only *must* is a modal.

*Must* expresses necessity in present and future. There is **no past form** of *must* in the sense of necessity. We use *had to* when referring to past necessity. There is also no negative form for this meaning of *must*. In other words, adding *not* does not convey lack of necessity or obligation. *Must not* refers to a logical deduction or high probability, as we discussed previously. *Must not* can also be used to convey the meaning of prohibition, which we will investigate shortly.

### 7.2.5.2 Related Structures

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<b>have to</b>	<b>have got to</b>
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*Have to* and *have got to* are idiomatic structures that express necessity. They are not modals but convey the same or similar meaning as *must* in the sense of necessity or obligation. In *have to* and *have got*, *have* is a main verb. Both *have to* and *have got to* inflect for person and time.

We form questions in simple present and simple past by inserting the *do* auxiliary. We form the negative of *have to* by using the *do* auxiliary and *not*. In Standard American English, we do not use *don't have got to*, although it is found in

some dialects. *Have got to* is used only in the present and future. It is generally a spoken, informal form and usually contracts. *Have to* is used in any tense and does not contract.

<i>Must, Have to, Have Got To</i>		
<b>meaning: necessity</b>	<b>structure</b>	<b>time reference</b>
She <i>must pay</i> her bills	modal <i>must</i>	
She <i>has to pay</i> her bills.	<i>have to</i> , no contraction possible	present or future
She <i>has got to pay</i> her bills.	<i>have got to</i> , contraction possible	
She <i>had to pay</i> her bills.	<i>have to (had)</i> no contraction possible	past
<b>meaning: lack of necessity</b>	<b>structure</b>	<b>time reference</b>
She <i>doesn't have to pay</i> her bills.	<i>do</i> auxiliary ( <i>does</i> ) for negation of <i>have to</i> (present form)	present or future
She <i>didn't have to pay</i> her bills.	<i>do</i> auxiliary ( <i>did</i> ) for negation of <i>have to</i>	past

Only *must* and *have to* are used in questions, although in informal spoken English speakers will ask questions such as *You gotta<sup>1</sup> go right now?* relying upon intonation to convey the question. For questions, *must* inverts with the subject and *have to* uses the *do* auxiliary, in accordance with our first auxiliary rule:

*Must* drivers *renew* their licenses every six years?

*Do* drivers *have to renew* their licenses every six years?

### **Are *must* and *have to* interchangeable?**

In general, *must* is considered stronger than *have to*. Grammar books often attempt to distinguish between the two by citing the difference as “external” versus “internal obligations.” External obligation refers to regulations, conventions, conditions, rules, laws, and so forth imposed by someone or something. Internal obligation refers to something imposed by speakers themselves.

Drivers <i>must obey</i> traffic laws.	<b>external</b>
I <i>have to</i> get my oil changed.	<b>internal</b>

In reality, this distinction is not always maintained, particularly in spoken American English. In spoken English, speakers will generally use *have to* or *have got to* more frequently than *must*, even when there are external obligations. Here is an example of when a speaker would likely use *must*:

<sup>1</sup>Spoken form of *got to*.

Jason: I *have to go*.

Graduate advisor: Before you leave this office, you *must complete* this form. You've got to listen to me about this. You don't want to lose your fellowship.

The graduate advisor is using *must complete* in this instance to emphasize the importance of Jason completing the form now.

Speakers may use additional stress on *have* in the verb phrase *have to* or *got* in the verb phrase *have got to* to emphasize the importance or necessity of a particular action. In the examples below, the slash mark indicates what is receiving the stress in the sentence.

/

You **have** to complete this form.

/

You've **got** to complete this form.

**When we speak, we don't usually enunciate the have in have to and have got to, do we?**

In spoken English *have to* is often reduced to *hafta*. *Has to* often sounds like *hasta*. *Have got to* is often reduced to *gotta* and in dialogues may be written as such to reflect the spoken form.

- *Learner difficulties*

Since *have to* and *have got to* are very reduced in spoken speech, ESL/EFL learners may have difficulty recognizing and understanding these forms. Inexperienced native speakers and ESL/EFL students exposed to informal English frequently need to be taught that *gotta* is actually the spoken form of *have got to* and that they should avoid writing *gotta* in place of *have got to*.

***Don't we sometimes use should when we mean necessity or obligation?***

### 7.2.5.3 Modal with Related Meaning of Necessity or Obligation

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#### **should**

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In certain contexts, *should* conveys the notion of necessity or obligation. It is usually substituted for *must* to soften a demand or requirement but, as with *must*, there is no choice involved as shown in the following excerpt:

All submissions to *TQ* **should** conform to the requirements of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.), which can be obtained from the American Psychological Association. [*TESOL Quarterly* Submission Guidelines. Retrieved from: [http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1002/\(ISSN\)1545-7249/homepage/ForAuthors.html](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1002/(ISSN)1545-7249/homepage/ForAuthors.html)]

### 7.2.6 Prohibition

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must not

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In Standard American English *must not* to mean prohibition is considered formal. Speakers will generally use other structures to convey the notion of prohibition:

You <i>must not</i> drink and drive.	<i>must + not</i>
No drinking and driving. Drinking and driving is illegal.	<b>alternatives</b> Drinking and driving is against the law.

*Must not* meaning prohibition versus *must not* meaning logical deduction or inference is differentiated based on the context in which the modal verb phrase occurs. To help clarify the meaning of *must not* versus *must*, *have to*, and *have got to*, consider the table below. This table summarizes the different uses of *must not*, *must*, *have to*, and *have got to* and their related meanings. Remember that “related” does not mean “identical,” and that the use of each structure does differ. Keep in mind also that adding *not* **significantly alters** the meaning of *must*. Note also that this chart does not include other meanings and forms of *must*.

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*Must, Must Not, Have To, Have Got To*

	Meaning	Time reference	Sentence type
We <i>must obey</i> the law.	necessity	present	statement
We <i>have to obey</i> the law. We <i>'ve got to obey</i> the law.	necessity	present	statement
We <i>had to come</i> .	necessity	past ( <i>must not</i> possible here for this meaning)	statement
<i>Must we obey</i> the law? <i>Do we have to obey</i> the law?	necessity	present	question
They <i>must not open</i> that door.	prohibition	present/future	negative statement
They <i>do not have to</i> come.	lack of necessity	present ( <i>must not</i> possible here for this meaning)	negative statement

The next Discovery Activity provides practice in identifying and ascertaining the meaning of *must*, *must have*, *have to*, and *have got to*. After you have completed the activity, check your answers with those in the Answer Key.

### Discovery Activity 3: *Must, Must Have, Have To, Have Got To*

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline the modal verb phrase. Be sure to underline the entire verb phrase, not just the modal.
2. Explain the meaning of the modal verb phrase (e.g., is it necessity or logical deduction?).

#### A.

Mack had the *Atlantic Ranger's* engine running and was perched on the bench in front of the wheel, putting on his shoes. He must have sprinted barefoot to reach the water before Anna. [Barr, N. (2003). *Flashback* (p. 42). New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.]

#### B.

"My condolences," I said. He frowned at me. "What?" "It must be difficult never being able to tell the truth. [Hamilton, L. K. (2003). *Cerulean sins* (p. 5). New York: Berkely Books.]

#### C.

Right now she even had to stay in character here, in her upstairs private office. Jane had to take Robins' advice and turn this fiasco into free publicity for *American Hero*. [Brockmann, S. (2004). *Hot target* (p. 36). New York: Ballantine.]

#### D.

You must submit evidence that lists you as the parent of the child applying for a passport. Some documents, like a U.S. birth certificate, provide both evidence of citizenship and evidence of parental relationship. If you're submitting one or more of the documents below as evidence of U.S. citizenship too, you must submit a certified copy. [U.S. Passports & International Travel. Retrieved from <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports/under-16.html>]

#### E.

"Does that mean that you're not coming over to my place for cider and doughnuts?" "No, Mrs. Zimmerman. but right now I've got to go up to my room and finish one of John L. Stoddard's books. I've gotten to the exciting part." [Bellairs, J. (1993). *The house with a clock in its walls* (p. 71). New York: Puffin.]

**F.**

How did you know her?" He must have known her well, to see her in my face, which is paler than hers, the eyes blue instead of dark brown. [Roth, V. (2013). *The transfer: A divergent story*. Kindle iPad version. Retrieved from Amazon.com]

**G.**

I notice that the Dauntless-borns, usually so quick to comment on everything, are silent. That must mean that what I'm feeling is correct—that Eric is someone to watch out for. [Roth, V. (2013). *The transfer: A divergent story*. Kindle iPad version. Retrieved from Amazon.com]

## 7.2.7 *Advice or Suggestion*

### 7.2.7.1 Modals

should	ought to
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*Should* and *ought to* both express advisability or suggestion, and the two are interchangeable in meaning. Some grammarians consider only *should* a pure modal and argue that *ought to* be classified as a related structure. Regardless of how they are classified, *should* and *ought to* are closely related semantically and generally taught together in ESL/EFL texts. *Ought to* occurs less frequently in Standard American English than *should*, although there are regional variations. *Should* and *ought to* refer to present or future advice or suggestions.

Kyle *should clean* his room.

We *ought to get* gas before we leave.

Questions and negatives with *should* and *ought to* follow the first auxiliary rule. In Standard American English, *not* is rarely used with *ought to*, nor is *ought to* generally used in questions.

In spoken speech, *ought to* is generally reduced and sounds like *outta* or *oughta*. In its reduced form *ought to* (*outta/oughta*) is considered informal and colloquial. *Outta/oughta* may appear in dialogues to reflect spoken speech:

Florida trailed them, kicking at rocks and tree trunks as she went. "*Oughta* just run away right now," Florida mumbled. "*Oughta* just bury us alive." [Creech, S. (2002). *Ruby Holler* (p. 84). New York: HarperCollins.]

### 7.2.7.2 Related Structure

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#### had better

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*Had better* is an idiomatic, fixed form. In Standard American English *had better* is considered somewhat stronger than *should* and *ought to*. It implies very strong advice, a warning, a threat, or the expectation that the action will occur. Although *had better* looks like a past time form, it is used only for present and future time reference. Since *had better* is a fixed structure, *not* comes after both words and before the main verb.

You *had better* come now.  
 You *had better not* forget this appointment.

- **Learner difficulties**

In spoken English, the *had* in *had better* is often contracted and reduced, which makes it difficult for learners of English to distinguish:

You'd better come now.  
 You'd better not be late.

Furthermore, speakers often drop the *had* altogether in spoken English:

Oh! You better watch out,  
 You better not cry,  
 You better not pout,  
 I'm telling you why:  
 Santa Claus is coming to town!  
 (refrain from the Christmas song, *Santa Claus Is Coming to Town*)

Discovery Activity 4 asks you to identify *should*, *ought to*, and *had better*. Note that the last excerpt is long but provides an interesting contrast in the use of two of the modal verb phrases. You can find the answers for this activity in the Answer Key at the end of this chapter.

#### Discovery Activity 4: *Should, Ought To, Had Better*

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline the modal verb phrase. Be sure to underline the entire verb phrase, not just the modal.

2. Explain the meaning of the modal verb phrase (i.e., is it obligation or advice)?

**A.**

[Tiller] eyed the dark storm clouds in the distance. “We’d better get that tent up or we’re going to get soaked tonight,” Tiller said. [Creech, S. (2002). *Ruby Holler* (pp. 207–208). New York: Harper Collins.]

**B.**

“You know I’m hypoglycemic. The doctor says I shouldn’t go more than two hours without eating.” [Grafton, S. (2004). *R is for ricochet* (p. 51). New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons.]

**C.**

“. If you give me some basic supplies, I’m sure I can build some glasses myself.” “No, no,” the foreman said, his surgical mask curling into a frown. “You’d better leave optometry to the experts.” [Snicket, L. (2000). *The miserable mill* (p. 101). New York: HarperCollins.]

**D.**

“... I designed that game myself, Pete..”  
“But look—I’ve figured out a way to beat it. I thought you ought to know.” [Heinlein, R. (1942/1997). *Beyond this horizon* (p. 39). New York: Penguin.]

**E.**

A central element of any program to develop the private sector is that the government should transfer commercial activities now carried out by state-owned enterprises or government agencies to the private sector... The vast literature on privatization gives little guidance to countries on what the objectives ought to be. However, it is recognized that countries should specify their objectives and then design a privatization program to achieve those objectives. [Anderson, R. (2004). *Just get out of the way: How government can help business in poor countries* (pp. 87–88). Washington, DC: Cato Institute.]

### 7.2.8 Expectation

<b>should</b>	<b>ought to</b>
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“I can go and nose around, see if I can pick up any sense of what kind of security they have... *It shouldn't* take long.” [Smith, T. (2006). *Slim to none* (p. 96). Ontario Canada: Mira.]

***In this excerpt, shouldn't doesn't mean "advice" or "suggestion," does it?***

*Should/ought to* can also mean expectation or a high degree of certainty, similar to *must* in the sense of logical deduction. The degree of certainty is not, however, as strong as with *must*. In Standard American English, *ought to* is not used as often as *should* in this sense, although, again, there are regional variations.

It's late. Helen *should be* here by now.

You *ought to receive* your paycheck by the first of the month.

When adding *not*, the meaning is simply negative without a change in meaning or use, as we can see in the excerpt above. Both *should* and *ought to* have only present or future meaning when used in the sense of expectation.

## 7.2.9 Unfulfilled Expectation, Mistake

### 7.2.9.1 Modals

should have	ought to have
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*Should* and *ought to* can refer to past time by adding *have* + past participle of the main verb. However, when *should* and *ought to* are used in **past** time reference, **the meaning** of these modals **is different** from their meaning than when used in present or future time reference.

*Should/ought to have* + past participle conveys the meaning of a comment on or evaluation of an action or event that was a mistake or that did not meet expectations.

I knew what was happening. I *should have done* something... I *shouldn't have let* it go on so long. [Shayne, M. (1993). *Reckless angel* (p. 15). New York: Silhouette.]

Depending on the context, *should/ought to have* + past participle may convey a reprimand or implied criticism. The *Pulptastic* website, for instance, offers a page titled “24 Headlines That Should Never Have Been Written” [<http://pulptastic.com/24-headlines-never-written/>]. Different songwriters have also written songs with a variety of lyrics entitled “I Should Have Known Better” (e.g., The Beatles, Richard Marx, Jim Diamond).

The table below summarizes the different uses of *should*, *ought to*, and *had better* and their related meanings. Remember again that “related” does not mean “identical,” and that the use of each structure may differ in different contexts.

<i>Should, Ought To, Had Better</i>		
	Meaning	Time reference
She needs to be ready before class starts, so she <i>should come</i> early. She needs to be ready before class starts, so she <i>ought to come</i> early.	advice or suggestion	present/future
She needs to be ready before class starts, so she <i>had better come</i> early.	strong advice or suggestion	present/future
It's late. She <i>should be</i> here by now. She <i>ought to be</i> here by now.	expectation or high certainty	present/future <sup>1</sup>
She's not ready. She <i>should have come</i> earlier. She <i>ought to have come</i> earlier.	unfulfilled expectation or reprimand; unheeded, ignored past advice	past

<sup>1</sup>As in, for example, When is Margo coming? She should be here by tomorrow

Complete Discovery Activity 5, which contrasts *should* and *should have*. This Discovery Activity should help clarify the meaning and use of these modals.

**Discovery Activity 5: *Should, Should Have***

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline the modal verb phrase. Be sure to underline the entire verb phrase, not just the modal.
2. Explain the meaning of the modal verb phrase (i.e., is it possibility, advice, or unfulfilled expectation/obligation)?
3. Explain what time the modal verb phrase is referring to.

**A.**

“Threw my back out,” he said by way of explanation. “I was moving boxes last week. I guess I should have done like Mother taught me and lifted with my knees.” [Grafton, S. (2003). *Q is for quarry* (p. 29). New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons.]

**B.**

“What you’re saying is true and you’re entirely correct. Grand should have come down here. She should have sent word, but I think she was afraid to face you.” [Grafton, S. (2003). *Q is for quarry* (p. 149). New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons.]

**C.**

Although experts agree that young children shouldn’t take cough medicine, they’re OK for most older children and adults... That said, anyone with a medical condition—like heart disease or high blood pressure—should check with a doctor before using any cold medicine. [WebMD. (n.d.). Cough medicine: should you or shouldn’t you? Retrieved from <http://www.webmd.com/cold-and-flu/features/cough-medicine-should-you-shouldnt-you?page=2>]

## 7.3 Section 2: *Would* and the Conditional

### 7.3.1 *Would*

*Would* is a modal that has many different uses. For one, *would* + main verb can be used to express past custom or habit, that is, something that happened repeatedly in the past as show in this excerpt:

Two years later, her grandfather had died of a sudden heart attack, but she *would* always treasure the solitary time she got spend with him that summer... [Smith, T. (2006). *Slim to none* (p. 162). Ontario Canada: Mira.]

*Would* is also used to refer to the **future in the past**:

Before he made any decisions, he *would make* a few more inquiries. Then, he *would consider* his options. [Smith, T. (2006). *Slim to none* (p. 304). Ontario Canada: Mira.]

*Would* is used for future time reference when there is a sense of possibility or capability. It is generally regarded as a weaker alternative to *will* when used in this sense:

The President is proposing a new bill that *would* significantly *change* Social Security.

*Would have* + past participle can refer to past time in the sense of possibility or capability.

She felt a twinge of regret for not publishing it on her blog—that *would have been* some serious advertising coin. [Doctorow, C. (2010). *Makers*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from Amazon.com.]

*Would* is also used to express wishes or conditions in present or future:

I wish he *would be* less critical of my housework...  
 I wish he *would spend* more time considering what is important to me...  
 I wish he *would speak* more kindly to me. [Chapman, G. (2011). *Happily ever-after: Six secrets to a successful marriage*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from Amazon.com.]

*Would have* + past participle is used to express wishes or conditions in the past.

She thought her friends *would have written* more often.

***Isn't would the past form of will?***

### 7.3.2 *Will*

In previous chapters, we have discussed *will* as being an auxiliary to mark future time. While we can say that *would* is the past of *will*, it more complicated than simply saying that *walked* is the past of *walk*, as you see from the discussion of the many uses of *would*. In addition to future time reference, *will* is used to indicate a present and future ongoing custom, habit, or fact:

Susan and Jason *will* always *be* there to help their mother out as long as she needs them.

This sentence conveys the idea that *helping their mother out* is something that Susan and Jason are committed to and will continue to do for the foreseeable future.

*Will* also occurs in real or true conditional sentences, which we examine in greater detail in Chap. 9.

### 7.3.3 *Would and the Conditional*

*Would*, along with *could*, and sometimes *might*, is used in the sentences above, is commonly associated with what we call the *conditional*.

#### *What is the conditional?*

The conditional means something that refers to a hypothetical state of affairs or an event or fact that is contrary to fact. These clauses are also referred to as hypothetical *if* clauses:

Violet... tried to imagine what Klaus *would have said* if he had been there, un hypnotized, in the library with his sisters. [Snicket, L. (2000). *The miserable mill* (p. 14). New York: HarperCollins.]

If I hadn't waited, if I had just clicked the link, I *could have found out* more. [Riker, G. 2015. *Reality heist*. Retrieved from <http://www.bookrix.com/books;science-fiction,id:58,page:2.html>]

Although conditional clauses will be examined in greater detail in Chap. 9, it is appropriate to introduce the conditional in this chapter on modals because of the use of *would*, *could*, and sometimes *might*.

#### 7.3.3.1 *Would and if* Clauses

The conditional consists of two clauses: an *if* clause and a main clause. In the **present conditional**, the *if* clause consists of *if* + simple past and the main clause consists of *would/could/might* + simple verb. The **past conditional** consists of *if* + past perfect. The main clause consists of *would/could/might* + *have* + past participle, as in the examples above.

Conditional: <i>if</i> Clause: Initial Position		
	Main clause	Time reference
If I <i>had</i> the time,	I <i>would study</i> more.	present
If they <i>had studied</i> more,	they <i>could have passed</i> the course.	past

The order of the *if* clause and the main clause may vary without a change in meaning.

Conditional: <i>if</i> Clause: Second Position		
	Main clause	Time reference
I <i>would study</i> more,	if I <i>had</i> the time.	present
They <i>could have passed</i> the course,	if they <i>had studied</i> more.	past

In the main clause, speakers will use either *would*, *could*, or sometimes *might*. *Would* implies an intended or desired action or event; *could* and *might* imply a possibility or possible option. *Would* occurs more frequently than *could* or *might* in conditional sentences.

The conditional use of *would*, *could*, and *might* must be understood from their occurrence in discourse. Like all modals, *would* and *could/might* have different meanings and functions, depending on the structure of the sentence and the context in which they are used.

Discovery Activity 6 focuses on identifying the different uses of *would*.

### Discovery Activity 6: Different Meanings of *Would*

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline the *would* modal verb phrase. Be sure to underline the entire verb phrase, not just the modal.
2. Explain each meaning of *would* (i.e., Is it a polite request? Does it refer to something hypothetical (conditional)? Is it a repeated action in the past?).

#### A.

When the three children lived in the Baudelaire home, there was a huge dictionary in their parents' library, and Klaus would often use it to help him with difficult books. [Snicket, L. (2000). *The miserable mill* (p. 123). New York: HarperCollins.]

#### B.

"Can I get you a cup of coffee? Would you like to use the shower or anything?" [Doctorow, C. (2010). *Makers*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from Amazon.com.]

#### C.

The bank officer would prepare the CTR as required and place a copy in the files, only instead of shipping the original to the IRS, he'd run it through a shredder... [Grafton, S. (2004). *R is for ricochet* (p. 90). New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.]

#### D.

"... If I'd suspected who he was at Baskul, of course, I'd have tried to get in touch with Delhi about him—it would have been merely a public duty." [Hilton, J. (1933/1971). *Lost horizon* (p. 118). New York: Pocket Books.]

**Overall, do ESL/EFL learners find the modal auxiliaries difficult?**

- **Learner difficulties**

ESL/EFL learners have numerous problems with the modal auxiliaries. For one, they have problems with form. For example, ESL/EFL learners may add *to* + verb after a modal:

\*We must to go.

Or, they may string more than one modal together:

\*We will can go.

And they may inflect the main verb:

\*We could went early.

ESL/EFL learners also be confused by English using both *must* and *have to* for present and future necessity but only *had to* for past necessity:

You *must* fill out this form.

*or*

You *have to* fill out this form

*but only:*

You *had to* fill out this form.

In addition, ESL/EFL learners have trouble when a modal changes its meaning with a change in time reference. *Should* and *must*, for instance, mean something different when used for present versus past time reference:

You should do your homework.	present, advice
You should have done your homework.	past, reprimand
You must pay your taxes by April 15.	present, necessity, obligation
He must have forgotten to pay his bill because he got an overdue notice.	past, high certainty/logical deduction

The pronunciation of modals also causes problems. In spoken English, the modals are pronounced in a reduced form; therefore, learners may have difficulties in hearing and identifying them. Remember that by “reduced” we mean that a word does not receive stress in a sentence. For example, in the sentence, *I can pick up the kids from school for you*, learners may not hear the *can* in the sentence because this word does not receive stress. They may then misinterpret the statement as: *I pick up the kids from school for you*—a sentence that by its structure conveys a statement of fact rather than ability.

When *should*, *would*, and *could* are followed by *have* + past participle, the *have* is frequently reduced to sound like *of*. Both inexperienced native speakers of English and learners of English need practice in identifying this reduced *have* as *have* and not *of*:

I should've known better.  
\*I should of known better.

In spoken English, *would* is generally contracted. In written dialogues, *would* is also frequently written as a contraction. Learners may confuse this contracted *would* ('*d*) with the past perfect, as in Excerpt D in Discovery Activity 6:

If I'd (*had*) suspected who he was at Baskul, of course, I'd (*would*) have tried to get in touch with Delhi about him—it would have been merely a public duty.

Given the many difficulties learners have in recognizing, understanding, and producing appropriate modals, semi-modals, and related structures, it is essential that learners have numerous opportunities to practice identifying meaning and use of modals in a variety of contexts, both written and oral.

## 7.4 Summary

### Auxiliary Verbs: Primary versus Modal

Primary auxiliary verbs	Modal auxiliary verbs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>be, have, do</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>can, could may, might, must, should, ought to, will, would</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>help the main verb by providing grammatical information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>nuance the main verb by providing semantic information</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>inflect for time and number</li> <li>precede a present or past participle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>invariable               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– convey past time reference through <i>modal + have + past participle</i>, except for <i>could</i> in the sense of ability</li> <li>– precede a simple verb</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Examples	
<p>I <i>am</i> running.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>am</i> is part of verb phrase, <i>be</i> + present participle (present progressive)</li> </ul> <p>Ellie <i>has</i> run.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>has</i> is part of verb phrase, <i>have</i> + present participle (present perfect)</li> </ul>	<p>I <i>can</i> run.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>can</i> conveys semantic meaning of <i>ability</i></li> </ul> <p>I <i>should</i> have run yesterday, but I didn't.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>should</i> conveys semantic meaning of something not done.</li> <li><i>should + have + run</i> conveys past time reference.</li> </ul>

**Modal Auxiliaries**

- consist of a number of words that are considered “pure” modals and other related structures.
- have multiple of meanings
- do not have parallel meanings between
  - their affirmative and negative forms
  - past and present time reference
- *would, could, might* are modals and conditional forms.
  - As conditionals, they form *if* clauses.
  - *if* clauses refer to something hypothetical, unreal, contrary-to-fact, or untrue.
- may have related structures that convey similar meanings that
  - may inflect for person and time.
  - may be used only for specific time reference.
  - may be more informal than their modal counterpart(s).

**Modals and Related Structures<sup>1</sup>**

can, could <i>related structure</i> : be able to	<b>ability</b> Jane can drive. Jane is able to drive. Jane could drive when she was 16.
can, may	<b>permission</b> You can go. You may go.
can, could, would	<b>polite request</b> Can you pass the salt? Could you pass the salt? Would you pass the salt?
may, might, could	<b>possibility, probability</b> We may go to Venice next year. We might go to Venice next year. We could go to Venice some time.
must <i>related structures</i> : have to, have got to	<b>necessity, obligation</b> You must have a license to drive. You have to have a license to drive. You have got to have a license to drive.
must	<b>logical deduction</b> The doorbell is ringing. It must be Tanya.
must not	<b>prohibition</b> You must not drive without a license.
should, ought to <i>related structure</i> : had better	<b>advice, suggestion</b> You should listen to your mother. You ought to listen to your mother. You had better listen to your mother.
should have, ought to have	<b>unfilled expectation, mistake</b> Speaker A: “Tyler, you’re late.” You should have left earlier.” Speaker B: “Tyler’s right. You ought to have left earlier to get here on time.”
will, would	<b>habit, custom, fact</b> Accidents will happen. She would always drive to work.
would	<b>present/future conditional</b> Adam would leave if he could.
would	<b>past conditional</b> If Taylor had studied more, she would have earned a better grade.

<sup>1</sup>This is a general summary that does not necessarily include all the modals in all their possible meanings or communicative functions

## 7.5 Practice Activities

### Activity 1: Polite Requests

1. Soften the following commands by using different modals.
2. Discuss how the different modals change the intensity or directness of the command.
3. Would you add any other word(s)? Why or why not?

*Example:*

Help me do my homework.

Could you help me do my homework?

- (a) Get me a pen!
- (b) Stop talking!
- (c) Come on time!
- (d) Lend me your notes!

### Activity 2: Semantic Meanings

1. Look at the following groups of sentences.
2. Explain the differences in meaning between the sentences in each group.
  - (1a) I should talk to the teacher about my grade.
  - (1b) I should have talked to the teacher about my grade.
  - (2a) Jean must have the receipt.
  - (2b) Jean must have lost the receipt.
  - (3a) Jason could help you with your homework.
  - (3b) Jason could have helped you with your homework.
  - (4a) Jin can speak English.
  - (4b) Jin couldn't speak English until he was a teenager.
  - (5a) You had better get your license renewed soon.
  - (5b) You should get your license renewed.
  - (6a) I was able to study abroad in college.
  - (6b) I could have studied abroad in college.
  - (6c) I should have studied abroad.

### Activity 3: Can and May

1. Read the following excerpt.
2. Discuss what the author is trying to convey by using *may* versus *can*.

... for years and years Danny has been begging his father to let him run the locomotive some night. For years and years, his father has been saying no. Then, finally, the night comes. "Can I run the engine tonight, Daddy?" asks Danny, who is too young to know about "can" and "may." [Kaufman, G. (1957/2001). Annoy Kaufman, Inc. In D. Remnick & H. Finder (Eds.), *Fierce pajamas: An anthology of humor writing from the New Yorker* (p. 294). New York: Random House.]

**Activity 4: Modals and Related Structures**

1. Read the following excerpts.
2. Identify the modal verb phrases.
3. Explain the meaning and function of each modal verb phrase.

**A.**

Should I tell Reba what was going on or should I not? More important, should I bring her father into the loop?... if I told her about Beck and Onni, what would she do?... And if I *didn't* tell her and she somehow got wind of it... much crashing and burning would ensue anyway... [Grafton, S. (2004). *R is for ricochet* (p. 104). New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.]

**B.**

I told her to take her time thinking about the situation before she decided what to do. Vince Turner might be in a hurry, but he was asking a lot and, one way or the other, she'd better be convinced. [Grafton, S. (2004). *R is for ricochet* (p. 138). New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.]

**C.**

He held the city now. Nothing could threaten that... Sileria's ancient capital must be brought to its knees. (Resnick, L. (2004). *The white dragon: In fire forged, part one* (pp. 318–319). New York: Tor.)

**D.**

"You should have kept your court date," I said to Cantell. "You might have only gotten community service."

"I didn't have anything to wear," she wailed. "Look at me. I'm a house!..."

"You're not as big as me," Lula said... "You just gotta know how to shop. We should go out shopping together someday." [Evanovich, J. (2004). *The big ones* (p. 18). New York: St. Martin's Press.]

**E.**

There was no real need for Mma. Makutsi to feel like this. She might have had difficulties in her life until now—certainly one should not underestimate what it must be like to grow up in Bobonong... [McCall Smith, A. (2002). *The Kalahari typing school for men* (p. 14). New York: Pantheon Books.]

**F.**

"We probably should have told you."

"No call to do that," Sairy said... "Kids ought to have a little choice, that's what I think. They ought to be able to do stuff without someone watching over their shoulders every minute." [Creech, S. (2002). *Ruby Holler* (p. 153). New York: HarperCollins.]

**Activity 5: Would, Could, Might**

1. Underline the different modal verb phrases with *would*, *could*, and *might*. Be sure to underline the entire verb phrase and not just the modal.
2. Explain the different meanings and uses of these three modals in this excerpt.

- There is also the idiomatic structure *used to* in this excerpt. Could you substitute *would* here and keep the same meaning?

Mr. Preble was a plump middle-aged lawyer... He used to kid with his stenographer about running away with him. "Let's run away together," he would say...

"All righty," she would say.

One rainy Monday afternoon, Mr. Preble was more serious about it than usual...

"My wife would be glad to get rid of me," he said.

"Would she give you a divorce?" asked the stenographer.

"I don't suppose so," he said.

"You'd have to get rid of your wife," she said.

Mr. Preble was unusually silent at dinner that night. About half an hour after coffee, he spoke... "Let's go down in the cellar," Mr. Preble said to his wife.

"What for?" she said... "We never did go down in the cellar that I remember..."

"Supposing I said it meant a whole lot to me," began Mr. Preble... "We could pick up pieces of coal... We might get up some kind of a game with pieces of coal."

[Thurber, J. (1935/2001). Mr. Preble gets rid of his wife. In D. Remnick & H. Finder (Eds.), *Fierce pajamas: An anthology of humor writing from the New Yorker* (pp. 133-134). New York: Random House.]

#### **Activity 6: Finding and Analyzing Modals and Related Structures**

1. Find two to three excerpts from any source, either digital or print, with examples of the modals and semi-modals discussed in this chapter.
2. Prepare four to six copies of your excerpt to share.
3. Form small groups of four to six participants, and share your copies.
4. After each participant has received a copy of each excerpt from the other members of the group, work individually, examine the excerpts, and:
  - identify the modals and semi-modals.
  - consider the meaning of each.
  - discuss whether you all identified the same structures; if there is disagreement, consider why.
  - compare the meanings each member suggested for the modals and semi-modals; if there is disagreement, consider why.

#### **Activity 7: Error Analysis**

The following excerpts were written by ESL/EFL learners. There are errors in modal verb choices and forms. **Ignore any other errors.**

1. Underline each error in modal verb phrase form and choice you find. Remember to **focus only on modal errors.**

2. For each error in modal choice:

- Discuss which modal the writer probably intended.
- Provide the correct modal verb phrase and discuss why the learner may have made the error.

**A.**

I can swim very good. My brother cans swim very good too. We learn to can swim together. My uncle can swims very good. He teaches us to can swim.

**B.**

If I were a giant, I will be bored. Because I think I can't to do anything! I can't to study because books can to be small and I can't to see. Because I'm too big I can't to do anything!

**C.**

I think that students need to study different things. I support that all students should taking art and music class. If school has art or music class for everybody, students will can learn those skills easier than outside school. Schools might to provide students with good instruction, art materials, or music instruments. I think that schools should giving the opportunity to each student to study both academic subjects and art and music. I would rather students should be playing and creating than studying all the time.

**D.**

If I win the lottery, I would can give my parents new house. They will be very happy if I gave them a big new house with beautiful garden. If I had much money, I would could do much travel. If I had time, I would may go around the world. I could study anywhere. If I went to France, I would can learn French very well.

**E.**

When I graduated, I was hoping that I could became a business lawyer. After seven years as business lawyer, I would decided that I would became a real estate person.

**F.**

In the morning, I was working with my mother at home. She sold sweet rolls to the stores and I must to help her. I must to put the sweet rolls in groups of five, and then, I put them into a plastic bag. Later when I was a student, I had a part-time job as a secretary. I must got at the office at 7:00 a.m.

**G.**

Can women successfully combine family and career? Everything must changed in this world. What is the goal of woman's life? What can to make her happy and successful?

## 7.6 Answer Key

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 1

#### Excerpt A

I was able to reach	single past ability; substitution with <i>could</i> not possible
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#### Excerpt B

I was able to find out	single past ability; substitution with <i>could</i> not possible
could get in and out	repeated or general past ability; substitution with <i>be able to</i> possible, but awkward and wordy here

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 2

#### Excerpt A

might fuel up, might (also) pack	future possibility; substitution with <i>may</i> possible with no change in meaning; substitution with <i>could</i> also possible with no change in meaning
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#### Excerpt B

may be	present/future possibility
can do	present ability; substitution with <i>be able to</i> possible without change in meaning

#### Excerpt C

could (you) hear	past ability; substitution with <i>be able to</i> possible without change in meaning
must have	present strong probability or logical deduction; <i>have</i> main verb <i>have</i> indicating possession

#### Excerpt D

might have been	past possibility; <i>have</i> is part of the modal verb phrase indicating past time reference; substitution with <i>may have been</i> or <i>could have been</i> possible without change in meaning
may be	future possibility; substitution with <i>might be</i> possible without change in meaning

#### Excerpt E

could have been listening	past possibility; substitution with <i>be able to</i> not possible; past progressive modal verb phrase: <i>could + have + been + present participle</i>
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**Discussion: Discovery Activity 3**

<i>Excerpt A</i>	
must have sprinted	past high certainty/logical deduction
<i>Excerpt B</i>	
must be	present high certainty/logical deduction
<i>Excerpt C</i>	
had to stay, had to take	past necessity; only past form of <i>must</i> in sense of necessity
<i>Excerpt D</i>	
must submit, must submit (appears twice)	present requirements or laws
<i>Excerpt E</i>	
I've got to go	present necessity; <i>I've gotten</i> in next sentence looks similar but is present perfect form of <i>get</i> in sense of "reach"
<i>Excerpt F</i>	
must have known	past high certainty/logical deduction
<i>Excerpt G</i>	
must mean	present high certainty/logical deduction

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 4**

<i>Excerpt A</i>	
had better	strong advice/suggestion; followed by transitive separable phrasal verb <i>get up</i>
<i>Excerpt B</i>	
shouldn't go	present advice
<i>Excerpt C</i>	
can	present/future ability
You'd better	strong advice/suggestion; contracted form of <i>had better</i>
<i>Excerpt D</i>	
ought to know	present suggestion
<i>Excerpt E</i>	
should transfer, ought to be, should specify	advice/suggestion

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 5**

<i>Excerpt A</i>	
should have done	unheeded, ignored past advice
<i>Excerpt B</i>	
should have come down, should have sent	past, unfulfilled obligations
<i>Excerpt C</i>	
shouldn't take, should check	present, advice

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 6**

<i>Excerpt A</i>	
would (often) use	past habitual or repeated action
<i>Excerpt B</i>	
Would you like	polite question
<i>Excerpt C</i>	
would <i>prepare</i> , he'd <i>run</i>	past repeated or habitual action; 2nd instance is contracted form
<i>Excerpt D</i>	
I'd have tried	past contrary-to-fact
I'd suspected	contraction of past perfect form <i>I had suspected</i> , not to be confused with <i>would</i> contraction
would have been	past possibility; part of conditional <i>if</i> clause beginning with <i>If I'd suspected</i>

# Chapter 8

## Basic Sentence Patterns and Major Variations

**Abstract** This chapter reviews sentence constituents and basic sentences, and then investigates variations on basic sentences. The chapter is divided into four sections. Section 8.1 reviews basic sentences; Sect. 8.2 explores different types of questions; Sect. 8.3 considers passive constructions; and Sect. 8.4 looks at sentence substitutions.

**Keywords** sentence constituents • basic sentences • yes/no questions • *wh*-questions • passive substitution

### 8.1 Section 1: Types of Sentence Constituents

In Chap. 1, Practice Activity 2 asked you to create as many original sentences as possible using these nonsense words: *mishiffen a drinking keg gwisers some were stoshly frionized*. The purpose of the activity was twofold. It reinforced the idea that derivational morphemes provide clues to word class in English. It also illustrated the fixed nature of word order in English. Although there were many possible sentences you could create, the number of total possible sentences, about 25, was constrained by the word order of English. The sentence parts and the way they combine create sentences, as in:

Some mishiffen gwisers were stoshly drinking a frionized keg.  
*or*  
Stoshly frionized, some gwisers were a mishiffen drinking keg.

The sentence parts are sentence constituents, which you as a native or highly proficient non-native speaker of English recognize intuitively, even though the words themselves are generally nonsense words. Constituents are the basic units of a sentence, including noun, adjective, adverb, prepositional, and verb phrases. Sentence constituents are combined in meaningful ways to form sentences. Take another example:

friends the exuberantly walked two to their large house happy

The way you choose to combine these words again reveals some of the basic constituents of sentences. You probably came up with:

*The two exuberantly happy friends walked to their large house.*

What you came up with is a basic sentence consisting of a noun phrase, a verb phrase and a prepositional phrase. The most basic sentence in English consists of a noun phrase and a verb phrase. It can be as simple as *I laughed* or *He is sighing*. Basic sentences frequently include other optional constituents.

Let us now review sentence constituents, with which you are already familiar with from other chapters.

### 8.1.1 Noun Phrases

In its most basic form, a noun phrase consists of just one word, a noun. Noun phrases, however, often consist of more than just one word: a noun and another element or elements. As we saw in Chap. 3, the elements that can occur in a noun phrase include determiners, modifiers, and prepositional phrases. Determiners include articles, quantifiers, numbers, possessive adjectives, and demonstrative adjectives:

Examples of Determiners and Noun Phrases			
noun phrase	determiner	noun (headword)	type of determiner
the table	a/the	table	article
some friends	some	friends	quantifier
two bicycles	two	bicycles	number
her coat	her	coat	possessive adjective
this car	this	car	demonstrative adjective

Grammar books often refer to the main word in a noun phrase as the *headword*. The headword of the noun phrase may be modified by any number of modifiers. Modifiers include determiners, other nouns, adjectives, and adverb-adjective combinations:

Examples of Modifiers and Noun Phrases			
noun phrase	modifier	noun (headword)	type of modifier
clean table	clean	table	adjective
long black cabinet	long black	cabinet	two adjectives
very good friend	very good	friend	adverb, adjective
brick wall	brick	wall	noun

### 8.1.2 *Prepositional Phrases*

Prepositional phrases begin with a preposition and end with a noun (noun phrase) or gerund.<sup>1</sup> What comes after the preposition is called the *object of the preposition*.

Examples of Prepositional Phrases		
prepositional phrase	preposition +	object (type of noun phrase)
from school	from	noun
with him	with	pronoun
by studying	by	gerund
at her last school	at	possessive adjective, adjective, noun
in the excessively hot summer	in	article, adverb, adjective, noun

Not all grammarians describe the functions of prepositional phrases the same way. Here we examine two basic and generally commonly agreed on functions.

Prepositional phrases can function as adjectives and adverbs. When they function as adjectives, they can come before or after the noun phrase they are modifying:

They live *in a big* house.  
The house *with the red tile roof* belongs to them.

When prepositional phrases function as adverbs, they can modify verbs and clauses:

Jeremy walked *along the highway*.  
*Before class*, we drove to the store.

### 8.1.3 *Verb Phrases*

As you will recall from Chaps. 5 and 6, a verb phrase can consist of a single verb, a phrasal verb, and auxiliary verbs + main verb.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Remember, gerunds function as nouns. Note also that clauses can also be objects of prepositions.

<sup>2</sup>Some grammarians expand the definition of verb phrase to include a main verb + *to* infinitive or a main verb + gerund. Others include verbs, auxiliaries, complements, and other modifiers in their definition. We restrict our definition of a verb phrase to a verb and any auxiliaries.

Examples of Verb Phrases		
verb phrase	type	time
walked	single verb	past
picked up	phrasal verb	past
wants to go	main verb + <i>to</i> infinitive	present
likes driving	main verb + gerund	present
is driving	<i>be</i> + main verb in present participle form	present progressive
has been driving	<i>have</i> + <i>been</i> + main verb in present participle form	present perfect progressive
should visit	modal + main verb	present/future

Verb phrases also include the negative *not*, for example, *did not work*, *is not driving*, or *should not drive*. Some grammar books also consider adverbs that occur within a verb phrase part of the verb phrase, (e.g., *has **already** been driving*); more commonly, however, only the actual verbs, excluding accompanying adverbs, are considered to constitute a verb phrase.

See how well you know the different types of phrases by doing Discovery Activity 1. Keep in mind that a phrase consists of one or more words. You can find the answers in the Answer Key at the end of the chapter.

### Discovery Activity 1: Identifying Noun Phrases, Prepositional Phrases, and Verb Phrases

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Make a chart with three columns. Label one column **noun phrase**, the second **verb phrase**, and the last one **prepositional phrase**.
2. Find the noun phrases, prepositional phrases, and verb phrases in the excerpts and enter them into your chart.

*Example:*

noun phrase	verb phrase	prepositional phrase
The dog	was barking	at the stranger

#### A.

With effort, I drag the trunk to the center of the attic, directly beneath the hanging light. [Hannah, K. (2015). *The nightingale*. Kindle iPad version. Retrieved from Amazon.com]

#### B.

“You’re stepping on my house!” Felix jumped off the hose... [Buller, J., & Schade, S. (1996). *Felix and the 400 frogs* (pp. 6–8). New York: Random House.]

#### C.

She waved toward the pond. Four hundred frogs’ heads poked out of the water... [Buller, J., & Schade, S. (1996). *Felix and the 400 frogs* (pp. 15–16). New York: Random House.]

### 8.1.4 Adjective and Adverb Phrases

Adjective phrases include one or more adjectives. Adverb phrases include one or more adverbs. Adverbs, as we observed in Chap. 4, can modify verbs, adjectives, adverbs, or just about anything in a sentence.

#### Examples of Adjective and Adverb Phrases

phrase	modifier	type
<b>young person</b>	young	adjective phrase
<b>cold, wet day</b>	cold, wet	adjective phrase
<b>carefully examined the child</b>	carefully	adverb phrase
<b>is calling very softly</b>	very softly	adverb phrase

Although the words in each type of phrase can change, the order in which most sentence constituents can occur is fixed. Only adverb phrases have some flexibility in terms of their sentence position.

The smart boy very carefully picked up some scattered rocks by the river.

*or*

Very carefully, the smart boy picked up some scattered rocks by the river.

*but not*

\*The smart boy some scattered rocks very carefully picked up by the river.

\* Very carefully, some scattered rocks picked up by the river the smart boy.

The next Discovery Activity provides additional practice in identifying sentence constituents and order. Discuss your answers with your classmates. Answers to this activity are not provided.

#### Discovery Activity 2: Sentence Constituent Order

Look at the following teacher-created sentences.

1. Try to vary each sentence.
2. Identify what the different sentence constituents are (i.e., the kinds of phrases in each sentence).
3. Consider what the constraints on constituent order are.
  - (a) The new medications did their job admirably well.
  - (b) The aging population in many countries will very likely strain current health care systems.
  - (c) Actually, some politicians have opposed constructive engagement on the topic.

We now turn to examining sentences that are still composed of these sentence constituents but that are no longer basic sentences. We will look at three types of variations on basic sentences: Sect. 8.2: Questions; Sect. 8.3: The Passive, and Sect. 8.4: Substitution.

## 8.2 Section 2: Questions

### 8.2.1 Yes/No Questions

In English, there are two basic types of questions, yes/no questions and *wh*-questions. The first type, yes/no questions, refers to questions that can be answered with either a *yes* or a *no*. Yes/no questions follow our first auxiliary rule. If there is no auxiliary, as in simple present and simple past tense, we must insert the *do* auxiliary. A short answer substitutes an auxiliary for the full verb phrase. This auxiliary is the same as in the verb phrase. Again, if there is no auxiliary, the *do* auxiliary must be added.

*Does* Jill enjoy driving?

Yes, she *does*.

*Has* Mabel responded to your query?

No, she *hasn't* yet.

#### ***Do ESL/EFL learners have trouble forming yes/no questions?***

ESL/EFL learners find yes/no question formation easier for some verb tenses than for others. Try the following Discovery Activity to see if you can discover which ones are generally easier for them to learn and why. Check the Answer Key when you finish.

#### **Discovery Activity 3: Yes/No Questions**

Look at the following teacher-created sentences.

1. Explain how each question is formed.
2. Which questions do you think are most difficult for ESL/EFL learners? Why?

#### *Example*

Are the students happy?

*Be* is the main verb so we invert the subject and verb. This is not very difficult for learners.

- (a) Is she coming home soon?
- (b) Was she waiting for me very long?
- (c) Have you seen the new movie with Leonardo DiCaprio?
- (d) Had he been working hard?
- (e) Does she travel a lot?
- (f) Did you call home last night?
- (g) Can you see the train approaching?

### 8.2.1.1 Negative Yes/No Questions

Yes/no questions can be negative. Often such questions imply an element of surprise, disbelief, or disdain because the speaker has a different expectation in mind:

<b>Aren't</b> you happy?	(You should be happy; you have a good life.)
<b>Isn't</b> she coming?	(She said she was.)
<b>Didn't</b> you drive today?	(You always drive.)

## 8.2.2 Wh-Questions

*Wh*-questions are formed with a question word, such as *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, or *how*. These question words are also referred to as interrogative words.

***How can I explain wh-question formation to my students?***

Question word order follows the first auxiliary rule **if** the question word is asking for information about the **subject** of the verb. As a reminder, if there is an auxiliary or *be* as the main verb in the verb phrase, the question word is followed by subject-verb inversion. If there is more than one auxiliary, only the first auxiliary changes places with the subject. For simple present or simple past tense where there is no auxiliary, we must insert the *do* auxiliary and leave the main verb in base form.

Where <i>does</i> Jamie live?	Jamie lives in Brooklyn.
When <i>are</i> your friends leaving?	They are leaving tomorrow.

The responses to each of the two questions provide information related to the subjects of the verbs.

***When don't we follow this pattern for wh-question words?***

### 8.2.2.1 Who

*Who* can follow two patterns. [AU: **Which Discovery Activity 4? From which chapter?**]. When *who* asks for information about the **subject** of the verb, the word order changes and we follow the first auxiliary rule.

*Who* can also ask about the **object** of the verb. When *who* asks for the **object**, there is no change in word order, and we do not add the *do* auxiliary to simple present and simple past tense verb.

***When who asks for the object of the verb, shouldn't we use whom?***

### 8.2.2.2 *Who Versus Whom*

As we saw in Chap. 1, in formal prescriptive English, *who* has two forms, *who* and *whom*. *Who* is used when asking for the subject and *whom* for the object. In Standard American English, *who* is replacing *whom* in all but the most formal situations.

<i>Who Versus Whom</i>		
example	asking about	usage
<i>Whom</i> did you call last night?	object of verb <i>call</i>	primarily found in formal written English
<i>Who</i> did you call last night?	object of verb <i>call</i>	common in spoken and less formal written English
<i>Who</i> called you?	subject of verb <i>called</i>	only option when in subject position; occasionally, when speakers hypercorrect, they use <i>whom</i>

### 8.2.2.3 *What*

Like *who*, *what* can follow two patterns. When *what* asks for information about the **subject** of the verb, the word order changes and we follow the first auxiliary rule.

*What* can also ask about the **object** of the verb. When *what* asks for the **object**, there is no change in word order, and we do not add the *do* auxiliary to simple present and simple past tense verbs.

The following table illustrates *who* and *what*. Note also what happens with respect to auxiliaries (see Sect. 8.4.1). You may want to compare these examples with the *who* and *what* sentences in the upcoming Discovery Activity 4.

**Asking for the *Subject* of the verb**

Question			
<i>wh</i> -word	verb	complement	short answer to subject question
Who	slept	late?	Sam did.
Who	has eaten	already?	Maddie has.
Who	will drive	home?	They will.
What	flew	over my head?	A bird did.
What	is buzzing	around his face?	A mosquito is.

**Asking for the *Object* of the verb**

**Question**

<i>wh</i> -word	verb	subject	verb	short answer to object question
Who <sup>a</sup>	did	Ryan	see?	His friend.
Who	has	Sarah	helped?	The children.
Who	can	your team	beat?	The Tigers probably.
What	does	your cat	like?	Catnip toys.
What	is	the baby	doing?	Crying.

<sup>a</sup>In formal English, these would be *whom*

***Is there another way to explain the wh-question formation to ESL/EFL learners?***

Another way to visualize the *wh*-question formation is to add *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, or *how* to a simple question. If the *wh*-question word does not change the meaning of the basic question, it is asking for information about the **object** of the verb. The next two tables illustrate this.

**Basic Question With *Be* Auxiliary Asking for Object of Verb**

question word		possible response (long)	possible response (short)
Who(m)	is she driving?	She's driving Kevin.	Kevin.
What	is she driving?	She's driving a Honda.	A Honda.
When	is she driving?	She's driving tonight.	Tonight.
Where	is she driving?	She's driving in Tampa.	In Tampa.
Why	is she driving?	She's driving because it's late.	Because it's late.
How	is she driving?	She's driving fast.	Fast.
Which car	is she driving?	She's driving the Honda.	The Honda.
Whose car	is she driving?	She's driving my sister's car.	My sister's.

The table above illustrates the use of *wh*-question words with a verb phrase with an auxiliary. The table below illustrates the use of *wh*-question words with simple past tense and the necessary addition of the *do* auxiliary. The simple present follows the same pattern.

<b>Basic Question with <i>do</i> Auxiliary Asking for Object of Verb</b>			
<b>question word</b>		<b>possible response (long)</b>	<b>possible response (short)</b>
Who(m)	did she drive?	She drove Kevin.	Kevin.
What	did she drive?	She drove a Honda.	A Honda.
When	did she drive?	She drove tonight.	Tonight.
Where	did she drive?	She drove in Tampa.	In Tampa.
Why	did she drive?	She drove because it's late.	Because it's late.
How	did she drive?	She drove fast.	Fast.
Which car	did she drive?	She drove the Honda.	The Honda.
Whose car	did she drive?	She drove my sister's car.	My sister's.

Note that when we ask for the object of the verb, there is no auxiliary in the short answer. When we ask for the subject of the verb, on the other hand, in the short answer we need an auxiliary to substitute for the verb.

Look at the *wh*-questions in Discovery 4. You can find the answers in the Answer Key. You may find parts of this Discovery Activity difficult to explain, which will be the same areas of difficulty for ESL/EFL learners. Be sure you try all of the sentences in Discovery Activity before you check your answers.

#### **Discovery Activity 4: *Wh*-Questions**

Look at the following teacher-created sentences.

1. Explain how each *wh*-question is formed. (You may find some difficult and may want to read more of this section on *who*, *whom*, and *what* to help you.)
2. Which *wh*-questions do you think are most difficult for ESL/EFL learners? Why?

#### *Example*

When is he coming?

The *wh*-question word is in initial position. The subject and verb are inverted according to the first auxiliary rule.

- (a) Where was he going?
- (b) Where did she study?
- (c) When is the party?
- (d) When did she call?
- (e) Which class are you taking this semester?

- (f) Which class did you take last semester?
- (g) Why has she called so often?
- (h) Why do they always leave early?
- (i) Who wrote that book?
- (j) Who did you call last night?
- (k) Who are you calling now?
- (l) What did you read last summer?
- (m) What fell down?

### ***What about how many and how much?***

#### **8.2.2.4 How**

*How* combines with *much* and *many* to ask questions about quantity. Remember in Chap. 3 we discussed count and non-count nouns. The choice between *much* and *many* depends on whether the noun to which *how* is referring is count or non-count:

How much <i>change</i> do you have?	non-count noun
How <i>many</i> oranges are you buying?	count noun

For an unknown quantity, we use *how much*:

How *much* is that doggie in the window?

*How* can combine with adjectives and adverbs to ask about descriptions and characteristics:

How *big* is her new house?

How *often* does the supervisor visit?

*How come* is informal English for *Why*.

Kristen: *How come* you don't want to go with us?

Terrie: I don't have the time.

Discovery Activity 5 provides additional practice in identifying questions. You can check your answers in the Answer Key at the end of the chapter.

### Discovery Activity 5: Identifying Questions

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline the questions. Are they *yes/no* or *wh*-questions?
2. Describe the word order in each question you have identified. For example, is there subject-verb inversion? Is there a *do* auxiliary?

#### A.

Pepito was afraid of heights. So when it was time to leave the nest, he decided that he would go his own way ... until he came to a river.

“Can you swim?” asked the fish ...

He was making real progress. But then he came to a busy road.

“Why don’t you fly over?” asked the gopher.

“I’m afraid of heights,” said Pepito ... Finally, he saw his brothers’ and sisters’ new tree ... “Pepito!” they cheered. “How did you get here?” [Beck, S. (2001). *Pepito the brave*. New York: Dutton Children’s Books, No page numbers.]

#### B.

“How do I get to your house?” I asked.

“Do you ever just not want to go home?” Her face was pale in the lamplight, and I could see it in her eyes that she was serious.

“Did we escape?” I called.

“Not even close.”

“Do you see that house just to the right of the tallest tree?” I asked, breaking the silence. [Schneider, R. (2013). *The beginning of everything*. Kindle iPad version. Retrieved from Amazon.com]

#### C.

“Alice darlin’,” said Uncle Harold, “Do you think you could entertain your grandfather while we pack up the wedding presents ...?”

“Sure,” I said ... I walked over to where Grandpa McKinley sat ...

“What was your first car, Grandpa?” ...

“I had a 1927 Model T Roadster,” he said ...

“What did the car have?” I asked ... [Naylor, P. (2002). *Starting with Alice* (pp. 84–86). New York: Atheneum.]

#### D.

“Hey, uh, Luke?” I asked. “Can I have my quiz back?”

“Nice essay, Faulkner,” he said, leaning back in his chair, still holding my paper.

“Which version of CliffsNotes did you use?”

“I didn’t know there were different versions,” I said. “Which one do you recommend?” [Schneider, R. (2013). *The beginning of everything*. Kindle iPad version. Retrieved from Amazon.com]

*What are some of the problems ESL/EFL learners have with wh-questions?*

- **Learner difficulties**

Learners have problems with auxiliary use and word order. They often produce questions such as these:

- \*Who did came last night?
- \*When you come?
- \*Why you here?
- \*Where you going?
- \*What she will do next year?
- \*How you have been?

Providing learners with simplified versions of the tables in this section can be helpful to ESL/EFL learners who are having difficulties with correctly forming *wh*-questions.

### 8.3 Section 3: The Passive

We can categorize sentences as *active* or *passive*. Many grammar books discuss the use of either of these as *voice*. Active voice refers to sentences where the “doer” or the “agent” is the grammatical subject and the “receiver” of the action is the grammatical object. Passive voice refers to sentences where the “receiver” of the action (object) is the grammatical subject. Only transitive verbs, that is, verbs that can take an object (see Chap. 5), can be found in the passive. This is because the **subject** of a sentence in *passive* voice is the original **object** of the verb in *active* voice. The tables below compare two sentences in active and in passive voice.

Active		
subject	verb	object
Leonardo da Vinci	Painted	the Mona Lisa.
The government	built	new roads.

Compare the active sentences with the passive ones. Note how the object of the active sentence becomes the subject of the passive sentence while the subject of the active sentence becomes the *by* phrase of the passive sentence.

<b>Passive</b>		
<b>subject</b>	<b>verb</b>	<b>by-phrase</b>
The Mona Lisa	was painted	by Leonardo da Vinci.
New roads	were built	by the government.

### *Do we always include a by-phrase in a passive sentence?*

Many passive sentences include what is called a *by-phrase*. The *by-phrase* is the doer or agent of the verb in the original or active form of the passive sentence.

The Mona Lisa was painted by Leonardo da Vinci.

Here the reader's attention is focused on the painting, *the Mona Lisa*, rather than on the artist, *Leonardo da Vinci*. The *by-phrase* is included because the name of the artist is significant information. Many passive sentences do not include a *by-phrase*. The *by-phrase* is not included when the agent or doer is not important or anyone specific. In our other sentence, it is better to leave out the *by* phrase because the doer, *the government*, is not specific or important information:

New roads were built.

### *How do we form the passive?*

The passive consists of *be* + main verb in the past participle form. The verb *be*, which can take various forms, must always be present in the passive.

## **8.3.1 The Passive and Tense**

We use the passive in every tense. The sentences in the following chart illustrate the passive in a variety of tenses. You will note that not all tenses are included, just enough to give you a sense of how the passive is formed in different tenses. The *by-phrase* is not used in these examples because the doer is not significant.

<b>Passive Voice: Sample Tenses</b>	
<b>Example</b>	<b>Form</b>
(a) New computer games <b>are</b> <i>designed</i> daily.	<b>Present</b> <i>am, is, are</i> + past participle
(b) New computer games <b>were</b> <i>designed</i> daily.	<b>Simple Past</b> <i>was, were</i> + past participle
(c) New computer games <b>are being</b> <i>designed</i> daily.	<b>Present Progressive</b> <i>am, is, are + being</i> + past participle
(d) New computer games <b>were being</b> <i>designed</i> daily.	<b>Past Progressive</b> <i>was, were + being</i> + past participle
(e) New computer games <b>have been</b> <i>designed</i> daily.	<b>Present Perfect</b> <i>have/has been</i> + past participle

(continued)

(continued)

<b>Passive Voice: Sample Tenses</b>	
<b>Example</b>	<b>Form</b>
(f) New computer games <b>had been</b> <i>designed</i> daily.	<b>Past Perfect</b> <i>had + been + past participle</i>
(g) New computer games <b>will be</b> <i>designed</i> daily.	<b>Modal Future</b> <i>will + be + past participle</i>
(h) New computer games <b>can be</b> <i>designed</i> daily.	<b>Modal Present/Future</b> <i>can + be + past participle</i>

These examples illustrate that *be* in some form is always evident and that the main verb is always in past participle form, although the auxiliaries can take different forms. In Sentences a through f, tense is indicated by the first auxiliary (*be* or *have*) and aspect by the second auxiliary, *being* for progressive and *been* for perfect. In Sentences g and h, the modals are followed by *be* and then the past participle.

***How can I explain passive formation to my students?***

Formation and identification of the passive can be confusing, particular with the more complex verb phrases. In teaching the forms of the passive, grammar books for ESL/EFL learners generally introduce the forms by showing and practicing transformations of active sentences to passive ones:

The best professors teach the graduate seminars.

- Move the object, *the graduate seminars*, to the head (front) of the sentence.
- Change the verb *teach* (present tense) to *be + past participle* (*are taught*). It must agree with the new subject (*The graduate seminars*), not with the subject of the original sentence (*The best professors*).
- Add the *by*-phrase to the end if the doer or agent is important or significant in this sentence.

<b>a</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>c</b>
The graduate seminars	are taught	by the best professors.

The next two Discovery Activities provide practice to help you understand the passive. The first, Discovery Activity 6, practices passive formation in different tenses using teacher-created sentences. The second, Discovery Activity 7, practices passive identification. Answers to both Discovery Activities are in the Answer Key.

### Discovery Activity 6: Forming the Passive

Look at the following teacher-created sentences.

1. Change each sentence from active to passive. Be sure to keep the same tense. Remember that the passive consists of *be* + past participle at a minimum. For more complex tenses, aspect is indicated through the use of *being* (progressive) or *been* (perfect).
2. Identify the tense.
3. Decide whether or not to use the *by*-phrase.

*Example:*

The researcher has discovered new gene information.

New gene information has been discovered. Present perfect passive—has + been + past participle of main verb—by phrase not necessary because doer or agent not important.

- (a) Computer scientists will develop new computer chips.
- (b) The Internet has revolutionized communication.
- (c) An artist painted the portrait in the early 1800s.
- (d) People can buy the new product at any drugstore.
- (e) Everyone must obey helmet laws.
- (f) Researchers are testing the new drug.
- (g) The insurgents blew up the bridge.
- (h) The government advises visitors to avoid crowded arenas.

Now that you have practiced forming the passive in different tenses, try the next Discovery Activity using authentic excerpts.

### Discovery Activity 7: Identifying the Passive

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline the passive verb phrase.
2. Identify the tense.

**A.**

Trevor Anderson has poured through twelfth-to-fourteenth-century documents to discover that ... [d]entures were fashioned from cow bones, teeth were whitened with a paste of sage and salt ... [From the Trenches. (2005, January/February). *Archeology Today*, p. 13.]

**B.**

“I don’t think he’s a flight risk ... He can never be retried for the crime.”  
 “Pathetic,” Julia muttered. “When this is all over, our illustrious district attorney should be recalled from office.” [Erickson, L. (2004). *Husband and lover* (p. 96). New York: Berkley.]

**C.**

Were the marines being sent as well as the grenadiers and light infantry companies?  
 ... Other spies had been bringing news of the embarkation ... [Pitcairn] had been seen with a civilian wrapped about him heading for the Common. [Forbes, E. (1971/1943). *Johnny Tremain* (p. 217). New York: Yearling/Doubleday.]

**D.**

We know a great deal of the history of English because it has been written for about 1,000 years. Old English is scarcely recognizable as English ... A line from *Beowulf* illustrates why Old English must be translated. [Fromkin, V., Rodman, R., & Hyams, N. (2003). *An introduction to language*. 7th ed., (pp. 499–500). Boston: Heinle.]

**E.**

Edmond Casarella has developed an unusual color relief-print technique... Casarella makes a “rough” gouache sketch, which will continually be transformed through each step in the process. The sketch is then analyzed... One sheet of tracing paper is prepared for each block ... When each block has been prepared, cutting can begin. [Eichenberg, F. (1976). *The art of the print* (pp. 157–158). New York: Harry N. Abrams.]

**F.**

Entering the room, I immediately sensed that something was wrong ... Someone else’s things were distributed around the head of the bed and the table. My first thoughts were, “What if I am discovered here? ... Clearly they had moved somebody else into my room ... I took the elevator to the lobby ... At the desk I was told by the clerk ... that indeed they had moved me. My particular room had been reserved in advance by somebody else. I was given the key to my new room and discovered that all my personal effects were distributed around the new room almost as though I had done it myself.” [Hall, E. T. (1981/1976). *Beyond culture* (pp. 58–59). New York: Anchor/Doubleday.]

*Is it hard for ESL/EFL learners to form passive verb phrases?*

- *Learner difficulties*

The passive always includes *be* (inflected for the tense) along with any necessary additional auxiliaries and the main verb in past participle form. Consequently, the verb phrase can be long and confusing for learners to identify and to remember. Recall that in our discussion of time, tense, and aspect in Chap. 6 we noted that any verb phrase that has more than one part to it causes difficulties for ESL/EFL learners. Consider the complexity of the verb phrases of these sentences:

Old tests <b>are being used</b> .	3 parts to verb phrase
The new tests <b>should have been prepared</b> earlier.	4 parts to verb phrase
The new tests <b>are going to be prepared</b> shortly.	5 parts to verb phrase

Given the complexity of passive verb phrases, you can see how ESL/EFL learners have trouble remembering to include all the various components with the appropriate inflections.

*When do we use the passive voice instead of the active?*

### 8.3.2 *The Passive Versus the Active*

When the doer or agent is unimportant or self-evident, we prefer to use the passive. In essence, the passive is used when we want to forefront or highlight the receiver, or when the doer is not important or unknown. The passive is often found in academic and science writing, as illustrated below. Can you identify the tense of each bolded passive verb phrase?

But in addition to being fortunate in his adversaries, Washington **was blessed** with the personal qualities that counted most in a protracted war. [Ellis, J. (2005, January). Washington takes charge. *Smithsonian*, 103.]

So far the remains of sixty-five people **have been unearthed**. Many of the remains **were interred** as part of complex rituals. One headless man **had been laid** to rest on top of a pile of wild ox bones, while at least four children **were buried** with fox mandibles. [Keys, D. (2003, November/December). *Archeology Today*, p. 10.]

In the first excerpt, *Washington was blessed* is not followed by a *by*-phrase because the agent or doer is unknown. In the second example, the four passive verb

phrases are written in three different tenses: *have been unearthed* (present perfect passive); *were interred* (past passive); *had been laid* (the past perfect passive); *were buried* (past passive). None of these sentences includes a *by*-phrase because the doer is unimportant.

### 8.3.3 *Get*

The passive can also be formed with the verb *get*. This form is generally more informal than passives formed with *be*. It is often used when there is no agent or doer. Passive *get* is also labeled a “causative” verb because *get* expresses the idea that an implied agent does or “caused” the subject to receive the action of the main verb.

passive with <i>be</i>	passive with <i>get</i>
The thief <i>was caught</i> robbing the house.	The thief <b><i>got caught</i></b> robbing the house.
The land <i>will be destroyed</i> .	The land <b><i>will get destroyed</i></b> .

*Get* can also combine with an adjective or past participle to mean *become*, as in *get well*, *get rich*, *get lucky*, *get bored*, *get annoyed*, or *get tired*. Most grammarians consider these forms a type of passive because there is some assumption that there is an underlying agent or thing bringing about this condition, state, or event.

Passive *get* should not be confused with the form *have got*. As discussed in Chap. 7, *have got* is an idiomatic structure that can have the meaning of *have to* or *have*.

***Is the passive always the opposite of the active?***

### 8.3.4 *Understanding Passive Use*

Although the passive is frequently discussed as the counterpart of the active, this is not always true. The verbs *have*, for instance, is a transitive verb that cannot be used in the passive, except in the stock (and archaic phrase) “A good time was had by all.”

ESL/EFL students may try form the passive with *have*, forming sentences such as in:

- \*A good teacher *was had* by my friend.
- \*A new car *will be had* by me next year.

There are also some passive forms that have no active equivalents or that have different meanings when used in the passive versus the active.

- Daniel married Miriam.
- Miriam was married by Daniel.

The first sentence tells us that a man, Daniel, married a woman, Miriam. The second sentence, which looks like the passive parallel to the first sentence, has a very different meaning. It tells us that “Daniel,” a minister, rabbi, judge, or other man, performed the actual marriage ceremony for Miriam.

***I learned that writers should avoid using the passive. Is this true?***

Grammar and stylebooks caution both native and non-native speakers of English from overusing the passive and rightly so. It is better in many cases to be more direct; active sentences are often less pompous and wordy sounding.

However, there are times when it is important to use the passive, particularly when the receiver or agent is unknown, unimportant, or unspecific, or when the reader’s attention should be focused on the receiver or agent rather than the “true” subject. We have seen various examples in this section where using the passive was the more appropriate choice.

## **8.4 Section 4: Substitution**

***What do you mean by substitution?***

### ***8.4.1 Substitution and the First Auxiliary Rule***

Substitution refers to words English speakers use to replace longer utterances that have been previously mentioned. A common type of substitution is the use of auxiliaries to refer to verb phrases, their complements, and objects that have already been mentioned. When substitution occurs, an entire sentence is shortened.

Lois: Did you read the assigned pages?  
Allie: Yes, I *did*.

The question and response in this example are in simple past tense. As you know, the main verb requires the auxiliary *do* for questions and negatives in this tense. When we want to substitute the verb phrase in simple present or simple past, we also use the *do* auxiliary.

In the next example, there is an auxiliary, *have*, in the verb phrase, which then substitutes for rest of the sentence:

Lois: Have you read the assigned pages?  
Allie: Yes, I *have*.

When the verb *be* is present, either as a main verb or auxiliary, it can substitute for the rest of the verb phrase.

Blythe: Is Jackie always late?  
Carol: Yes, she *is*.

Liza: Is Jackie coming over later?

Maya: Yes, she *is*.

Substitution does not only occur in answers to questions. It also occurs in other sentences:

Allie always completes her assignments, and Lois *does*, too.

Allie was walking studying, and Lois *was*, too.

Jay works harder than Alex *does*.

Adam writes more papers than Roy and his brother *do*.

Clay has invited more visitors than his roommates *have*.

In the first pair of sentences, we see auxiliary substitution and the addition of *too* to indicate the sameness of the action or event described by the verb. In the second set of sentences, auxiliary substitution serves to avoid verb phrase repetition. This substituting auxiliary must agree with its subject, which may be different than the subject of the main part of the sentence.

When there is more than one auxiliary in the verb phrase, only the first one does the substitution:

His mom *has been helping* at school and her mom *has*, too.

The children have been crying harder than the baby *has*.

Note that in spoken English speakers frequently leave out the auxiliary.

## 8.4.2 Substitution and Inversion

We can also use *so*, *neither*, and *either* in substitutions. When we use *so* and *neither*, we need to **invert** the subject and the auxiliary.

### 8.4.2.1 So

*So* carries the meaning of *too* or *also* in affirmative statements.

Allie always completes her assignments, and **so does** Lois.

Allie was walking studying, and **so was** Lois.

### 8.4.2.2 Neither and Either

*Neither* carries the meaning of agreement in negative statements.

Greg doesn't like grammar and **neither does** the rest of the class.

Those students aren't taking the course and **neither are** these students.

*Either* is semantically similar to *neither* but differs structurally. Compare the two sentences:

Sam isn't coming and *neither is* Lillian.

Craig isn't listening and Lacie *isn't either*.

When *either* is present, the verb must be negated with *not* if the intent is to convey a negative meaning. *Neither* is already negative and therefore the verb is always in the affirmative. There is also no word order inversion with *either* the way there is with *neither*.

Discovery Activity 8 provides practice in identifying substitutions. The answers are in the Answer Key.

### Discovery Activity 8: Substitution

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline the substitutions.
2. Explain the substitution you underlined.

#### Example

"You're drenched." "And so are you." [Seth, V. (1993). *A suitable boy* (p. 453). New York: Harper Collins.]

"So" substitutes for "drenched" (participial adjective); "are you" main verb & example of inversion after "so"

#### A.

He asked me, "Do you think your mother helps him by buttering his rolls?" ...

"In fact, yes, I think she does." [Maclean, N. (1976). *A river runs through it* (p. 84). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.]

#### B.

"You think he's here, on Eelong?" Boon asked.

"Yes, I do," was my answer ...

Boon shouted with defiance. "I'm not afraid and neither is Seegen." [MacHale, D. J. (2004). *Pendragon, book five: Black water* (pp. 57–58). New York: Aladdin Paperbacks.]

#### C.

"Where's Varun?" "I don't know," said Meenakshi. "He hasn't returned and he hasn't called. I don't think he has, anyway" ...

"I've been dreaming about you," lied Meenakshi. "You have?" asked Arun ... [Seth, V. (1993). *A suitable boy* (p. 489). New York: HarperCollins.]

#### D.

I said, "Paul, I'm sorry. I wish I knew how I could have stayed away from this guy."

"You couldn't," he said ... [Maclean, N. (1976). *A river runs through it* (p. 68). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.]

***What about one? Isn't that a form that can function as a substitution?***

### 8.4.2.3 One

*One* is another form that can substitute for a noun phrase in a sentence to avoid repetition. *One* is sometimes referred to as a *pro-form* because it acts like a pronoun. When *one* functions as a substitute, it is substituting for a phrase with a count noun. The plural form *ones* substitutes for phrases containing plural count nouns. *One* when it substitutes for a noun phrase should not be confused with the number *one*.

Maggie prefers teaching a small class, but I like teaching a large *one*.  
Leslie likes big cars. Her brother has always driven compact *ones*.

In the first example, *one* replaces the noun phrase, *teaching a small class*, which includes the singular count noun, *class*. In the second example, *ones* replaces the noun phrase, *big cars*, which includes the plural count noun, cars.

An additional clue in spoken English for distinguishing between *one* as a substitution form and the numeral is stress. When speakers refer to the numeral *one*, this word is stressed. The pro-form, on the other hand, is never stressed.

Do you have any pencils?	I have <i>one</i> .	<b>stressed</b>
Can you lend me a pencil?	I need one for this test.	<b>unstressed</b>

There is still another *one*, the indefinite pronoun used when speakers wish to refer to an unnamed and/or unspecified person. This *one* is sometimes referred as generic *one*.

*One* should be skeptical of such results.

This last Discovery Activity is designed to help you become familiar with the different uses of *one*. You will find the answers in the Answer Key.

#### Discovery Activity 9: Identifying the Uses of *One(s)*

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Find all the uses of *one* and underline them.
2. Decide if *one* is the numeral or a substitution form. If *one* is functioning as a substitute, identify what elements in the sentence each use of *one* is replacing.

#### A.

“Where were you?”

“Here. And after it shut we went over to that other café....”

“The Café Suizo.”

“That’s it.... I think it’s a better café than this one.” [Hemingway, E. (1976/1976). *The sun also rises* (p. 100). New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons.]

#### B.

“From him I learned that the robberies had been going on for a long time ... The safe was an old one ... I’m certain that old Buzby, the book-keeper, is doing the stealing.”

“Can you prove it?” ...  
 “The clerks all think so.”  
 “When you say all which ones do you really mean?” [*How to be a detective*. (n.d.).  
 p. 10. Retrieved from Project Gutenberg [https://www.gutenberg.org/files/50902/50902-h/50902-h.htm-TN\\_end](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/50902/50902-h/50902-h.htm-TN_end)]

### C.

Most dog books fall roughly into two types: the ones that focus on training, and the ones that tell dog stories. [Blumber, B., & Coppinger, R. (2005, February). Review: Can dogs think? *Natural History*, 114(1), 48.]

- ***Learner difficulties***

Using substitution correctly requires practice. ESL/EFL learners need to remember which auxiliary to use. They often forget to use the *do* auxiliary and will use only the main verb:

Lois: Did you read the assigned pages?  
 \*Allie: Yes, I *read*.

Learners also may forget to change word order after *so* and *neither*:

Lois: I didn't do the homework.  
 \*Allie: Neither I do.

Although less proficient learners are often asked to answer to questions in complete sentences in classroom practice, in authentic language, repeating the entire verb or verb phrase is awkward and wordy, and does not reflect the way native speakers actually use the language. Native speakers use substitution regularly in responding to questions, and learners should have practice in using the different substitution forms.

## 8.5 Summary

A basic sentence at a minimum must consist of a noun phrase + a verb phrase:

Cats sleep.  
 Her baby cried.  
 Many people are coming.  
 The car has stalled.

Sentence constituents that can be added to the basic sentence include prepositional phrases, adjective phrases, and adverb phrases.

<b>Basic Sentence Constituents</b>	
<b>constituent</b>	<b>example</b>
noun phrase	a book
verb phrase	is walking, is not walking
prepositional phrase	in the book
adjective phrase	heavy black
adverb phrase	very happy

<b>Noun Phrase</b>	
noun	dog
determiners	
• articles	
– definite	the dog
– indefinite	a dog, an owl
demonstratives	this dog, these dogs, that dog, those dogs
possessive adjectives	my dog, your dog, his dog, her dog, its bone, our dog, their dog
quantifiers	some dogs, a lot of dogs, many dogs, a few dogs—count nouns much money, a little money—non-count nouns

<b>Functions of a Noun Phrase</b>	
Subject	<i>The book</i> is black.
object	Jess likes <i>books</i> .
complement	This is <i>a best-selling book</i> .
object of the preposition	I put the book <i>on the table</i> .

### **Sentence Variations: Questions, Passive, Substitution**

<b>Questions</b>	
yes/no	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• subject/verb inversion when there is one or more auxiliary or main verb <i>be</i></li> <li>• requires insertion of <i>do</i> auxiliary for simple present and simple past</li> </ul>
<i>wh</i> -questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• subject/verb inversion after question word when there is one or more auxiliary or main verb <i>be</i></li> <li>• requires insertion of <i>do</i> auxiliary for simple present and simple past</li> <li>• <i>what</i> and <i>who</i> can ask for either subject or objects; will be followed by different sentence structure accordingly</li> </ul>
<b>Passive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• composed of <i>be</i> (in appropriate tense) + past participle</li> <li>• used when agent or doer unimportant or unspecified; may or may not include <i>by</i>-phrase</li> </ul>
<b>Substitution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>do</i> auxiliary, <i>be</i> (main verb), first auxiliary in complex verb phrase, and certain words (e.g., <i>neither</i>, <i>one</i>) can substitute for various sentence elements</li> </ul>

## 8.6 Practice Activities

### Activity 1: Generating Phrases

Write phrases following the patterns indicated. Label the type of phrase you have created.

*Example:*

article + noun the car, noun phrase

1. number + adjective + noun
2. quantifier + adjective + noun
3. adverb + adjective
4. adjective + adjective
5. adverb + adjective + noun
6. preposition + determiner + noun
7. possessive adjective + adverb + adjective + noun

### Activity 2: Identifying Verb Phrases

1. Choose an excerpt from any source, either print or digital.
2. Underline all the verb phrases.
3. Label the tense of each verb phrase.
4. Mark any adverbs that occur within any of the verb phrases.

### Activity 3: Question Formation

1. Complete the following dialogues by adding questions in the blanks.
2. Compare your dialogues with your classmates. Were they identical? Which elements were the same? Which ones differed? Why?

**A.**

Jerry: \_\_\_\_\_?

Lilly: No, not usually. \_\_\_\_\_?

Jerry: I have, but not this week. \_\_\_\_\_?

Lilly: Maybe tomorrow.

**B.**

Sara: \_\_\_\_\_?

Wes: Only on Mondays. \_\_\_\_\_?

**C.**

Karen: In Toronto. \_\_\_\_\_?

Joe: Because we wanted to. \_\_\_\_\_?

**D.**

Chelsea: \_\_\_\_\_?

Donna: Sure, I'd love to.

Chelsea: \_\_\_\_\_ next weekend?

Donna: Great!

### Optional Follow Up

After you have completed the dialogues and discussed these with your classmates, explain

- how you could use such dialogues with ESL/EFL students.
- what aspects of question formation learners need to be aware of.

#### Activity 4: Identifying Questions

The selections are long, so you may choose to do only A or B. If you find you are having problems identifying questions, you may want to complete both A and B.

1. Examine the following two selections from actual interviews. The first is with Jerry Spinelli, a popular author of children's books. The second is with J.K. Rowling about her Harry Potter series.
2. Underline all the *yes/no* and *wh*-questions.
3. Explain the structure of the different questions. For example, does the question follow the first auxiliary rule? What tense is the question in?

#### A. Jerry Spinelli (JS) and unknown interviewer (I)

I: How long have you been writing?

JS: Well, I've been writing since I was sixteen...

I: What is your favorite book that you've written?

JS: I guess that would be my first published book, *Space Station Seventh Grade*

I: What inspired you to write *Maniac Magee*?

JS: Actually, there was no particular inspiration...

I: Will *Maniac Magee* appear in another book?

JS: I don't have any plans for a sequel...

I: How many books have you written?

JS: At last count, I've written twenty books, but only sixteen are published ...

I: Have any of your books ever been turned down by a publisher? ...

JS: My first four books were never published ...

I: What was your first book, and how long did it take you to write it?

JS: Let's see—it took about six months to write...

I: What college did you go to? What did you major in?

JS: I went to Gettysburg College ... I majored in English...

I: Did you think you would win one of the Newbery Medals?

JS: No, I can't say that I expected it...

I: Where is the one place you want to go the most?

JS: I guess I've already been to the place on the top of my list—that was Egypt ...

I: Did you ever know someone like *Maniac Magee*?

JS: ... Basically he's a patchwork of memories and imagination.

I: What are some of the new books you're working on?

JS: I'm not working on anything right now—I've given myself a sabbatical ...

I: Did you ever run away from home and if you did, where did you go?

JS: No, I'm afraid I wasn't the type to run away...

- I: What is your favorite food?  
 JS: Chocolate almond ice cream...  
 I: Were you raised by a black family like the kid in *Maniac Magee*?  
 JS: No, but I did play with a lot of African-American kids, and that was part of my inspiration for the theme of the book ...  
 I: Besides yourself, who is your favorite author?  
 JS: My favorite author now is Eileen Spinelli, who happens to live in my house here. She's my wife ...  
 I: Have you ever wanted to change your career?  
 JS: Not lately.... When I was the age of most of my readers I wanted to be a baseball player.  
 I: Are you going to write any more books in the *School Daze* series?  
 JS: No, I think the *School Daze* series is over now ...  
 [Spinelli, J. (no date). Interview transcript. *Scholastic*. Retrieved from <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/jerry-spinelli-interview-transcript>]

### **B. J.K. Rowling (JKR) and interviewer C. Lydon (CL)**

*What is the secret of Harry Potter?*

- JKR: I don't know. That's the question I get asked most of all, I think and it's really hard for me to say because as far as I am concerned, this was my private little world ...  
 CL: Why did He-Who-Can-Not-Be-Named, Voldemort, if I can get away saying it, Voldemort, why did he do it?  
 JKR: Well, that's a really key question and I can't answer it because you will find that out over the course of the 7 book series ...  
 CL: Where did you come by the sort of—there is a code—a sort of a DNA pattern to these stories? ...  
 JKR: The funny thing is that Harry came into my head almost completely formed ...  
 CL: What about the names themselves? Muggles, to begin, but the whole catalog of wizards, Albus Dumbledore, Voldemort, Hagrid.  
 JKR: I'm big on names. I like names, generally. You have to be really careful giving me your name if it's an unusual one because you will turn up in Book 6 ...  
 CL: I was going to say, are you a Hermione?  
 JKR: ... Hermione is a caricature of what I was when I was 11, a real exaggeration ...  
 CL: Are you sticking with that outline of the 7?  
 JKR: Yeah ...  
 CL: Why 7 and what is the contour that you want to complete?  
 JKR: Well 7 is for several reasons, but I suppose the main one, I was 7 years at my secondary school. That's kind of standard in England ...  
 CL: How are you going to protect him on the silver screen?  
 JKR: Warner Brothers are giving me a lot of input, I feel ...

[Lydon, C. 1999, 12 October). J. K. Rowling interview transcript, The Connection (WBUR Radio). Retrieved from <http://www.accio-quote.org/articles/1999/1099-connectiontransc2.htm-p2>]

### **Activity 5: Practice in Changing Sentences from Active to Passive**

Change the following sentences from active to passive. Be careful to keep the same tense. Evaluate whether or not to include a *by*-phrase.

*Example:*

People are finding many artifacts.

Many artifacts are being found. The *by*-phrase is not necessary here.

1. Archeologist reconstruct the past.
2. Everyone followed the directions.
3. The company is going to fire some of the employees.
4. The police have apprehended the stalker.
5. You can find the answers in the back of the text.
6. The management will return unauthorized checks.
7. The painter is painting our house.
8. Someone had accused the man of stalking when someone else found exonerating evidence.
9. The high voter turnout encouraged all the political parties.
10. The company has not paid the employees.

### **Activity 6: Finding Different Uses of the Passive**

1. Find excerpts from any authentic source, either digital or print, that use the passive. Find at least four different examples.
2. Indicate the tense of each passive verb phrase.
3. Share your findings with other members of your class. Does everyone agree on the identified passive verb phrases and the tense(s)?

### **Activity 7: Error Analysis 1**

The following questions were overheard in an ESL classroom. The students are from a variety of language backgrounds.

- What errors do you find?
- What do you think these learners need to practice?
  1. How you close the window?
  2. What you mean by this?
  3. Why teacher say that?
  4. Who his listening teacher?
  5. When she gave back the homework?
  6. Which part you come from?
  7. When he hurted himself?

8. What made her gave up?
9. Where you come from?
10. Who your mother like best?
11. What that word *sparkle*?
12. Where we at?
13. Why he do that?
14. Which book she want?

### **Activity 8: Error Analysis 2**

The following excerpts were written by ESL students.

1. Identify the problems you see in the use of **the passive only**. **Ignore other errors.**
2. Explain what each problem is.
3. Suggest a correction for each problem you have identified.

#### **A.**

I recommend you try a dish called “degue.” It is a kind of drink that is had by people in my country for breakfast, lunch, or dinner. There is couscous and chocolate. In addition, only the eggs yolk is added. Water is also added. It is always made by women.

#### **B.**

When people buy something, some people is influenced by advertisements. Others are decided by themselves in the store. As for me, advertisements have useful information for buying, and should not be required for me because I can make my own decision.

#### **C.**

During vacation, I went to New York City. I like New York City very much. But, I don't like the hotel reserved by me. The hotel was expensive, but not good. I bitten by lice, little animals in your hair.

#### **D.**

I love New York and Xmas. Especially, in Xmas season, trees is decorated in many lights.

#### **E.**

Every person was a baby when they were just born. They grow and they've been learned and experienced language by their mothers and fathers.

## 8.7 Answer Key

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 1

noun phrases	verb phrases	prepositional phrases
<b>A.</b>		
I trunk	drag	with effort to the center of the attic beneath the hanging light
<b>B.</b>		
You Felix	're stepping jumped	on my house off the hose
<b>C.</b>		
She Four hundred frogs' heads	waved poked out (phrasal verb)	toward the pond of the water

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 3

- (a) **Is** she **coming** home soon?  
 (b) **Was** she **waiting** for me very long?

Subject-verb inversion: *be* is auxiliary

- (c) **Have** you **seen** the new movie with Leonardo?  
 (d) **Had** he **been working** hard

Subject-verb inversion: *have* is auxiliary

- (e) **Does** she **travel** a lot?  
 (f) **Did** you **call** home last night

Insertion of *do* auxiliary: *Do* inserted in appropriate tense; main verb remains in base form

- (g) **Can** you see the train approaching?

Subject-verb inversion: *can* is modal auxiliary

Sentences (a–d and g) follow the first auxiliary rule: Whenever there is one or more auxiliary in a verb phrase, the first auxiliary moves to initial position when forming a question.

Sentences e and f follow the corollary to this pattern: Whenever there is no auxiliary present, an auxiliary must be inserted.

As we saw in Chaps. 5 and 6, simple present and simple past have no auxiliary; therefore, we must use *do/does* or *did*, and the main verb retains its base form. This means that the main verb does not take the 3rd person present tense—*s* inflection (*she travels*) nor the past tense —*ed* inflection (*you called*). The exception to this is the verb *be*. *Be*, whether functioning as a main verb or an auxiliary, always inverts with the subject in questions.

#### Discussion: Discovery Activity 4

(a) Where was he going?	subject and <i>be</i> auxiliary inverted per first auxiliary rule
(b) Where did she study?	insertion of <i>do</i> auxiliary, simple past
(c) When is the party?	main verb <i>be</i> after — <i>wh</i> -question word
(d) When did she call?	insertion of <i>do</i> auxiliary, simple past
(e) Which class are you taking this semester?	subject and <i>be</i> auxiliary inverted per first auxiliary rule
(f) Which class did you take last semester?	insertion of <i>do</i> auxiliary, simple past
(g) Why has she called so often?	subject and <i>have</i> auxiliary inverted per first auxiliary rule
(h) Why do they always leave early?	insertion of <i>do</i> auxiliary, simple present
(i) Who wrote that book?	asking for subject of verb <i>wrote</i>
(j) Who did you call last night?	asking for object of verb <i>call</i> ; insertion of <i>do</i> auxiliary, simple past; <i>whom</i> in formal English
(k) Who are you calling now?	asking for subject of verb <i>call</i> ; subject and <i>be</i> auxiliary inverted per first auxiliary rule; <i>whom</i> in formal English
(l) What did you read last summer?	asking for object of verb <i>read</i> ; insertion of <i>do</i> auxiliary, simple past
(m) What fell down?	asking for subject of verb <i>fell</i>

#### Discussion: Discovery Activity 5

<i>Excerpt A</i>	
Can you swim	yes/no question with modal auxiliary <i>can</i> , requires only subject-verb inversion to form question
Why don't you fly	<i>wh</i> -question with <i>do</i> auxiliary, simple present; generally considered informal language
How did you get here?	<i>wh</i> -question with <i>do</i> auxiliary, simple past
<i>Excerpt B</i>	
How do I get	<i>wh</i> -question with <i>do</i> auxiliary, simple present
Do you ... not want	yes/no question with <i>do</i> auxiliary, simple present
Did we escape	yes/no question with <i>do</i> auxiliary, simple past

(continued)

(continued)

Do you see	yes/no question with <i>do</i> auxiliary, simple present
<i>Excerpt C</i>	
Do you think	yes/no question with <i>do</i> auxiliary, simple present
What was your first car	<i>wh</i> -question with main verb <i>be</i> , requires only subject-verb inversion to form question; asking for complement of verb
What did the car have	<i>wh</i> -question with <i>do</i> auxiliary, simple past, asking for object of main verb <i>have</i>
<i>Excerpt D</i>	
Can I have	yes/no question with modal auxiliary <i>can</i> , requires only subject-verb inversion to form question
Which version of CliffsNotes did you use?	<i>wh</i> -question with <i>do</i> auxiliary, simple past, asking for object of main verb <i>use</i>
Which one do you recommend?	<i>wh</i> -question with <i>do</i> auxiliary, simple present, asking for object of main verb <i>use</i>

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 6**

(a) New computer chips will be developed.	future passive “by computer scientists” not necessary
(b) Communication has been revolutionized by the Internet.	present perfect passive “by the Internet” important to sentence meaning
(c) The portrait was painted in the early 1800s.	past passive “by the artist” not necessary
(d) The new product can be bought at any drugstore.	modal present passive “by people” not necessary
(e) Helmet laws must be obeyed. Helmet laws must be obeyed by everyone.	modal present passive “by everyone” optional, used only if there is emphasis on “everyone” versus, for example, children under the age of 16.
(f) The new drug is being tested.	present progressive passive “by researchers phrase” not necessary
(g) The bridge was blown up by insurgents.	past passive “by insurgents” important to sentence meaning
(h) Visitors are advised to avoid crowded arenas.	present passive “by the government” not necessary

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 7**

<i>Excerpt A</i>	
dentures were fashioned, teeth were whitened	past passive
<i>Excerpt B</i>	
can (never) be retried, should be recalled	modals present passive
<i>Excerpt C<sup>a</sup></i>	
Were the marines being sent	question, passive past progressive <i>were</i> first auxiliary and inverted with subject
had been seen	past perfect passive
<i>Excerpt D</i>	
has been written	present perfect passive
must be translated	modal present passive
<i>Excerpt E</i>	
will (continually) be transformed	future passive
is analyzed, is prepared	present passive
has been prepared	present perfect passive
<i>Excerpt F</i>	
were distributed	past passive
am discovered	present passive
was told	past passive
had been reserved	past perfect passive
was given, were distributed	past passive

<sup>a</sup>Note *had been bringing* is an active sentence; past perfect progressive

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 8**

<i>Excerpt A</i>	
She does	substitutes for <i>helps him by buttering his roles</i> , simple present, <i>do</i> auxiliary required
<i>Excerpt B</i>	
Yes, I do	substitutes for <i>think he's here</i> , simple present, <i>do</i> auxiliary required
neither	substitutes for <i>Seegan is not afraid</i> , main verb <i>be</i> , inversion required after <i>neither</i>
<i>Excerpt C</i>	
he has	substitutes for <i>hasn't returned, hasn't called</i> negative is expressed in first part of clause <i>I don't think</i>
have	substitutes for <i>have been dreaming</i>
<i>Excerpt D</i>	
couldn't	substitutes for <i>have stayed away from this guy</i> with negative added

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 9**

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<i>Excerpt A</i>	
one	substitutes for <i>Café Suizo</i>
<i>Excerpt B</i>	
one	substitutes for <i>safe</i>
ones	substitutes for <i>clerks</i>
<i>Excerpt C</i>	
the ones, the ones	substitute for <i>types of dog books</i>

## Chapter 9

# Compound Sentences and Introduction to Complex Sentences: Adverbial Clauses

**Abstract** In Chap. 8, we reviewed the constituents of basic sentences and examined some common variations of the basic sentence. In the next three chapters, we will examine expanded sentences. In this chapter, we will start by considering compound clauses and then begin our investigation into complex sentences, focusing on adverbial clauses. In Chaps. 10 and 11, we will investigate two other types of complex sentences, relative clauses and noun clauses. There are three parts to this chapter. Section 9.1 considers compound sentences, coordinators, and transition words. Section 9.2 delves into the various types of adverbial clauses. Section 9.3 examines reduced adverbial clauses.

**Keywords** main clauses • compound sentences • complex sentences • coordinators • subordinators • subordinate clauses

## 9.1 Section 1: Compound Sentences

### 9.1.1 *Clauses Versus Phrases*

#### *How can we define a sentence?*

A sentence consists of one or more clauses. A clause is the smallest syntactic unit that has meaning. This is a complicated way of saying that a clause is a sentence that can stand alone. Minimally, a sentence consists of one clause.

#### *What is a clause?*

As we saw in Chap. 8, a clause minimally consists of two constituents, a noun phrase and a verb phrase. As you will recall, a phrase is a word (*child*; *meow*) or group of words (*the angry child*; *is loudly meowing*) that functions as a unit within a sentence.

### ***How does a clause differ from a phrase?***

A phrase differs from a clause in that a phrase does not generally occur independently. A phrase cannot form a sentence by itself.

<b>Clause versus Phrase</b>		
Cats	meow loudly.	sentence
Cats		phrase
meow loudly		phrase
The dogs	in the house have been barking.	sentence
The dogs		phrase
have been barking		phrase
in the house		phrase

Most English sentences consist of more than a noun phrase and verb phrase. Certain verbs are transitive and require an object:

Jack threw *the ball*.

And, we have looked at sentences with adjective and adverb phrases:

*My crazy dog* fell down *the stairs*.

### ***Are these sentences still basic sentences?***

Both examples above are still basic sentences. The examples can also be labeled declarative sentences. We will now expand our simple sentences by exploring compound sentences.

## ***9.1.2 Compound Sentences and Coordinators***

### ***What is a compound sentence?***

When two sentences are combined with *and*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, or *for*, they are called compound or coordinate sentences. Each part is a complete clause that can stand on its own. The words that join two equal clauses are called *coordinating conjunctions* or simply *coordinators*. The coordinator *and* is the most commonly used coordinator to combine compound sentences, followed by *but* and *or*. Less common is *yet*, followed by *for*. *Yet* and *for* are generally considered more formal than the other three coordinating conjunctions, *and*, *but*, and *or*.

Boys read books, and girls read books.<sup>1</sup>

Boys and girls read books.

<sup>1</sup>Many style books, but by no means all, require the use of a comma before a coordinating conjunction that joins two independent clauses; consequently, readers will see different punctuation in the various excerpts in this text.

In compound sentences, identical phrases that have the same function can be combined as in this example. In the first sentence, *boys* and *girls* are both subject noun phrases and *read* is the same verb. We can reduce the sentence to a single noun phrase by conjoining the two subject noun phrases with *and*, as in the second sentence. We can also substitute a pronoun for a noun phrase that has the same function in different parts of a compound sentence:

Main clause		Main clause	
Barry likes	chocolate, and	<i>Barry</i> often buys	<i>chocolate</i> .
<b>noun phrase</b>	<b>noun phrase</b>	<b>noun phrase</b>	<b>noun phrase</b>
Barry likes	chocolate, and	<i>he</i> often buys	<i>it</i> .
<b>noun phrase</b>	<b>noun phrase</b>	<b>pronoun</b>	<b>pronoun</b>

Because *Barry* and *chocolate* are identical in both main clauses, we can substitute the pronouns **he** for *Barry* and **it** for *chocolate*. Since the subject is the same, we have the option of omitting the second reference:

Barry likes chocolate, and often buys it.

We generally omit the subject pronoun in such cases unless we want to include it for emphasis.

I laughed, and I cried. The news was that startling.

Look at the excerpt below. Can you identify the different parts of the compound sentences?

Was Tarby kidding, or was he trying to deny to himself that he had seen what he really had seen? Lewis didn't know, and he didn't care. [Bellairs, J. (1973). *The house with a clock in its walls* (p. 89). New York: Puffin.]

First, we see two compound questions conjoined with the coordinator *or*. You may have found this a little tricky because these are compound questions rather than statements, which we have discussed until now. Nevertheless, you can see how compounding also applies to questions.

The second sentence uses *and* to conjoin the two main clauses. In addition, you will notice that both *Tarby* and *Lewis* are replaced in their second mention by the pronoun *he*. The author leaves in the pronoun in the second clause for emphasis.

Discovery Activity 1 reviews compound sentences. Check your answers in the Answer Key at the end of the chapter.

### Discovery Activity 1: Compound Sentences

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Mark the coordinating conjunction.
2. You may find it helpful to underline each main clause.

*Example:*

She rode a bike, **but** he drove a car.

#### A.

Mowgli walked on, for he was feeling hungry... [Kipling, R. (1894). *The jungle books*. Retrieved from <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/236/236-h/236-h.htm>]

#### B.

Jacob glanced to the right and noticed that the cabinet door shut, quietly... He tried to scream but it caught in his throat. He pulled himself from the floor, utterly exhausted, and took a step forward. [Stoltzfus, R. (2014). *A home for Jacob*. Kindle iPad version. Retrieved from [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)]

#### C.

Argus rolled forward and spun around... Quixote ran to another tree in time to hide himself yet could not resist watching the two men fight. [Mason, S. (2013). *The Omega children: The return of the marauders*. Kindle iPad version. Retrieved from [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)]

***Do ESL/EFL learners have many difficulties with compound sentences?***

- ***Learner difficulties***

Because *for* and *yet* have other sentence functions, less proficient ESL/EFL learners are occasionally confused when these words are used as coordinators. They must learn to distinguish between *for* as a preposition and *yet* as an adverb from their coordinating conjunction counterparts.

She came <i>for</i> me.	<b>preposition</b>
She came, <i>for</i> we had invited her.	<b>coordinator</b>
We haven't eaten <i>yet</i> .	<b>adverb</b>
He had eaten, <i>yet</i> he was still hungry.	<b>coordinator</b>

### 9.1.3 Transition Words or Phrases

***Is there any other way to connect main clauses?***

Main clauses may also be connected by *conjunctive adverbs* or *transition words* as they are often referred to in writing or composition textbooks. Different transition words express different types of relationships between one main clause and another one.

The meaning of the relationship between the two main clauses depends on the meaning of the transition word or phrase, as you can see in the following chart. Specific transition words and phrases may be classified in the same category, yet they are not always interchangeable due to subtleties in meaning.

Common Transition Words/Phrases	
<b>contrast</b>	however, nevertheless, nonetheless, still, yet, in fact, in contrast, on the contrary, on the other hand
<b>addition</b>	furthermore, further, moreover, in addition, additionally, likewise, similarly, also
<b>result</b>	therefore, consequently, accordingly, thus, hence, as a result, then
<b>time sequence</b>	then, afterward, meanwhile
<b>condition</b>	otherwise

***Why use the term transition words rather than conjunctive adverbs?***

As you examine the table, you will notice that there are phrases consisting of two or three words rather than single words. These phrases are technically not conjunctive adverbs, but, based on their meanings and use, they are often classed together with the conjunctive adverbs.

The term *transition words* more clearly conveys the role these conjunctive adverbs and related phrases play in sentences. We will use the terms *transition words* to refer to the conjunctive adverbs and *transition phrases* to refer to groups of words that establish these similar types of sentence relationships.

### 9.1.4 Sentence Position and Punctuation

***Is the sentence position for transition words and phrases fixed the way it is for coordinators such as and?***

Transition words and phrases can occur in three positions: at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of a main clause. The punctuation of the transition words and phrases differs according to their position. When they occur at the beginning of a main clause, they may be preceded by either a period or semicolon, as illustrated in the first two sentences:

<b>Examples: Position and Punctuation With <i>However</i></b>		
<b>main clause 1</b>	<b>main clause 2</b>	<b>clause position</b>
Voting ended at 9 p.m.;	<i>however</i> , the election results were not announced until the next day.	<b>initial</b>
Voting ended at 9 p.m.	<i>However</i> , the election results were not announced until the next day.	
Voting ended at 9 p.m.	The election results, <i>however</i> , were not announced until the next day.	<b>middle</b>
Voting ended at 9 p.m.	The election results were not announced until the next day, <i>however</i> .	<b>final</b>

When transition words and phrases occur in the middle of a main clause, they are offset by commas. When they occur at the end of a main clause, they are also preceded by a comma.

***Why have I seen different punctuation used with transition words and phrases?***

There are stylistic variations to these general guidelines. It should be noted that first, there is not complete agreement among different stylebooks as to punctuation of the transition words and phrases in different instances; and that second, these guidelines change over time. ESL/EFL learners should be encouraged to follow the basic punctuation guidelines in their textbook. As learners become more proficient writers, they can be introduced to stylistic variations.

***Do speakers use many transition words and phrases in everyday English?***

Most transition words and phrases are found more commonly in formal written English rather than in casual written or spoken English. You will see that the next Discovery Activity contains excerpts taken from academic or academic-style texts. See how well you do in identifying and understanding the use of transition words and phrases. When you do this activity, you will note that the punctuation does not always follow the guidelines we discussed, illustrating how stylebooks differ in what is “correct” punctuation. The answers are in the Answer Key.

**Discovery Activity 2: Transition Words and Phrases**

1. Look at the following excerpts
2. Underline the transition words.
3. Identify the meaning of each transition word.

**A.**

... streamlined case reports have tended to take the place of the original data... As a result, the path from observation to theory can never be retraced; thus we have no way to confirm or disconfirm an observation, much less combine old observations in a new formulation. [Spence, D. (1982). *Narrative truth and historical truth: Meaning and interpretation in psychoanalysis* (p. 23). New York: Norton.]

**B.**

Discrete boundaries between dialects are often difficult to determine, since dialects share many features with one another. In addition, even the smallest dialect areas are characterized by incredible heterogeneity. Further, different dialect boundaries may emerge depending on which level of language we choose to focus on... [Wofram, W., & Shilling-Estes, N. (1998). *American English: Dialects and variation* (p. 91). Malden, MA: Blackwell.]

**C.**

In Paris, for example, upwards of three hundred children were found abandoned in the 1670s, whereas the figure for Amsterdam, half as big a city, for 1700 was around twenty... The same pattern, moreover, seems to hold true for infanticide figures. Both phenomena of relative benevolence may owe something to the more stable position of working families and their domestic budgets in the Republic... Nonetheless, it seems equally likely that the disparity with other European urban experiences owed something to cultural aversion to child exposure and abandonment. [Schama, S. (1987). *The embarrassment of riches: An interpretation of Dutch culture in the golden age* (pp. 522–523). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.]

**D.**

To distinguish X from Y, is to say that X is not Y, precisely that which Parmenides claims is impossible. Therefore, one cannot logically discriminate between different things in the world. One can only say, Parmenides concludes that everything is and hence, the true nature of reality—that which is—must be that of an undivided, homogenous, single entity. [Stokes, P. (2002) *Philosophy 100 essential thinkers*. Kindle iPad version. Retrieved from [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)]

***What kinds of problems do ESL/EFL learners have with transition words and phrases?***

- ***Learner difficulties***

Because most transition words and phrases occur primarily in formal written English, ESL/EFL learners frequently lack adequate exposure to the use and meanings of these words and phrases, a problem also faced by inexperienced native speakers. There are often subtle differences in the meanings of similarly categorized transition words and phrases; therefore, learners need practice in understanding and using the different transition words and phrases. This, again, is difficult given the relatively infrequent use of many of these transition words and phrases in spoken and informal written English. Repeated exposure and practice to formal texts will help learners become more aware of the use and subtleties of meaning of the transition words.

At this juncture we have completed our review of compound sentences and begin our investigation into complex sentences.

## 9.2 Section 2: Complex Sentences

Look at any written text, whether print or digital, and you will quickly notice that simple sentences and compound sentences are only a small part of the picture. There are other important sentence types in English called *complex sentences*.

Complex sentences are so labeled because they consist of a main clause and a subordinate clause. Unlike sentences with coordinating conjunctions, the two clauses in such a sentence are not equal: One part, the subordinate clause, is dependent on the other part, the main clause. We call clauses that need to be attached to another clause *subordinate clauses*.<sup>2</sup>

Remember that we have defined a main clause as one that can stand alone as a complete sentence. A subordinate clause is generally introduced by a word, called a *subordinator* or *subordinating conjunction*. Contrast these sentences:

I walked home.  
 I walked home and I called my mother.  
 I walked home after I called my mother.

The first of these three sentences, *I walked home*, is an example of a simple main clause (subject, verb, and complement), and can stand alone as is. The second sentence is what we saw previously in our discussion of compound sentences. It consists of two main clauses joined by the coordinating conjunction *and*.

The last sentence, *I walked home after I called my mother*, is an example of a complex sentence. The first part of the sentence, *I walked home*, is a main clause that can stand alone. The second part of the sentence, *after I called my mother*, cannot stand alone. It needs to be attached to a main clause. The word *after* is a subordinator. It has changed the main clause, *I called my mother*, into a subordinate clause, *after I called my mother*.

### 9.2.1 Complex Sentences and Multiple Subordinate Clauses

***Do complex sentences have just one subordinate clause?***

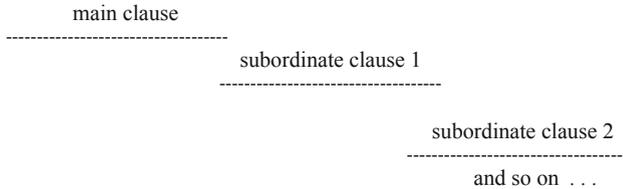
Complex sentences can have more than one subordinate clause:

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<sup>2</sup>Main clauses can also be called independent clauses and subordinate clauses can also be called dependent clauses.

Main Clause	Subordinate Clause	Subordinate Clause
I was watching the game	while they were talking to Jane	who lived nearby.
Maggie drove home	after the baseball game	that our team lost.

Visually, we can think of complex sentences as:



### 9.2.2 Subordinate Clauses and Word Order

*Can we change the order of the main clause and the subordinate clause?*

A feature of complex sentences is that in many instances, although not in all, the *main* clause and *subordinate* clause can be reversed in order without a change in meaning. When the main clause follows a subordinate clause, it is preceded by a comma.

I left for class before I texted Jill.	<b>main clause, initial position</b>
Before I left for class, I texted Jill.	<b>subordinate clause, initial position</b>

#### 9.2.2.1 GLUE

Another useful way to envision main clauses, subordinate clauses, and the use of subordinators is to think of subordinators as GLUE (Marshall 1982; Marshall and DeCapua 2009/2010). If we think of two pieces of paper that we want to put together, they won't stick unless we use glue. In complex sentences, if we don't have grammatical GLUE to join two subject noun phrases and verb phrases, we don't have complete sentences. The number of GLUE words needs to be one *less* than the number of subject noun phrases + verb phrases. In other words, English sentences need **one more subject noun phrase and verb phrase than GLUE**.

After the little girl rode her bike

In this example, there is one GLUE word (*after*), one subject noun phrase (*the little girl*), and one verb phrase (*rode*). The number of GLUE words is equal to the number of subject noun phrases and verb phrases (i.e., one). Therefore, this is not a grammatical sentence because there should be one more subject noun phrase and

one more verb phrase than GLUE. To make a grammatical complex sentence, we need to be sure that there is one more subject noun phrase and verb phrase than subordinators, or GLUE.

The boys left because it was raining hard.

Here we now have a complex sentence. There is one GLUE word (*because*), but there are two subject noun phrases (*the boys, it*), and two verb phrases (*left, was raining*).

***What, in general, do ESL/EFL learners find difficult about adverbial clauses?***

- ***Learner difficulties***

In forming adverbial clauses, ESL/EFL learners may not use the correct number of GLUE words:

\*Because I went there late.

\*When you go home.

ESL/EFL learners may add too many GLUE words:

\**Even though* I study hard; *however*, I still get low grades.

To help ESL/EFL learners, remind them that there must always be one less GLUE word than noun phrase and verb phrase.

***Are there different types of adverbial clauses?***

There are many types of adverbial clauses, but they all have something in common: They tell us something about the information in the main clause. Adverbial clauses are usually subcategorized according to type. Although some grammar books may vary slightly in their categorizations, the basic categories of adverbial clauses are time, contrast, place, cause, result, purpose, conditional, and manner. The type or category of an adverbial clause is determined by its subordinator. For example, the subordinators *after* and *when* introduce adverbial time clauses while the subordinators *since* or *because* introduce reason or cause clauses. A number of subordinators fit in more categories because they have more than one meaning, depending on how they are used in a sentence. We begin by examining adverbial clauses of time.

### ***9.2.3 Adverbial Clauses of Time***

before	after	until	while	when	since	as
--------	-------	-------	-------	------	-------	----

Time subordinators indicate different time references or time sequences. When we are referring to future events, *before*, *after*, *until*, *while*, and *when* are followed by the simple present. We do not use *will* or *be going to* after these time subordinators, even when the sentence is referring to future time.

- Before Bree *leaves*, she will call you.
- \*Before Bree *will leave*, she will call you.

### 9.2.3.1 *When and While*

In Chap. 6, we noted that in formal prescriptive grammar a distinction is made between the use of *when* and *while* in past time when two events or actions are described, one of which is interrupting the other event or action. *When* should be used with the simple past to refer to the single event or action that interrupts the ongoing event or action. *While* should be used with the past progressive form and not the simple past.

Lynn called <i>while we were eating</i>	<b><i>while</i> + past progressive</b>
<i>When Lynn called</i> , we were eating.	<b><i>when</i> + simple past</b>

Native speakers frequently do not adhere to this prescriptive rule and will use *when* with the past progressive.

- Lynn called *when we were eating*.

### 9.2.3.2 *Whenever*

The subordinator *when* can combine with *-ever* to refer to indefinite time.

- Whenever* Lynn called, we were eating.

### 9.2.3.3 *Until*

*Until* is often reduced to *till* in spoken and informal written English.

- We can't leave *until* her mother comes.
- We can't leave *till* her mother comes.
- We can't leave 'til her mother comes.

Different writers will use either *till* or *'til* to reflect the reduced form; *'til* is considered an incorrect written form but can be found in advertising and in informal writing, especially dialogues.

***What is hard about time clauses?***

- ***Learner difficulties***

One problematic area for ESL/EFL learners is remembering that future verb forms cannot follow time subordinators. Errors similar to our earlier sentence are common:

\*Before Bree *will come*, she'll text you.

\*They will finish the test after the teacher *will give* them more time.

Adverbial clauses with *since* are also confusing for learners because *since* has two different meanings as a subordinate conjunction. It can refer to time or to reason:

<b>Since</b> Jo moved, she's been a lot happier.	<b>time</b>
<b>Since</b> he retired, they moved to Florida.	<b>reason</b>

Because *since* is also an adverb used to mark a specific point in time, ESL/EFL learners occasionally confuse this function of *since* with the adverbial subordinator *since*:

I've lived here **since** 1995.

This town has existed **since** colonial times.

In these examples, *since* indicates a particular point in time and does not introduce an adverbial clause of time.

Another confusing subordinator for learners is *as* because it can express either a time or a reason relationship:

<b>As</b> we entered the room, the noise died down.	<b>time</b>
<b>As</b> Katie was late, she missed the information.	<b>reason</b>

See how well you can identify the adverbial time clauses in Discovery Activity 3. The answers are in the Answer Key.

**Discovery Activity 3: Identifying Adverbial Time Clauses**

Look at the following excerpts and underline the subordinators of time in the following excerpts.

**A.**

... my mother had worked in the sheet mill when I was a little boy, before she succumbed to cigarettes, booze, drugs, and, ultimately, lung cancer. [Patterson, J. (2015.) *Cross justice*. Kindle iPad version. Retrieved from [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)]

**B.**

As you read this, criminals... are destroying portions of mankind’s past... As you continue to read, other people across the globe are purchasing some of mankind’s oldest and most exquisite creations... [Vincent, S. (2005, April). Ancient treasures for sale. *Reason*, 36 (11).]

**C.**

“Can I talk to him?”“Of course. But he hasn’t responded to anyone since he arrived.”... Her heart crunched when she realized someone had taken off his ring. [Bond, S. (2013). *Two guys detective agency*. Kindle iPad version. Retrieved from [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)]

**D.**

He sets up a bank account and feeds money in, transferring funds until he has what he needs. Then he can go on merrily cheating ’til someone’s onto him. [Grafton, S. (2001). *P is for pearl* (p. 85.) New York: Putnam.]

**9.2.4 Adverbial Clauses of Contrast**

although	even though	though	<b>unexpected result</b>
while	whereas	inasmuch as	<b>direct opposition</b>

Adverbial clauses of contrast are often subcategorized into two types: *unexpected result* and *direct opposition*.

**9.2.4.1 Unexpected Result**

When *although*, *even though*, and *though* are used, the implication is one of unexpected result or of a contrast of ideas between the main clause and the subordinate clause. All three subordinators have the same meaning, but *though* is generally considered more informal than the other two.

*Although* it was raining, we took a walk.  
*Even though* it was raining, we took a walk.  
*Though* it was raining, we took a walk.

### 9.2.4.2 Direct Opposition

*While*, *whereas*, and *inasmuch as* are used to convey the notion of direct opposition. The information in the subordinate clause is the direct opposite of the information in the main clause. *Whereas* is most commonly found in formal written English.

Arbitration is more formal than mediation and the arbitrator's decision is usually binding on the parties, *whereas* mediation focuses on negotiation and the mediator seeks to facilitate an agreement between the parties. [Justia. (n.d.) Arbitration and Mediation. Retrieved from <https://www.justia.com/trials-litigation/arbitration-mediation/>]

*Inasmuch as* this pipeline has received steady political support from the United State because it would enable Turkmenistan to find another alternative to dependence on Russia for exporting its gas, Russia has been very skeptical about the project. [Blank, S. (2015, December 18). Russia and the TAPI Pipeline. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*. Retrieved from [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=44919&tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=95ab8b1a1a0c7a64f6b3e70c6ae12389-.VpkfL5MrJE4](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=44919&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=95ab8b1a1a0c7a64f6b3e70c6ae12389-.VpkfL5MrJE4)]

- *Learner difficulties*

*While* used in adverbial clauses of contrast is often confusing to learners of English because they more commonly associate *while* with time clauses. They also have a tendency to overuse *though* in more formal writing.

### 9.2.5 Adverbial Clauses of Place

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where

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The most common subordinator for adverbial clauses of place is *where*.

Older adults are more likely to stay *where* they live. Younger adults are more likely to move *where* they can find jobs.

When speakers are referring to an indefinite place, *-ever* is attached to *where*.

During the games, thousands of visitors traveled to Olympia, creating a crowded scene with folks camping *wherever* they could find a space... [The Olympic Games. (n.d.) Retrieved from [Ancient-Greece.org](http://Ancient-Greece.org)]

Not only adverbial clauses are introduced by *where*, but also relative clauses. Relative clauses are clauses that modify, that is, describe or expand a noun phrase in a sentence. (see Chap. 10). When *where* modifies a noun, it introduces a relative clause rather than an adverbial clause.

The Olympics in ancient Greece... provided a peaceful ground *where* Greeks discussed and forged agreements...

In this sentence, *where* introduces a relative clause and not an adverbial clause because *where* modifies the noun phrase *a peaceful ground*.

### 9.2.6 Adverbial Clauses of Cause

because	since	as	inasmuch as
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Adverbial clauses of cause are also referred to as *reason* clauses because they explain the *why* of the main clause. In adverbial clauses of cause, *since* and *because* are synonymous. *As*, which we saw earlier as introducing adverbial clauses of time, can also introduce clauses of cause or reason:

*As* the patient was severely overweight, he faced numerous health issues.

*Inasmuch as*, which we saw earlier functioning to introduce adverbial clauses of contrast, is also used to indicate cause.

Reactive cultures listen before they leap. They are the world’s best listeners **inasmuch as** they concentrate on what the speaker is saying. [Reactive (n.d.) Retrieved from <http://www.crossculture.com/about-us/the-model/reactive/>]

Another commonly used structure, *now that*, is not a subordinator, but is often used to introduce adverbial cause clauses. This structure is used only for present and future events or actions, not past ones.

- Because* it’s snowing, we’ll stay home.
- Since* it’s snowing, we’ll stay home.
- As* it’s snowing, we’ll stay home.
- Now that* it’s snowing, we’ll stay home.

As you do this next Discovery Activity, think about the different excerpts. How do you think the formality of writing influences the number and type of clauses used?

#### Discovery Activity 4: Identifying Adverbial Clauses of Contrast, Place, and Cause

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline the subordinators of contrast, place, and cause.
2. Identify the meaning of each subordinator.

**A.**

All along the way people had been stopping them to ask where they were to camp. They were simply told to camp wherever they wanted to. [Stoner, B. (2012). *Leave me alone*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)]

**B.**

While food contains nutrients and calories that animals need to produce heat and energy, it may also contain harmful parasites, bacteria, or chemicals... Beverages, foods, and chemical compounds all are ingested because we are motivated to do so for pleasure or for the relief of unpleasant states such as thirst, hunger, or tiredness (e.g., caffeinated drinks such as coffee). [Reed, D. R., & Knaapila, A. (2010). Genetics of taste and smell: Poisons and pleasures. *Progress in Molecular Biology and Translational Science*, 94, 213–240. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3342754/>]

**C.**

When we eat, we attend to the concentration of chemical stimulus in our food... Some find bitter compounds to be very bitter, whereas others experience the same concentration of the same chemical as much less intense... Although the relationship between bitter taste and plant poisons is relatively simple (compared to other taste qualities), it is not the only one that signals a warning. [Reed, D. R., & Knaapila, A. (2010). Genetics of taste and smell: Poisons and pleasures. *Progress in Molecular Biology and Translational Science*, 94, 213–240. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3342754/>]

**D.**

As we approach the boulder-strewn clearing, dozens of females and their babies are lying in huge piles at the base of a large rock... Since natural breaks in the woods are so important... it is not uncommon to find several different snake species sharing basking... sites. [Clark, R. (2005, March). Social lives of rattlesnakes. *Natural History*, 114, 36–41.]

### 9.2.7 Adverbial Clauses of Result

such	+ (adjective) + noun	(+ that)
so	+ adjective or adverb	(+ that)
so	+ many, few, much, little + (noun)	(+ that)

Result clauses indicate the consequence or result of an action or event. *Such* and *so* are followed by specific types of words or phrases.

In a result clause with *such*, if the noun following is a singular countable noun, *a* or *an* must precede this noun.

That was <i>such a mistake that</i> I'll never hear the end of it.	<b>singular count noun, <i>mistake</i></b>
That was <i>such fun that</i> we'll have to do it again.	<b>non-count noun, <i>fun</i></b>

*So* can be followed either by an adjective or an adverb:

The fish smells <i>so bad that</i> it must be rotten.	<b>adjective</b>
I rode my bike <i>so fast that</i> now I'm out of breath.	<b>adverb</b>

*So* can also be followed by a quantifier (*much, many, etc.*) and a noun:

We have <i>so many books that</i> we need more shelves.	<b>plural count noun</b>
We had <i>so much fun that</i> we didn't want to leave.	<b>non-count noun</b>

Here again we see the importance of ESL/EFL learners understanding the distinction between count and non-count nouns, as we originally discussed in Chap. 4.

***Do we always use that with such and so?***

In spoken English and less formal written English, we often use *such* and *so* without *that* before the adverbial clause:

- They have *such a large yard* it must be difficult to keep up.
- The music is *so loud* I can't hear anything else.

Many native speakers, when dropping *that*, will add a pause in speaking and a semicolon or comma when writing before the adverbial clause:

This is *such* a bad mistake; I don't know how to fix it.

***Can we switch the order of the result clause and the main clause?***

Unlike the adverbial clauses we have discussed up to now, result clauses and main clauses cannot change order.

***What problems do ESL/EFL learners have with result clauses?***

- ***Learner difficulties***

ESL/EFL learners may have difficulty using the correct article and/or quantifier after *such* and *so* because they have to remember whether or not the noun is count or non-count. In addition, if the noun is a count noun, they need to be aware whether it is singular or plural.

Learners also become confused as to the meaning of *so... that* clauses. First, *so* has various uses and meanings; second, there is another type of adverbial clause structure and meaning with *so that* as we will see next.

***What is another type of clause with so and that?***

### 9.2.8 Adverbial Clause of Purpose

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so that

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An adverbial clause with *so that* indicates an intention or purpose. *So that* conveys the idea that the action or event of the main clause deliberately results in the action or event in the subordinate clause. Unlike the *so... that* result clause, this *so that* is not separated.

Peggy studied hard *so that* she would do well on the test.

The verb phrase in this type of clause usually has *can* or *will* for present or future meaning and *could* or *would* for past time reference. Like the result clauses we just discussed, a purpose clause and a main clause do not change order.

#### **Do we always use that with so?**

As we saw with adverbial clauses of result, the *that* after *so* is often omitted, especially in casual speech and informal written English.

Peggy studied hard *so* she would do well on the test.

The following table summarizes *so that* (purpose) and *so... that* (result) clauses.

<i>So... that</i> (result)	<i>So that</i> (purpose)
That was <i>so much fun (that)</i> we'll have to do it again.	Peggy studied hard <i>so (that)</i> she would do well on the test.
<i>so</i> and <i>that</i> separated with different sentence constituents after <i>so</i> (e.g., <i>much fun</i> )	<i>so that</i> not separated and followed directly by adverbial clause: <i>she would do well on the test</i>

The next Discovery Activity will help you practice identifying result versus purpose clauses. The answers are in the Answer Key.

#### **Discovery Activity 5: Identifying Adverbial Clauses of Result and Purpose**

Look at the following excerpts and underline the subordinators of result and purpose.

##### **A.**

Now the bombers are so close that the floor starts to throb under her knees... It's the first time he's heard the gun at such close range, and it sounds as if the top half of the hotel has torn of. [Doer, A. (2015). *All the light we cannot see*. Kindle iPad version. Retrieved from [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)]

##### **B.**

What's important in Milo these days is that Gardy gets convicted and sentenced to death and executed as soon as possible so that the town can feel better about itself

and move on... The two deputies in the front seat are listening so hard they're barely breathing... [Grisham, J. (2015). *Rogue lawyer*. Kindle iPad version. Retrieved from [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)]

**C.**

[The hitting] streak itself is such a good story, such an important event in our cultural history, that the day-by-day chronicle will shape a bare sequence into a wonderful drama... [Gould, S. J. (2003). *Triumph and tragedy in Mudville* (p. 178). New York: London.]

We will now investigate adverbial clauses of condition, originally introduced in Chap. 7 in our examination of the uses of the modal auxiliary *would*. In this chapter explores in greater depth the structure and use of sentences referring to some kind of possibility or reality.

### 9.2.9 Adverbial Clauses of Condition

To review, conditional sentences consist of two parts. One clause is called the *if* clause because it is introduced by the word *if*. The other clause is referred to as the *conditional clause* because this is the part of the sentence that refers to some kind of possibility or reality.

There are two types of conditional clauses: real (true) and unreal (contrary-to-fact) clauses:

Conditional Sentences			
<i>if</i> clause	conditional clause	type	time reference
<i>If</i> Marta likes the idea,	I will present it to everyone else.	real	present/future
<i>If</i> Dino paid his bills,	he wouldn't be in trouble.	unreal	present
<i>If</i> Jason had called,	Dad would have been happy.	unreal	past

*What are the rules for forming the conditional for the different time references?*

#### 9.2.9.1 Real Conditions

To form **present** or **future real** conditions as in *If Marta likes the idea, I will present it to everyone*, use:

- a **present** tense verb in the *if* clause.
- *will* + a main verb in the main clause. You can also use a present tense verb in the main clause: *If you need help, I'm here for you.*

### 9.2.9.2 Present Unreal Conditions

To form **present unreal** sentences as in *If Dino paid his bills, he wouldn't be in trouble*, use:

- a **past** tense verb in the *if* clause.
- *would* + a main verb in the main clause.

*Could* and *might* + a main verb can also occur in the main clause. *Could* and *might* change the meaning from contrary-to-fact or unreal to possibility, as we saw in Chap. 7.

### 9.2.9.3 Past Unreal Conditions

To form **past unreal** sentences as in *If Jason had called, Dad would have been happy*, use:

- a **past perfect** tense verb in the *if* clause.
- *would* + *have* + past participle in the main clause.

*Could/might* + *have* + past participle can also occur in the main clause.

#### *Are there any irregular conditional verb forms?*

The verb *be* is irregular. For 1st person and 3rd person singular, the form *were* is used in present unreal clauses.

“Maybe *if I weren't* so repulsive-looking—maybe *if I were* pretty like you—” [L'Engle, M. (1976/1962). *A wrinkle in time* (p. 10). New York: Dell.]

Increasing, speakers use *was* rather than *were*. An example of this can be seen in a few of the lines from the song, *If I Was a River*, by Willie Nile and sung by various artists, including Patti LaBelle:

“If I Was a River”

If I was the sun

I would shine my light to your world

If I was the rain

I would wash your tears away

[Retrieved from <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/pattilabelle/ifiwasariver.html>]

This increasing use of *was* for *were* in present unreal conditional is evident even in formal written English, especially in situations where the subject noun phrase is long and does not immediately precede *be*:

Tobacco prices would have been more stable and less subject to monopoly pricing if tobacco could have freely crossed national borders and *was* supplied from a wider geographical area. [Pecquet, G. (2003). British mercantilism and crop controls in the tobacco colonies: A study of rent-seeking costs. *The Cato Journal*, 22, 482.]

*If* clauses, like many adverbial clauses we have already explored, can be reversed. The *if* clause can come in initial position and the main clause can come in second position:

If I <i>had</i> the time and money, I <i>would travel</i> more.	<b>If clause, initial position</b>
I <i>would travel</i> more, <b>if</b> I <i>had</i> the time and money.	<b>If clause, second position</b>

***Do we always use if in conditional clauses?***

**9.2.9.4 Conditional Sentences Without *if***

Past unreal clauses are not always introduced by *if*. Sometimes speakers introduce the subordinate clause by inverting *had* (whether it is the main verb or the auxiliary) with the subject:

<b>Inverted Past Unreal Clauses</b>	
<i>Had</i> I the time and money, I <i>would travel</i> more.	<b>present</b> <i>had</i> = main verb
<i>Had</i> I <i>had</i> the time and money, I <i>would have traveled</i> more.	<b>past</b> <i>first had</i> = auxiliary verb

Past unreal clauses with inversion are less common than past unreal clauses introduced by *if*.

**9.2.9.5 Pronunciation of Modals in the Conditional**

In spoken English, the auxiliary *had* and the modals *would/could/might + have* are often contracted. We often see written versions of the contracted forms in dialogues to reflect spoken language.

You should've heard him before you showed... *If he'd had* a gun on him, *he'd have blown* his brains out. [Grafton, S. (2003). *Q is for quarry* (p. 95). New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.]

These contractions are avoided in formal written English.

***Do speakers always make only one time reference in conditional clauses?***

**9.2.9.6 Mixed Time**

Frequently the time reference in the *if* clause and the time reference in the main clause are different. When the time reference in the two parts of the sentence is not the same, we call this *mixed time*. In this sentence the *if* clause refers to **conditional**

**past** time using the past perfect verb tense while the main clause refers to **present** possibility.

If *he'd cooked up* a false identity, he *could do* as he *pleased*... [Grafton, S. (2001). *P is for pearl* (p. 101). New York: Putnam.]

Here the *if* clause also refers to **conditional past** time using the past perfect verb tense but the main clause verb is in the **simple past** and refers to a truth or fact:

If Dow *had been taken* ill, if *he'd been injured or killed* in a fatal accident, I *had* no way to know... [Grafton, S. (2001). *P is for pearl* (p. 100). New York: Putnam.]

***Is mixed time confusing to ESL/EFL learners?***

- ***Learner difficulties***

Mixed time is difficult for learners of English because most ESL/EFL grammar texts treat conditional or unreal clauses as separate from real clauses. Thus, when learners encounter sentences with mixed time reference, they are uncertain as to meaning because such forms are often unfamiliar to them. At more advanced levels of proficiency, it is helpful to have learners analyze mixed time clauses in context in order to help them understand these forms.

You may find Discovery Activity 6 challenging. Do the best you can and be sure to check your answers in the Answer Key only after you have tried the activity.

### **Discovery Activity 6: Identifying Conditional Clauses**

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline the conditional clauses.
2. Decide which type of conditional clause each one is (i.e., real or unreal).
3. Identify the time referred to in each conditional clause.

**A.**

“Are you his attorney?” She almost smiled. “If I were, I wouldn’t be telling you this...” [Lee, R. (2003). *Last breath* (p. 52). New York: Warner.]

**B.**

Had Bianca an adult eye, she might have guessed from its mismatched roofs and inconsistent architectural details that many owners had lived here before her family arrived... [Maguire, G. (2003). *Mirror mirror: A novel* (p. 6). New York: HarperCollins Publishers.]

**C.**

The extent to which we commend someone for operating a complex piece of equipment depends on the circumstances... If he is following oral instructions, if someone is “telling him what to do,” we give him slightly more credit... [Skinner, B.F. (1971). *Beyond freedom & dignity* (p. 44). New York: Bantam.]

**D.**

“Look, Liza, if I had it to do over again, I’d do things differently. I didn’t run away from you, but from a hopeless situation.” [Warren, P. (2011). *Daddy’s home*. Kindle iPad version. Retrieved from [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)]

**E.**

If I wanted to get the kind of Level II quotes and market executions I was used to, I’d have to spend more money than I was currently willing to part with. [Richards, L. (2004). *Mad Monday* (pp. 59–60). Don Mills, Ontario, Canada: Mira.]

The last type of adverbial clauses we will examine are adverbial clauses of manner, which are related to conditional clauses because they express comparisons to real or unreal situations.

### 9.2.10 Adverbial Clauses of Manner

as if	as though
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*As if* and *as though* can express comparisons to both **real** and **unreal** situations, possibilities, or expectations. The *as* in *as if* or *as though* is part of these phrases. This *as* is different from the *as* that introduces an adverbial clause of time or reason.

When speakers want to compare something to something else that is **unreal**, hypothetical or, fanciful, they use *as if* or *as though* followed by the conditional form. The two phrases are interchangeable.

<i>As if and As though</i>		
He acts as if he <i>knows</i> everything.	(and maybe he does)	<b>present real</b>
He acts as if I <i>were</i> stupid.	(but I’m not)	<b>present unreal</b>
He acted as if he <i>knew</i> everything.	(and maybe he did)	<b>past real</b>
He acted as if he <i>had known</i> everything.	(but he didn’t)	<b>past unreal</b>

Speakers may not necessarily use the conditional in past unreal *as if/as though* clauses but use simple past tense in both the main and subordinate clauses:

He acted as if he knew everything.

Only context clarifies whether a real or unreal condition is being referred.

See how well you can identify the time references in the *as if* and *as though* clauses. The answers are in the Answer Key at the end of the chapter.

### Discovery Activity 7: *As if* and *As though*

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline the *as if* and *as though* clauses.
2. Identify the time reference in the adverbial clauses with *as if* and *as though*.

#### A.

Reenie was sucking her thumb and stroking something in her lap with her short, stubby fingers, as if it were a kitten. [Wood, J. (1995). *When pigs fly* (p. 5). New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.]

#### B.

Jiniwin's parents had been divorced for three years, and they gave her so little attention it was as though they'd divorced her, too. [Wood, J. (1995). *When pigs fly* (p. 8). New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.]

#### C.

Starting tomorrow, life is going to be very different for me. I feel as if I'm closing the first chapter on my life as a Traveler and beginning a new and more dangerous one. [MacHale, D. (2005). *Pendragon, book six: The rivers of Zada* (p. 1). New York: Simon & Schuster.]

#### D.

Sarah looked as if he'd slung mud in her face... He acted as if nothing unusual had happened between them, almost as if he had forgotten that they'd had a child together. [Ford, B. (2014). *Mama's pearl*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)]

This concludes our exploration of the different adverbial clauses in English. We turn now to an examination of adverbial phrases, which are reduced forms of adverbial clauses.

### 9.3 Section 3: Reduced Adverbial Clauses

Reduced adverbial clauses are adverbial clauses that do not have a full verb phrase. Remember that a verb phrase consists of at least one main verb (e.g., simple present) or at least one auxiliary + main verb in the appropriate aspect (e.g., present progressive).

Dee waved with her hand while she <i>was holding</i> the jug in other hand.	<b>full verb phrase</b> past progressive <i>was holding</i>
Dee waved with her hand while <i>holding</i> the jug in other hand.	<b>reduced verb phrase</b> <i>holding</i>

#### *Can all adverbial clauses be reduced?*

Adverbial clauses can only be reduced from clauses to phrases under certain conditions:

- These clauses must be adverbial clauses of **time** beginning with *after, before, while, when, and since*.<sup>3</sup>
- The subject of the adverbial clause and the subject of the main clause must be identical. If there is a different subject for each clause, then the adverbial clause cannot be reduced.

#### *How do we reduce adverbial clauses to adverbial phrases?*

### 9.3.1 Reducing Adverbial Clauses

How the adverbial time clause is reduced depends on the type of verb phrase.

#### 9.3.1.1 Verb Phrase with Auxiliary *Be* in a Progressive Tense

When the adverbial clause includes a form of the auxiliary *be* + *present participle*, drop the subject and the *be* verb:

*While Matt was studying*, he took notes.  
*While studying*, he took notes.

*Before she is coming* to visit, she has to work.  
*Before coming* to visit, she has to work.

*After they had been studying* for a long time, they took a break.  
*After studying* for a long time, they took a break.

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<sup>3</sup>Note that when *since* introduces adverbial clauses of *cause*, these cannot be reduced.

### 9.3.1.2 Verb Phrase with Auxiliary *Have* in a Progressive Tense

If the verb is in a past perfect form, *had* changes to *having* and is followed by the main verb in *past participle* form:

*After we had seen* the test results, we decided to take it again.

*After having seen* the test results, we decided to take it again.

*Before they had finished* work, they decided to leave.

*Before having finished* work, they decided to leave.

### 9.3.1.3 Verb Phrases with No Auxiliary Verb

When there is no auxiliary in the main verb phrase, drop the subject and change the verb in the adverbial clause to a present participle (*-ing*).

*When Leigh talks* on the phone, she clears out the dishwasher.

*When talking* on the phone, she clears out the dishwasher.

*Before he texted* me, he called several times.

*Before texting* me, he called several times.

*Since Jason has graduated*, he has been looking for a job.

*Since graduating*, he has been looking for a job.

- **Learner difficulties**

There are several difficulties ESL/EFL learners have with reduced adverbial clauses of time. One, they may be unclear as to the time reference in the adverbial clause. Second (and something inexperienced native speakers also have trouble with in writing) is using the present participle form of the main verb in the adverbial clause when the subject of the main clause is different from that of the adverbial clause:

After being late five times, the teacher told me to drop the class.

The subject of the main clause, *the teacher*, is different from the one implied in the reduced adverbial clause, *I*. Because *the teacher* is the first subject after the reduced adverbial clause, grammatically it acts as the subject of this reduced adverbial clause, even though logically we know it isn't. (Similar problems will be discussed in Chap. 12.)

This concludes our exploration of the first of the three types of complex sentences we will be investigating further in Chap. 10, 11.

## 9.4 Summary

Sentences Types		
Greg is sleeping.	subject + noun phrase	<b>simple sentence</b>
Greg is in his room.	subject + complement	
Greg is reading a book.	subject + object	
Greg is sleeping and Vera is reading.	two simple sentences conjoined by conjunction <i>and</i>	<b>compound sentence</b>
Because it rained last night, the river is flooding.	subordinate clause + simple sentence (main clause)	<b>complex sentence</b>

Adverbial Clauses		
type	subordinators	example
<b>time</b>	before, after, until, while, when, since as	<i>After</i> we left, the town changed.
<b>contrast</b>	although, even though, though, while, whereas, inasmuch as	<i>Although</i> Jack studied, he didn't pass the test.
<b>place</b>	where	Many people prefer to live <i>where</i> the climate is warm.
<b>cause</b>	because, since, as, inasmuch as	They came late <i>because</i> the traffic was bad.
<b>result</b>	such... that, so... that	There are <i>so</i> many cars on the road <i>that</i> the traffic is always bad.
<b>purpose</b>	so that	She majored in business <i>so that</i> she could get a good job.
<b>conditional</b> • real • present/future – unreal – present – past	if	<i>If</i> Jay comes, we'll have a party. <i>If</i> I were rich, I would travel around the world. <i>If</i> Jenny had been rich, she would have bought a yacht.
<b>manner</b>	as if, as though	Melissa petted the wolf cub <i>as though</i> it were a puppy.

## 9.5 Practice Activities

### Activity 1: Coordinator Identification

1. Choose an excerpt from any source, either print or digital.
2. Underline the compound sentences you find.
  - Which coordinator or coordinator(s) occur(s) most frequently?
  - Which one(s) did you have trouble finding?

**Activity 2: Transition Words and Phrases**

Look at the following pairs of sentences.

1. Join each pair together using as many transition words and phrases as you can. You can change the order of the clauses if you want.
2. Discuss the differences in meaning when you change the transition words and phrases.

*Example*

It snowed. We left.

It snowed; **consequently**, we left.

It snowed; **therefore**, we left.

**A.**

I was extremely hungry.

I started eating before you came.

**B.**

Angela left school when she was 16.

She has had a very successful career as a writer.

**C.**

Jeremy failed the test.

He passed the course.

**Activity 3: Complex Sentence Variation**

Look at the following pairs of sentences.

1. Combine each pair into as many different complex adverbial sentences as possible. Note that the first three sentences are the same as in Activity 2, only this time you are forming complex sentences with adverbials rather than using transition words and phrases.
2. Discuss the differences in meaning when you change adverbial subordinators.

*Example*

It snowed. We stayed home.

**Because** it snowed, we stayed home.

**When** it snowed, we stayed home.

**While** it snowed, we stayed home.

**As** it snowed, we stayed home.

**A.**

I was extremely hungry.  
I started eating before you came.

**B.**

My mother left school when she was 16.  
She has had a very successful career as a writer.

**C.**

Jeremy failed the test.  
He passed the course.

**D.**

Math is hard for Eva.  
She had to study to pass the course.

**E.**

The water boiled over.  
Nick was helping some friends.

**Activity 4: Identifying Types of Adverbial Clauses**

1. Underline the subordinate clauses.
2. Label each type of adverbial clause

**A.**

Reading and writing grow out of the students' own experiences and interests... As they attempt to express their thoughts to another person in writing, the students are pushed to attempt structures they have not yet mastered... Although they are not composing autonomous text, they are developing abilities essential for writing... [Johnson, D. & Roen, D. (1989). *Richness in writing* (p. 111). White Plains: Longman.]

**B.**

We made it big enough so that all three of us would be able to stretch outside of it, and we left one side open so that we can watch movies... I shift upward so that I am sitting in the pile. [Nowlin, N. (2013). *If he had been with me*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)]

**C.**

While Trisha snores softly in her bed, the cherry pie in the oven releases its sweet, heady fragrance throughout the house... I'm crying because I miss my husband, Carl... As part of my mourning process, I take the antique heart-shaped locked I inherited from my mother... [Brown, J. (2015). *The housewife assassin's handbook*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)]

### Activity 5: Distinguishing Meaning

Discuss the differences in meaning between the same subordinators in the excerpts below.

- Be careful not to confuse other functions of *as* with *as* functioning as a subordinator.

#### A.

*since*

1. Since much of our social reality is understood in metaphorical terms, and since our conception of the physical world is partly metaphorical, metaphor plays a very significant role in determining what is real for us. [Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by* (p. 146). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.]
2. The Common Application is simpler, more utilitarian—and soaring in popularity. Since a nonprofit consortium of colleges behind it was founded in 1975, membership has swelled from 15 to 298 schools. [Springer, K. (2006, December 4). College: A more common application process. *Newsweek*, p. 12].

#### B.

*as*

1. Mary had liked to look at her mother from a distance and she had thought her very pretty, but as she knew very little of her she could scarcely have been expected to love her or to miss her very much when she was gone. She did not miss her at all, in fact, and as she was a self-absorbed child she gave her entire thought to herself... [Burnett, F. H. *The secret garden*. Retrieved from [http://www.pagebypagebooks.com/Frances\\_Hodgson\\_Burnett/The\\_Secret\\_Garden/](http://www.pagebypagebooks.com/Frances_Hodgson_Burnett/The_Secret_Garden/)]
2. As he made his way into the rehabilitation hospital where Kendra was a patient, Isaac Taylor flipped off his cell phone and slid it into the leather holster... [Richards, E. (2006). *Lover's knot* (p. 19). Don Mills, Ontario: Mira.]

### Activity 6: Identifying Different Types of Clauses

Look at the excerpts below.

Find the compound clauses. Label these CC.

Find the adverbial clauses. Label these AC.

- What type of adverbial clause is each one?

#### A.

Peter... rushed all over the garden, for he had forgotten the way back to the gate. He lost one of his shoes among the cabbages, and the other shoe amongst the potatoes. After losing them, he ran on four legs and went faster, so that I think he might have gotten away altogether if he had not unfortunately run into a gooseberry net... [Potter, B. (1902/1992), *The tale of Peter Rabbit*. London: Penguin, pp. 26–30].

**B.**

It was a good thing Kerby had warned Fenton not to say anything about the set, because his mother was in the kitchen when they came inside... Twenty seconds later Kerby had the chemistry set out on his desk and his visitor was carefully inspecting the special tube. [Corbett, S. (1960). *The lemonade trick* (pp. 70–72). New York: Apple Paperbacks.]

**Activity 7: Identifying Conditional Clauses**

1. Look at the excerpts from the children’s story *If I Were President*.
2. Examine the different conditional clauses.
  - What type of conditional clause is each one: present unreal, past unreal, future unreal?

It would be great to be president of the United States!

- a. If I were president, that means after a big campaign with speeches and posters and TV ads, the people would have chosen me as their leader. Years of planning and hard work would have prepared me for that day.
- b. If I were president, I’d promise to “preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States,” because that would be my job.
- c. If I were president, I could go bowling or visit a movie theater without every leaving my house.
- d. I’d have my own chef and could eat whatever I wanted...
- e. If I were president, each year I’d give a speech to Congress.
- f. Congress would present bills. If I didn’t like an idea, I’d say no... But if I agreed, I’d sign the bill and make it a law.
- g. If I were president, I’d comfort families that had been in an earthquake, hurricane, or flood. Then I’d help them rebuild their towns.
- h. If I were president, the people could only elect me twice. Then I’d have to find a new job and a new house.
- i. If I were president, they might someday make a statue of me... Or someday my face might show up on the country’s money.

[Stier, C. (1999). *If I were president*. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman & Company, No page numbers.]

**Activity 8: Error Analysis A**

The following excerpts were written by ESL students. There are errors in compound and complex sentences. Evaluate **only the errors related to adverbial clauses**. You may find the other errors distracting, but remember one of your jobs as an ESL/EFL teacher is to be able to pay attention to specific errors in different circumstances.

1. Find the adverbial clause errors. **Only focus on these errors.**
2. Consider how an explanation of GLUE would be helpful in addressing some of the learners’ difficulties.

**A.**

Although studying music and becoming a professional pianist sound good, but I cannot guarantee that you can have a good job. If you will study to be a doctor, I can guarantee that you can find a good job. If you will pursue a doctor career, it will enhance your quality of life now and forever.

**B.**

I want to be a policewoman. Because, I like to be. When I'm big I like to be you! My good dream was when I'm a princess. Because I am very beautiful like you!

**C.**

Now, I don't have children, but if I have a child I want to give a gift for my child, a dog or cat. Dogs and cats help child develop. If a child have a cat or dog, he has to take care of it. If the child didn't take care of the cat or dog, it will be bad for the cat or dog.

**Activity 9: Error Analysis B**

The following excerpt was written by an EFL student.

1. Identify the errors with transition words and phrases. What suggestions might you offer this student to help understand the use of transition words and phrases? Remember to focus **only on the transition word and phrase problems**.

In an ESL classroom, it will be interesting for students from different cultural backgrounds to have teacher who uses communicative teaching. In an EFL setting, however, because the language teacher and the students are likely to belong to the same language and cultural background. It will be more difficult for meaningful topic discussions to occur in classrooms since students all speak the same language. In addition, there are also usually very big classes with 30 or more students and it makes it very hard for the teacher to give everyone a chance. Nevertheless, it will be a challenge for EFL teachers to use communicative teaching in their classes.

**9.6 Answer Key****Discussion: Discovery Activity 1**


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*Excerpt A*

for

*for* as a coordinator is uncommon in modern American English; occurs sometimes in formal writing.

---

*Excerpt B*

and (first sentence and last sentence), but (second sentence)

---

*Excerpt C*

and, yet

---

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 2**

*Excerpt A*

as a result, thus	result
-------------------	--------

*Excerpt B*

in addition, further	addition
----------------------	----------

*Excerpt C*

moreover	addition
----------	----------

nonetheless	contrast
-------------	----------

*Excerpt D*

therefore, hence	result
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**Discussion: Discovery Activity 3**

*Excerpt A*

when, before

*Excerpt B*

as, as

*Excerpt C*

since, when

*Excerpt D*

until, 'til

'til is considered by some to be an incorrect written form for *till* but is often found in dialogues and informal writing.

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 4**

*Excerpt A*

where, wherever	place
-----------------	-------

*Excerpt B*

while	contrast (direct opposition)
-------	------------------------------

because	cause
---------	-------

*Excerpt C*

whereas	contrast (direct opposition)
---------	------------------------------

although	contrast (unexpected result)
----------	------------------------------

*Excerpt D*

as	time
----	------

since	cause
-------	-------

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 5***Excerpt A*

so close that	so + adjective + that
such close range	such + adjective non-count noun + that

*Excerpt B*

so that	so + that
so hard	so + adverb ( <i>that</i> omitted)

*Excerpt C*

such a good story,	such + a + adjective + count noun
such an important event in our cultural history	such + a + adjective + count noun + that

*such a good story* and *such an important event in our cultural history* part of same result clause followed by one *that*.

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 6***Excerpt A*

If I were you, I wouldn't be telling	present unreal
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*Excerpt B*

Had, she might have guessed	inverted present ( <i>had</i> ) and present unreal; past possibility ( <i>might have guessed</i> ); mixed time
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*Excerpt C*

If he is following oral instructions,	present progressive real
if someone is "telling him... , we give	present real

*Excerpt D*

If I had, I'd do	present unreal
------------------	----------------

*Excerpt E*

If I wanted, I'd have to	present unreal
--------------------------	----------------

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 7***Excerpt A*

as if it were	present unreal
In informal spoken and written English, <i>was</i> is often used instead of <i>were</i> .	

*Excerpt B*

as though they'd (had) divorced	past unreal situation
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*Excerpt C*

as if I'm closing	present progressive real
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*Excerpt D*

as if he'd (had) slung	past unreal situation
as if nothing unusual had happened	past unreal situation
as if he had forgotten	past unreal situation

# Chapter 10

## Complex Sentences Continued: Relative Clauses

**Abstract** In Chap. 9 we examined one type of complex clause, adverbial clauses. In this chapter we will be discussing another type of complex clause, relative clauses. We will explore what relative clauses are, the different types of relative clauses, and how they are formed. Section 10.1 discusses relative clauses and the relative pronouns. Section 10.2 examines relative adverbs. Section 10.3 looks at reduced relative clauses.

**Keywords** relative clauses • relative pronouns • essential relative clauses • nonessential relative clauses • reduced relative clauses

### 10.1 Section 1: Relative Clauses and Relative Pronouns

that	which	who	whom	whose
------	-------	-----	------	-------

A relative clause is a group of words that describes a noun or noun phrase. Relative clauses are also referred to as *adjective* clauses because the function of these clauses is to describe or modify a preceding noun phrase. In other words, relative clauses describe or provide information about someone or something in the main clause, very similar to the modifying function of adjectives. Like adverbial clauses, relative clauses are a type of subordinate clause and cannot stand alone. Relative clauses must be accompanied by a main clause.

Relative clauses are generally introduced by relative pronouns. English has five relative pronouns: *who*, *whom*, *that*, *which*, and *whose*. For people, we generally use *who*, *whom*, and sometimes *that*. We use *whose* to refer to possession. For everything else, we use *which* or *that*.

In formal prescriptive English, *that* should not be used for people, only *who* or *whom*. Nevertheless, it is common for native speakers to use *that* for people both in speaking and less formal writing. *Which* refers to things or concepts, never people.

<b>that</b>	things, people (informal); essential clauses
<b>which</b>	things, concepts; nonessential clauses
<b>who</b>	people, subject position, object position (informal)
<b>whom</b>	people, object position (formal)
<b>whose</b>	possession, people (formal); people and things (informal)

### 10.1.1 Essential and Nonessential Relative Clauses

There are two types of relative clauses, *essential* and *nonessential*. Different grammar books may call these two types of relative clauses *restrictive* and *non-restrictive* or *defining* and *non-defining*. Regardless of the label, the distinction between the two types of clauses is based on whether or not a relative clause is necessary or “essential” for the sentence to have meaning.

Essential and Nonessential Relative Clauses	
<i>Example A:</i> The teacher who just graduated is the newest teacher in the school.	<i>Example B:</i> The social studies teacher, who is new, is teaching a large class.
An <b>essential</b> relative clause	A <b>nonessential</b> relative clause
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides necessary information to identify or limit the noun phrase it is modifying.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>adds extra information or supporting detail about the noun phrase it is modifying.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>gives central meaning to the clause by narrowing down the class, group, or category of the noun phrase being modified.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can be deleted and the main clause will still have clear meaning.</li> </ul>

In Example A, the relative clause *who just graduated* is specifying which particular teacher is the newest teacher in the school. In Example B, *who is new* is adding extra information about the social studies teacher, information that is not important to the fact of *teaching a large class*.

As shown in these examples, a relative clause is usually found immediately after the noun phrase it is modifying.

***In addition to modifying a noun or noun phrase, what else can a relative clause modify?***

A relative clause can also modify a main clause, in which case it will immediately follow that clause. The relative pronoun *which* is used when a relative clause modifies another clause:

Linda studied every weekend, **which** would drive Barney crazy.

***Can both essential and nonessential relative clauses modify an entire clause?***

Both essential and nonessential relative clauses can modify an entire clause. A comma precedes essential relative clauses that modify an entire clause. These clauses should not be confused with nonessential relative clauses that provide extra information about the noun phrase. Compare the two sentences:

Jason kept on telling jokes, which made all of us really angry.  
 Jason kept on telling jokes which made all of us really angry.

The inclusion or omission of the comma after the relative pronoun *which* changes the meaning of the two sentence. In the first sentence, *which* is modifying the main clause *Jason kept on telling jokes*. The relative clause is telling us that the act of telling (versus the jokes themselves) angered *us*.

In the second sentence, *which* is modifying *jokes*. It is specifying or identifying the type of jokes Jason told, namely jokes that angered *us*. From the perspective of prescriptive grammar, using *which* in this second sentence is incorrect. This brings us to our next point.

***When do we use which versus that?*****10.1.1.1 Which Versus That**

Formal prescriptive grammar demands that *which* be used in nonessential clauses and *that* in essential clauses. In reality, native speakers often use *which* in place of *that* in **essential** clauses, although they rarely substitute *that* for *which* in **nonessential** clauses.

Jason kept on telling jokes, which made all of us really angry.	<b><i>which</i>, modifying entire clause</b>
Jason kept on telling jokes which made all of us really angry.	<b><i>which</i>, essential clause modifying <i>jokes</i> (spoken and less formal written)</b>
Jason kept on telling jokes that made all of us really angry.	<b><i>that</i>, essential clause modifying <i>jokes</i></b>

Also note that prepositions such as *in*, *on*, *from*, and so on may precede *which* but not *that* (when functioning as a relative pronoun):

The chair *in which* Justin sat was comfortable.  
 \*The chair *on that* Justin sat was comfortable.  
 Near the back was a makeshift stage *on which* the band was playing.  
 \*Near the back was a makeshift stage *on that* the band was playing.

***Should I teach my students the distinction between that and which?***

Not using *that* in nonessential clauses is something ESL/EFL students should be aware of. With respect to whether or not to teach the distinction between *which* and *that* in essential clauses depends on the goals of your students. Are the students

preparing to take a standardized test based on formal grammar? Are they more interested in becoming better communicators? Are you teaching in an EFL curriculum with a national curriculum and traditional grammar text? These and other questions relevant to your teaching situation will help you in deciding whether or not to teach this distinction. If you do decide to teach it, keep in mind that not all grammar and stylebooks today agree on whether or not the distinction should be maintained, so your students should be aware of the alternatives they are likely to encounter.

This first Discovery Activity provides practice in identifying essential and nonessential relative clauses. The answers to this Discovery Activity, as with all in this chapter unless indicated otherwise, are in the Answer Key at the end of the chapter.

### **Discovery Activity 1: Identifying Essential and Nonessential Relative Clauses**

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Mark the relative pronoun.
2. Underline the relative clauses.
3. Decide whether a relative clause is essential or nonessential.

#### **A.**

When Mattel first broke ground here in 1967, Taiwan was still considered an underdeveloped country. But the Barbie factory, which was quickly followed by three others on the island, helped unleash an astonishing ... economic miracle ... The island, which is approximately the size of West Virginia, is the fifth largest economy in Asia. [Dmitri, H. (2005). Barbie's Taiwanese homecoming. *Reason*, 37 (1), 40–41.]

#### **B.**

During the twenties St. Elmo was a resort, with a reputation that spread as far away as Atlanta and Birmingham. [Thompson, M. (2013). *Hurricane season*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)]

#### **C.**

The older Vega daughter, Paula, and her new boyfriend, whose name Gail had already forgotten, sat at the far end of the table. [Parker, B. (2005). *Suspicion of rage* (p. 70). New York: Penguin.]

#### **D.**

My neighbors use the diphthong-rich vowels of the hill accent that was my own first language. After I met, fell in love with, and married the man who was working this land. [Kingsolver, B. (2002). *Small wonder* (pp. 32–33). New York: HarperCollins.]

### 10.1.2 *Relative Pronouns as Subjects and Objects*

Relative pronouns can function as **subjects** of a relative clause or they can function as the **objects** of the relative clause. This is an important distinction ESL/EFL students need to learn because the function of the relative pronoun determines several different things.

#### *How do we determine the function of a relative pronoun?*

One way to distinguish the function of a relative pronoun is to consider what is following the relative pronoun:

- If there is a *verb phrase* following the relative pronoun, it is functioning as the **subject** of the relative clause.
- If there is a *noun phrase* or *pronoun* following the relative pronoun, it is functioning as the **object** of the relative clause.

#### **Relative Pronoun: Subject of Verb Phrase**

main clause	relative pronoun	verb phrase	complement
Jenny wanted a cat	that	purred	a lot.
Teachers appreciate students	who	study	hard.

*That* and *who* are functioning as the subjects of their respective verb phrases and are thereby also the subjects of their relative clauses.

#### **Relative Pronoun: Object of Verb Phrase**

main clause	relative pronoun	noun phrase/pronoun	complement
Astrid saw the movie	that	her friend	had recommended.
Cami helped the new student	whom	we	met yesterday.

In these two examples, the relative pronouns and their relative clauses are modifying the objects of the verbs. *The movie* is the object of *saw* and *the new student* is the object of *helped*.

Completing a chart, such as in Discovery Activity 2, is a useful way to help visualize the role of a relative pronoun in a sentence. The answers appear after this activity.

### Discovery Activity 2: Distinguishing Relative Pronouns as Subjects Versus Objects

Look at the sentences.

1. Create a chart similar to the one here.
2. Enter each sentence into the chart. (VP means verb phrase)
  - The first two sentences are done for you as examples.

subject	VP	object	relative pronoun	subject	VP	complement	role of relative pronoun
George	saw	the movie	that		had won	an award.	subject
George	saw	the movie	that	his son	wanted	to see.	object

- (a) George saw the movie that had won an award.
- (b) George saw the movie that I wanted to see.
- (c) I found the keys that Sam had lost yesterday.
- (d) I found the keys that belong to Sam.
- (e) The big dog barked at the child who was crying hard.
- (f) The big dog barked at the child who the mother was chasing.
- (g) The teacher returned the tests that she had corrected.
- (h) The teacher returned the tests that counted for 50 % of the grade.
- (i) The searchers rescued the man who had lost his way.
- (j) The searchers rescued the man whom the dogs had found.

#### Discussion: Discovery Activity 2

Sentences a, d, e, h, and i: relative pronoun functioning as subject of the verb phrase  
 Sentences b, c, f, g, and j: relative pronoun functioning as object of the verb phrase.

From the standpoint of formal prescriptive grammar, in Sentence f, the correct form of the relative pronoun should be *whom*, as in Sentence j, because the relative pronoun is in object position.

***Why is it difficult to distinguish between who and whom?***

#### 10.1.2.1 Who Versus Whom

As we have already seen, *who* and *whom* are alternate forms, the choice of which depends on the function of the relative pronoun. It is the only relative pronoun to

have two forms. In formal prescriptive English, *who* is appropriate when the relative pronoun is the **subject** of the relative clause. *Whom* must be used whenever it is the **object** of the relative clause.

Today, especially in spoken and less formal written English, *who* is commonly used as both the subject and object relative pronoun. Because the distinction is becoming less common, both native and non-native speakers frequently have difficulty remembering and using the two forms.

Another reason for the confusion between *who* and *whom* is that all relative pronouns occur at the beginning of the relative clause, regardless of their function. In not understanding clearly the difference between the two forms, speakers may substitute *whom* for *who* when the relative pronoun is actually the subject of the relative clause, rather than the object.

If *who(m)* is followed by a verb phrase, this relative pronoun is functioning as the **subject**. If *who(m)* is followed by a noun or noun phrase, then this relative pronoun is functioning as the **object**. If there is a preposition before *who(m)*, then formal English requires *whom* since the relative pronoun is the object of this preposition. In spoken and informal written English, however, many native speakers would use *who* in all instances.

One way for native speakers and learners of English to evaluate whether or not to use *whom* or *who* is to try the sentence with *who* left out. If *who* can be omitted, then the relative pronoun is in object position and *whom* is the correct formal form:

The big dog barked at the child *who* was crying hard.

\*The big dog barked at the child was crying hard.

The searchers rescued the man *whom* the dogs had found.

The searchers rescued the man the dogs had found.

We will discuss the omission of relative pronouns in greater length after the next Discovery Activity.

For extra practice in deciding between *who* and *whom*, try Discovery Activity 3 with these teacher-created sentences and then check your answers in the Answer Key. If you feel confident in your ability to distinguish the two forms, you may want to skip this Discovery Activity.

### Discovery Activity 3: Choosing Between *Who* and *Whom* in Relative Clauses

Complete each sentence with either *who* or *whom*.

- (a) The doctors \_\_\_\_\_ had completed their training in Boston earned the most.
- (b) The bus driver \_\_\_\_\_ had had his license revoked was soon back on the job.
- (c) The movie director to \_\_\_\_\_ the studio had granted \$10 million went over budget.
- (d) The little girl \_\_\_\_\_ is holding her mother's hand is walking across the street.
- (e) The business people \_\_\_\_\_ have become the most successful work long hours.
- (f) The people \_\_\_\_\_ the drug company chose for its drug trials were seriously ill.
- (g) The president and CEO of the company \_\_\_\_\_ the board had recently elected resigned yesterday.
- (h) The department elected a new chairperson \_\_\_\_\_ was known for her leadership abilities.
- (i) The suit Kelly bought is being altered by a tailor \_\_\_\_\_ the store had recommended.
- (j) The students completed evaluations on the teacher \_\_\_\_\_ was teaching the course that semester.

### *When do we use the relative pronoun whose?*

#### 10.1.2.2 Whose

The relative pronoun *whose* refers to the possession of something by someone. It signals a possessive relationship between two nouns. The relative pronoun *whose* can occur in both essential and nonessential clauses.

The girl *whose* book I borrowed isn't here today.

Here *whose* tells us that the book belongs to the girl.

A rule of thumb for understanding the use of *whose* is to consider whether *his*, *her*, *its*, *their*, or a possessive form of the noun (apostrophe 's) can be substituted:

Eva is the student *whose* grades were the highest in the class.

*Her* grades were the highest in the class.

*Eva's* grades were the highest in the class.

### ***Can we use whose for people and things?***

In traditional prescriptive English, *whose* is considered appropriate only for use with persons and animate objects. The construction noun phrase + *of which* is used to refer to possession with inanimate objects:

The tsunami, *the effects of which* are still felt, was devastating.

The prancing putti, winged horses, naked youths, and bare buttocks scattered on them are regarded as anomalies in a culture the artistic legacy of which is predominantly Christian and Orthodox. [Paroma, C. (2013). Vision, transformation, and the Veroli Casket. *Oxford Art Journal*, 36(3), 325–344.]

This noun phrase + *of which* is primarily found in formal written English. Native speakers will generally use *whose* with inanimate objects or use an alternate construction:

The tsunami was devastating and its effects are still felt.	<b>alternative construction</b>
The effects of the devastating tsunami are still felt.	<b>alternative construction</b>
The tsunami, <i>whose effects</i> are still felt, was devastating.	<b>whose</b>

- ***Learner difficulties***

Learners sometimes use *that* in nonessential relative clauses. Although native speakers commonly interchange *that* or *which* in essential relative clauses, they do not use *that* in nonessential relative clauses.

\*My friend, *that* comes from my country, has helped me a lot.

Learners may use also *which* when referring to people. While we can use *that* to refer to both things and people in informal English, we use *which* only for things, never people.

\*I have had many friends *which* are important to me.

Another area of confusion occurs with *whose* and *who's*. The two sound identical in spoken speech but are very different:

Cindy is the girl <i>who's</i> living with Pam.	<b>contraction of who + is</b>
The cashier sold sand buckets to the mother <i>whose</i> children had forgotten theirs.	<b>relative pronoun</b>

### 10.1.3 Omission of Relative Pronouns

#### *When can we omit a relative pronoun?*

As you have already seen, an important point in understanding relative clauses is determining whether or not the relative pronoun is functioning as the subject or the object of the relative clause. This is underscored by the fact that we can, at times, omit the relative pronoun. When the relative pronoun *who*, *whom*, *that*, or *which* is the **object** of an **essential** relative clause, we can omit the relative pronoun. (The relative pronoun *whose* cannot be omitted.)

---

#### **Example: Omission of Relative Pronoun Possible**

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They bought the house	<i>that</i>	everyone liked.	<i>That</i> is the object of <i>liked</i> . <i>They</i> is the subject of <i>liked</i> .
They bought the house	Ø	everyone liked.	<i>That</i> can be omitted because it is functioning as the object in an essential relative clause.

We cannot omit the relative pronoun in the following sentences because the relative pronouns are the **subjects** of the verbs:

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#### **Examples: Omission of Relative Pronoun Not Possible**

---

Susan wanted the book	<i>that</i>	was a bestseller.	<i>That</i> is the subject of <i>was</i> and cannot be omitted.
*Susan wanted the book	Ø	was a bestseller.	
The teacher	<i>who</i>	taught us has retired.	<i>Who</i> is the subject of <i>taught</i> and cannot be omitted.
*The teacher	Ø	taught us has retired.	

Discover Activity 4 provides an introduction to omitting relative pronouns. If you feel confident in your knowledge of when and when not to omit relative pronouns, move on to Discovery Activity 5.

**Discovery Activity 4: Omitting Relative Pronouns**

Decide whether or not the relative pronoun can be omitted in the sentences.

- (a) Last week Gina Giarda stood before her fans who had come from as far away as Japan to applaud her success.
- (b) Gina Giarda has become a performer who every music lover recognizes.
- (c) Music was something that she had loved from her earliest days.
- (d) When barely more than a toddler, Gina learned to play the violin from her parents who were talented musicians.
- (e) When she was eight, she received a prize that made her famous in classical music circles.
- (f) Later she began to write songs that she performed all over the world.

Discovery Activities 5 and 6 are more challenging than Discovery Activity 4. Discovery Activity 5 asks you to practice identifying omitted relative pronouns in isolated, teacher-created sentences. Discovery Activity 6 builds on Discovery Activity 5 and asks you to identify relative clauses with omitted relative pronouns. These relative clauses come from authentic excerpts. Answers for both Discovery Activities can be found in the Answer Key at the end of this chapter.

**Discovery Activity 5: Identifying Relative Clauses Without Relative Pronouns**

Look at the sentences below in which the relative pronouns have been omitted.

1. Underline the relative clauses.
2. Decide which relative pronoun was omitted and indicate where it should go.

*Example:*

that

Evan sent me a letter  $\wedge$  I forgot to answer.

- (a) The textbook Nora bought cost over \$100.
- (b) The new flight attendants the airline had hired quit last week.
- (c) The children got all the toys they asked for.
- (d) He finally met the woman he wanted to marry.
- (e) The animal shelter has many wonderful animals you can adopt.
- (f) The movie the kids rented was PG-13.
- (g) The science teacher all the students love is retiring at the end of the year.
- (h) Tina bought the car my brother was selling.

In completing this activity, you may have noticed that you could use *that* in every sentence. As we discussed earlier, *that* is considered acceptable for referring to people in spoken and informal written English whereas in formal English, *who/whom* should be used.

Note also that many speakers use *that* and *which* interchangeably when referring to animals or things, even though formal prescriptive grammar requires *that* in essential clauses.

The next Discovery Activity provides an opportunity for identifying relative clauses with or without relative pronouns. You may find this activity more challenging than the previous two Discovery Activities.

### **Discovery Activity 6: Identifying Relative Clauses With or Without Relative Pronouns**

Look at the sentences below in which the relative pronouns have been omitted.

1. Identify the relative clauses. Be careful; remember that in some sentences the relative pronoun has been omitted.

#### **A.**

The effort is the force that moves the lever. The load is the weight the lever is trying to move. The fulcrum is the pivot, the point on which the lever moves. [Simple Machines: Meet the levers. (2005). *Kids Discover*, 15(4).]

#### **B.**

All recent hunter-gatherers are modern human beings (*Homo sapiens*) whose cultures are the products of long histories. [Gould, R. (2005). Lessons from the aborigines. The discovery of Lucy. *Dig*, 7(4), 18.]

#### **C.**

Mainly, they foraged for plants they could bring back to camp and process in some way to make them edible ... Then there were appliances—tools like stone seed grinding slabs that were too heavy to be carried easily from place to place. These were usually left at campsites that were revisited again and again... While fire is not an object, it is one of the most important kinds of technology we find among modern-day and historic hunter-gatherers. [Gould, R. (2005). Lessons from the aborigines. The discovery of Lucy. *Dig*, 7(4), 19–20.]

#### **D.**

Maddie remembers all too vividly an unfortunate faux pas I committed after I managed to carry on a lengthy conversation with a dark-haired girl I repeatedly called Claire, even though, according to my mortified daughter, Rachel (her actual name) bore absolutely no resemblance to Claire. [Murphy, A. P. (2004). *The 7 stages of motherhood* (p. 193). New York: Alfred A. Knopf.]

The next Discovery Activity is intended for extra practice. If you had difficulties with Discovery Activity 6, you should also do Discovery Activity 7. If you had no problems, continue on to the next section.

### **Discovery Activity 7: Identifying Relative Clauses With or Without Relative Pronouns**

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Mark the relative pronouns.
2. Discuss what each one is modifying and whether it is in subject or object position.

#### **A.**

In the Arthurian world, the most dangerous foes came in the least likely guises. Heroic knights who slew giants, wizards and even dragons were often entrapped by the frailest maidens. [Day, D. (1999). *King Arthur* (p. 63). New York: Barnes & Noble.]

#### **B.**

The sword Excalibur was the gift of the Lady of the Lake to King Arthur ... Its jeweled scabbard had a magical property that prevented the warrior who wore it from being wounded. [Day, D. (1999). *King Arthur* (p. 82). New York: Barnes & Noble.]

#### **C.**

Arthur's sword had a scabbard which would not permit any weapon to draw his blood ... Arthur was betrayed by Morgan who stole both sword and scabbard, replacing them with counterfeit versions. [Day, D. (1999). *King Arthur* (p. 86). New York: Barnes & Noble.]

#### **D.**

Camera and light crews followed him, along with people from costume and makeup, and the two extras with whom Marla Valentine had recently conversed. [Graham, H. (2005). *Killing Kelly* (p. 17). Don Mills, Ontario: Mira.]

#### **E.**

Faulty listening is often responsible for the letter that needs to be retyped time and again, the team that cannot produce results, or the physician who faces a malpractice suit. [Shafir, R. (2001). *The Zen of listening* (p. 14). Wheaton, IL: Quest Books.]

### **10.1.4 Building Longer Complex Clauses**

As we saw in Chap. 9, more than one adverbial clause can occur in a sentence. Similarly, more than one relative clause can occur in a sentence:

main clause	relative clause 1	relative clause 2
I read a book	that won a prize,	which is awarded yearly.

Relative clauses and adverbial clauses can also be found within the same sentence:

subordinate clause	main clause	relative clause
While I was reading,	I drank the tea	that you had given me.

The next Discovery Activity provides practice in identifying different types of clauses within a sentence. Because it not only includes relative clauses but also adverbial clauses, this is a good review of both this chapter and Chap. 9.

### Discovery Activity 8: Longer Complex Clauses

Look at the excerpts, which all include more than one type of subordinate clause.

1. Locate the relative clauses and adverbial clauses.
2. Label each clause.

*Example:*

While they were talking to Jane who lived nearby, I was watching the game.

While they were talking to Jane, who lived nearby, I was watching the game.

subordinate clause (adverbial time), relative clause (who modifies Jane)

**A.**

She pushed open the door and battled her way through bucolic humanity to the side bar where the cast and crew who were allowed to stay out after ten o'clock had gathered in a dismal group. [Cookman, L. (2006). *Murder in Steeple Martin*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)]

**B.**

I know a man who runs an important media business who suffers terribly before he gives a speech, who in fact for 20 years devoted considerable energy and ingenuity to successfully avoiding ever having to make one ... [Noonan, P. (1991). *Simply speaking* (p. 6). New York: Regan.]

**C.**

... in winter waist-high snowfields transform the western steppe into an immense featureless sea that billows and swirls when the Arctic wind whips down from the Siberian tundra. [Kelly, J. (2005). *The great mortality: An intimate history of the black death, the most devastating plague of all time* (pp. 29–30). New York: HarperCollins.]

**D.**

Because he was certainly not busy enough writing newspapers, creating the library system, and inventing various scientific innovations, Franklin also composed classical music and learned how to play the violin, the harp, and the guitar as well, while also becoming one of the first people who learned to play chess in the American colonies. [Johnson, J. (2016). *The Revolutionary War*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)]

## 10.2 Section 2: Relative Adverbs

when	where	why
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In addition to relative pronouns, there are also other words that can introduce relative clauses. These words are called relative adverbs. They are called relative adverbs because, like many adverbs, *when*, *where*, and *why* refer to noun phrases of time, place, and reason, respectively. Very formal written English prefers the use of *in* or *on which* rather than *where*.

*When* can refer to any time and *where* to any place. *Why* is restricted and must be preceded by a noun phrase with the word *reason*. At times the noun phrase with *reason* is omitted but remains implicitly understood.

Examples: Relative Adverbs

Ian remembered the day <i>when</i> he forgot to set his alarm clock.	time: the day	<b>when</b> —used to modify noun phrase of time (e.g., day, week, hour, minute, month, year)
Is this the house <i>where</i> George Washington slept?	place: the house	<b>where</b> —used to modify noun phrase of place, location, or space
I need to know the reason <i>why</i> you were late. I need to know <i>why</i> you were late.	reason	<b>why</b> —used to modify the noun <i>reason</i> , which may be omitted but there implicitly

***Instead of the relative adverb when, can we use relative pronouns to express time and introduce a relative clause?***

### 10.2.1 *Relative Pronouns Instead of Relative Adverbs*

The relative pronouns *that* or *on* + *which* can be substituted for the relative adverb *when*:

Ian remembered the day *when* he forgot to set his alarm clock. Ian remembered the day *that* he forgot to set his alarm clock. Ian remembered the day *on which* he forgot to set his alarm clock.

#### ***Are there any relative pronouns we can use in place of the relative adverb where?***

The relative pronouns *which* and *that* can be substituted for the relative adverb *where*. When *which* or *that* is used, a preposition of place must be included, usually *in* or *on*.

Is this the house *where* George Washington slept?  
 Is this the house *in which* George Washington slept?  
 Is this the house *which* George Washington slept *in*?  
 Is this the house *that* George Washington slept *in*?

The preposition can come before *which* or at the end of the clause. Placing the preposition before *which* is more formal. With *that*, the preposition comes at the end of the clause.

Placing a preposition at the end of the clause is frowned upon by the most traditional of grammarians but is common in both informal and formal English.

Using the construction *in which* or *on which* can sound wordy and/or pretentious in informal English but is considered the more appropriate form in formal written English:

In most of the classrooms in which Somali Bantu focal group students were enrolled, there were two to three other refugee students present. [Roxas, K. (2011). Tales from the front line: Teachers' responses to Somali Bantu refugee students. (p. 521). *Urban Education*, 46 (30), 513–546.]

***In Chap. 9 we learned that where is used to introduce adverbial clauses. Now we are seeing that where can be used to introduce relative clauses. How can we tell the difference?***

#### **10.2.1.1 *Where as Relative Adverb Versus Subordinator***

With *where*, we see again how form does not guarantee of function. We can understand the two different grammatical uses of *where* by looking at sentence structure. Compare these two sentences:

We went *where* we could eat a nice lunch.  
 We met in the Thai restaurant *where* we like to eat lunch.

In the first sentence, *where* is functioning as a subordinator of an adverbial clause of place; *where* is modifying the verb *went*. That is, *where* is telling us something about where the main action of the verb occurred.

In the second sentence, *where* is functioning as a relative adverb to introduce a relative clause. Here *where* is modifying the noun phrase *the Thai restaurant*. It is telling us something about the place itself. You may recall that a relative clause is also called an adjective clause because it modifies a noun or noun phrase, as we see in this sentence.

Another way to examine the two sentences is to see whether or not we can substitute a preposition of place + *which* for *where*. For these sentences, let's try to substitute *in which*:

- \*We went *in which* we could eat a nice lunch.
- We met in the Thai restaurant *in which* we like to eat lunch.

We can only substitute *in which* for *where* in our second sentence. Now let's try this "test" with two other sentences using *on which*:

- They've altered the stage *where* the band played last time.
- They've altered the stage *on which* the band played last time.
- The band plays *where* they find gigs.

- \*The band plays *on which* they find gigs.

Again, we see that substituting *on which* only works when *where* is functioning as a relative adverb.

Discovery Activity 9 has two parts. After you complete Part I, check your answers in the Answer Key and then complete Part II.

### Discovery Activity 9: Relative Adverbs

Part I focuses on identifying relative adverbs. Part II focuses on substituting other words or phrases for a relative adverb.

#### Part I

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Mark the relative adverbs.
2. Identify what the relative adverb is modifying.

#### A.

When he was a safe distance from the gatekeeper he trotted up a ramp, where he could see what was going on inside this strange and interesting place. [Cleary, B. (1964/1992). *Ribsy* (p. 121). New York: Camelot.]

**B.**

“Things are different now ... There may be reasons why I have to get out of town.”  
 [Thompson, M. (2013). *Hurricane Season*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)]

**C.**

Anyone who stands at an urban intersection or in the lobby of a large office building soon senses some pattern in the migration of people. There are times when they flow together, congregating in dense masses, and times when they disperse and flow apart. [Barnlund, D. (1987). Verbal self-disclosure: Topics, targets, depth. In L. Luce & E. Smith (Eds.), *Towards internationalism* (2nd ed., p. 147). Cambridge, MA: Newbury.]

**D.**

Usually they filmed in the studio ... Tonight, however, they were out at Hibiscus Point, a man-made private development where they had been all day, filling every exterior shot they could in a matter of hours. [Graham, H. (2005). *Killing Kelly* (p. 14). Don Mills, Ontario: Mira.]

**Part II**

Sometimes it is possible to rewrite the sentence using a relative pronoun instead of a relative adverb.

1. Look back at the relative adverbs you identified.
2. Consider whether you can rewrite the sentence using a relative pronoun instead of the relative adverb. (If you can do so, you may need to add other words.)

***What about adverbial clauses of time with when and relative clauses introduced by when?***

**10.2.1.2 When**

As we saw with *where*, *when* modifies a noun phrase of time when functioning as a relative adverb:

Our street flooded the year *when* we had refinished the basement.

In this example, *when* is modifying *the year*. In the next example, we see *when* functioning as a subordinator and introducing the adverbial time clause, *it rains*.

The river sometimes floods *when* it rains.

This concludes Section 10.2 and we now turn to the last section on reduced relative clauses.

## 10.3 Section 3: Reduced Relative Clauses

If the relative clause has the relative pronoun *who*, *that*, or *which* and the relative pronoun is functioning as the **subject** of the relative clause, we can usually reduce the clause. Reduced relative clauses are different than relative clauses with an omitted relative pronoun. You can think of a reduced relative clause as a short form of a relative clause. We call this reduced form a *phrase*.

*How can a relative clause be reduced?*

### 10.3.1 Reducing Relative Clauses

Reduced relative clauses are relative clauses that do not have a full verb phrase. We can only reduce a relative clause in which the relative *pronoun* refers to the **subject** of the relative clause. To reduce a relative clause:

- If the main verb in the relative clause is in simple present or simple past, drop the relative pronoun and change the main verb to the present participle form.
- If the main verb in the relative clause is a part of a progressive verb phrase and thereby already a present participle, drop the relative pronoun and the *be* auxiliary.
- If *be* is functioning as a main verb in the clause and is followed by a prepositional phrase, drop both the relative pronoun and *be*.

#### Examples: Reduced Relative Clauses

As I walked on the beach, the cold wave <i>that broke</i> on the shore shocked my bare feet.	• no auxiliary; main verb irregular past tense
As I walked on the beach, the cold wave <i>breaking</i> on the shore shocked my bare feet.	• <i>that</i> dropped; main verb changed to present participle
The young man <i>who was dancing</i> all night lives next door to me.	• <i>be</i> auxiliary + main verb already present participle
The young man <i>dancing</i> all night lives next door to me.	• <i>who</i> and <i>was</i> dropped
The cat <i>that was on his keyboard</i> played with the computer monitor.	• <i>be</i> main verb, followed by prepositional phrase
The cat <i>on the keyboard</i> played with the computer monitor.	• <i>that</i> and <i>was</i> dropped

*What happens with a passive relative clauses?*

### 10.3.2 Reducing Passive Relative Clauses

Passive relative clauses can also be reduced. If the passive verb phrase is in present or past tense, drop the relative pronoun and *be* auxiliary. If the passive verb phrase is in a progressive tense, drop the first *be* auxiliary:

#### Examples: Reduced Passive Relative Clauses

The food <i>that was prepared</i> by the new catering service is very good.	• past passive
The food <i>prepared</i> by the new catering service is very good.	• <i>that</i> and <i>was</i> dropped
The landscape <i>that is being installed</i> now will soon be mature.	• <i>be</i> auxiliary (time, present) + <i>be</i> auxiliary (aspect, progressive), main verb already past participle
The landscape <i>being installed</i> now will soon be mature.	• <i>that</i> and <i>is</i> dropped

Discovery Activity 10 provides practice in reducing relative clauses, using teacher-made sentences and prepares you for the next activity, Discovery Activity 11, which uses authentic excerpts.

#### Discovery Activity 10: Reducing Relative Clauses

Look at the sentences and reduce the relative clause in each sentence.

*Example:*

She has a sister ~~who is~~ living in Alaska.  
 The hockey player ~~who was~~ injured by the puck went to the hospital.

- The cat went after the dog that tried to chase her.
- The trophy that was awarded at the end of the season went to the best new player.
- I have a friend who hopes to get on reality TV.
- The movie star who is on Blair's favorite show graduated from my high school.
- After dark, the boys who were ice skating in the park went home.

Now that you have familiarized yourself with reduced clauses, try Discovery Activity 11 using authentic excerpts.

### Discovery Activity 11: Identifying Reduced Relative Clauses

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline the reduced relative clauses.
2. Give the full form.

*Example:*

The boat, caught in the weeds, couldn't move.

The boat, which was caught in the weeds, couldn't move.

#### A.

Most of us are not great leaders speaking at great moments. Most of us are businessmen rolling out next year's financial goals, or teachers at a state convention making the case for a new curriculum, or nurses at a union meeting explaining the impact of managed care on the hospitals in which we work. [Noonan, P. (1991). *Simply speaking* (p. 47). New York: Regan.]

#### B.

She saw people sitting under a mildewed bus shelter, others walking a path along the side of the road... Closer to the city, they followed a truck laying down a fog of blue smoke through a quivering exhaust pipe... The Vegas lived in a sprawling, flat-roofed tri-level built around 1950 for someone with a great deal of money. [Parker, B. (2005). *Suspicion of rage* (pp. 39–40). New York: Penguin.]

**What do ESL/EFL students find difficult about relative clauses?**

- **Learner difficulties**

Relative clauses pose a number of problems for language learners. First, languages differ in the construction and placement of relative clauses. In Korean, Japanese, and Chinese, for instance, a relative clause comes before the noun it is modifying and there are no relative pronouns. Learners who come from these and similar languages may have difficulty remembering to put a relative clause after the noun phrase it is modifying.

Low-proficiency learners have trouble remembering which relative pronoun to use. In helping learners decide which relative pronoun to use, have them ask themselves questions such as:

- Does the relative pronoun refer back to a person or to a thing?
- Does the relative pronoun refer to a possessive relationship?

Another area of difficulty is that in some, but not all relative clauses, the relative pronoun may be omitted. ESL/EFL students sometimes omit the relative pronoun in sentences where it cannot be omitted:

\*I like Ms. Jeffers because she is a teacher always helps me.

A related problem for many learners is understanding the meaning of relative clauses without introductory relative pronouns.

Another trouble spot is the tendency of some ESL/EFL students, often as a result of transfer from their native language, to use *what* in place of *that*.

\*That is the book **what** I want.

ESL/EFL students may also reduce nonessential relative clauses when only essential relative clauses can be reduced:

\*Annette is working for a company, going broke.

Finally, learners of English may use a relative pronoun and or relative clause where one does not belong because a different structure is required:

\*There are some problems caused by culture shock, **which are** anxiety, depression, and ill health.

Like other grammar elements we have discussed, learning to use relative clauses correctly requires practice. After learners have become familiar with the structure of relative clauses, writing assignments that encourage the production of relative clauses in context are essential.

## 10.4 Summary

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### The Relative Pronouns and Relative Adverbs

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**Relative pronouns: pronouns that introduce relative clauses; relate clauses or phrases to noun phrase or pronoun**

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who	person (or animate) subject
whom	person, object
that	person (informal) thing, concept, idea
which	thing, concept, idea
whose	possession
of which	possession (formal, inanimate)

**Relative adverbs: adverbs that introduce relative clauses; relate clauses or phrases to specific types of noun phrases (time, place, reason)**

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when	time
------	------

(continued)

(continued)

**The Relative Pronouns and Relative Adverbs**

where	place
why	reason

**Essential Versus Nonessential Relative Clauses**

essential relative clause	nonessential relative clause
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• specifies something necessary to the meaning of the clause</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provides additional or supporting information</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identifies or clarifies a specific class or category of something</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• extra information not essential to the meaning of the clause</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cannot be left out without changing the meaning of the clause</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• if left out, the meaning of the main clause does not change</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no commas offsetting relative clause</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• commas offsetting relative clause</li> </ul>

**Relative Pronouns: Which Versus That**

<i>which</i>	<i>that</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• almost never used with people or animals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• commonly used for people, animals, things</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• can follow a preposition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cannot follow a preposition</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• used in both essential and nonessential relative clauses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• generally used only with essential relative clauses</li> </ul>

Traditional prescriptive grammar allows only *that* in essential clauses and only *which* in nonessential clauses. Native speakers use *that* and *which* interchangeably in nonessential clauses.

## 10.5 Practice Activities

### *Activity 1: Forming Relative Clauses*

Exercises on relative clauses for ESL/EFL students often consist of sentence combining. In such exercises students are given two sentences and asked to combine them into a relative clause. These exercises are useful in helping learners understand the structure of relative clauses.

1. Combine the following sentences into relative clauses.
2. Discuss whether the relative pronoun is functioning as the subject or object of the relative clause verb phrase.

*Example:*

That is a portrait of George Washington. George Washington was the first president of the United States

That is a portrait of George Washington *who* was the first president of the United States.  
*Who* is the subject of *was*.

- (a) Nellie and Tom have a car. The car has over 100,000 miles.
- (b) Samantha bought the dress. She liked the dress.
- (c) She showed me a photo of her son. Her son is in the army.
- (d) Karen has a friend. Her friend is a drummer in a rock band.
- (e) The new movie theater opens next month. The new movie theater holds 600 people.
- (f) We saw a person. The person is a famous actress.
- (g) The teacher told stories. The stories were funny.
- (h) Her uncle is a politician. Her uncle is famous
- (i) Marta is one of my closest friends. I've known Marta for eight years.
- (j) The animal sanctuary has been famous for many years. It has received a large donation.

### **Activity 2: Identifying Relative Pronouns and Relative Adverbs**

1. Mark the relative pronouns and relative adverbs in the excerpts.
2. See if you can tell whether they are essential or nonessential.

#### **A.**

It's an old Henny Penny supermarket that we renovated in 1976 when Bicentennial money was wandering around like helpless buffalo, and it houses seventeen little shops... and a watering hole called The Barre. This is one of those quiet little bistros where you aren't driven crazy by the constant ringing of cash registers. [Keillor, G. (1993/1982). What did we do wrong? In R. Baker (Ed.), *Russell Baker's book of American humor* (pp. 41–48). New York: Norton.]

#### **B.**

What invading species mostly don't do, it turns out, is out-compete native species. Take the case of the American gray squirrel, which was introduced in England in 1876. Dubbed "tree rat" by its detractors, the invader has made a pest of itself in its new land, where it is in the habit of eating flower bulbs and birds' eggs ... [Brudick, A. (2005, May). The truth about invasive species. *Discover*. Retrieved from <http://discovermagazine.com/2005/may/cover>]

#### **C.**

But in a period of mass death, when enormous amounts of money and property were suddenly being orphaned, notaries, who made out wills and other legal documents, played an essential role in the maintenance of civil order. [Kelly, J. (2005). *The great mortality: An intimate history of the Black Death, the most devastating plague of all time* (p. 91). New York: HarperCollins.]

#### **D.**

"Hope and I heard stories about a monster who lived in the forest, a creature that lived in the forest and ate everything that walked or flew, which is why there is no game in it. [McKinley, R. (1978). *Beauty: A retelling of Beauty & the Beast* (p. 76). New York: HarperTrophy.]

**Activity 3: Following the Rules**

According to formal prescriptive grammar, there are incorrect relative pronouns in the excerpts below.

1. Find and underline the “incorrect” relative pronouns.
2. Explain why each pronoun is “incorrect” from the perspective of formal prescriptive grammar.

**A.**

“It never occurred to us that the killer could be someone so charming ...” “Or so handsome ...” “sometimes it’s who you least expect.” Leatrice cleared her throat. “Appearances can be deceiving” [Durharm, L. (2005). *Better off wed* (pp. 240–241). New York: Avon Books.]

**B.**

A hundred miles around and guarded by twelve great gates, the city had blue-water canals, fire brigades, hospitals, and fine broad streets lined with houses upon whose doors were listed the names of every occupant. [Kelly, J. (2005). *The great mortality: An intimate history of the Black Death, the most devastating plague of all time* (p. 33). New York: HarperCollins.]

**Activity 4: Identifying Relative Clauses without Relative Pronouns**

1. Identify the relative clauses with omitted relative pronouns.
2. Insert the omitted relative pronoun. More than one may be possible. If so, explain why.

**A.**

Before the informal talk could turn into a news conference she had no intention of giving, she slipped into her black wool coat. [Heggan, C. (2005). *The search* (p. 9). Ontario CA: Mira.]

**B.**

The country was flush with military success, awash in French war booty, and best of all, England had a king it could love again... [Edward II] was... quite handsome, a trait he shared with his son and successor ... [Kelly, J. (2005). *The great mortality: An intimate history of the Black Death, the most devastating plague of all time* (p. 184). New York: HarperCollins.]

**C.**

Anxious as she was to find a clue to her husband’s whereabouts, she was equally afraid of the answers she might unearth. For more than 8 months, doubt had simmered behind the anger she wore like armor. [Thompson, C. (2004). *Fatal error* (p. 135). New York: Leisure Books.]

**D.**

So I went for a hike with a crowd of exceedingly healthy people I had never seen before in my life. It was an easy walk along paths that meandered through the cloud-grass meadows ... [Asaro, C. (1995). *Primary inversion* (p. 157). New York: TOR.]

**Activity 5: Identifying the Clauses in a Complex Sentence**

The following excerpts contain examples of adverbial and relative clauses.

1. Label the adverbial clauses AC.
  - Mark the subordinators.
2. Label the relative clauses RC.
  - Mark the relative pronouns.

**A.**

While the sparkling twenty-somethings in *The Decameron* are fictional, the account of the plague that precedes their conversation in the church is not. [Kelly, J. (2005). *The great mortality: An intimate history of the Black Death, the most devastating plague of all time* (p. 105). New York: HarperCollins.]

**B.**

The upheaval in cosmology that took place in the 1920s was unusual because the established model of an eternal universe came under simultaneous attack on both fronts. [Singh, S. (2005). *Big bang: The origin of the universe* (p. 268). New York: HarperCollins.]

**C.**

When I was a college student in the seventies, Transcendental Meditation had become a vehicle of self-discovery and a discipline that brought welcome clarity to eighteen credit hours of graduate work and two part-time jobs. [Shafir, R. (2001). *The Zen of listening* (p. 6). Wheaton, IL: Quest Books.]

**D.**

Once Mr. Quinn's classroom was identified as the site for the study, I asked him to help me identify five native speakers of English who represented a range along a continuum in their abilities to independently and successfully complete a rigorous, linguistically and academically demanding project like the Senior Exhibition. Since Mr. Quinn had taught the same class of students the previous year, he had sufficient experience with them and their work to guide his decision making. [Enright, K.A. (2010). Language and literacy for a new mainstream (p. 92). *American Educational Research Journal*, 48(1), 80-118.]

**Activity 6: Identifying Reduced Relative Clauses**

Underline the reduced relative clauses. Give the full form.

**A.**

Eragon's stay is disrupted by news of an Urgal army approaching through the dwarves' tunnel. [Paolini, C. (2005). *Eldest: Inheritance book 2* (p. xvi). New York: Alfred A. Knopf.]

**B.**

I was intrigued by one display at the interpretive center, lying flat in a glass case. It was a facsimile reproduction of a journal entry made in May 1850 by an Oregon Trail pioneer from Indiana, Margaret Frink, describing the scene from the rise above the river that I had just left. [Buck, R. (2015). *The Oregon Trail: A new American journey*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)]

**C.**

A new study by this group, presented at the 2005 World Garlic Symposium in April, found that when heart patients who were already taking cholesterol-lowering statin drugs added aged garlic extract supplements to their regimens, they showed additional improvement over simply taking the medication alone. [Downey, M. (2005). Garlic. *Better Nutrition*, 6, 8.]

**Activity 7: Ungrammatical Sentences**

1. Look at the following sentences.
2. Explain why they are ungrammatical according to Standard American English.
  - (a) The mountain who is the highest in the world is Mt. Everest.
  - (b) The book what I liked best was *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*.
  - (c) The man, which my sister decided to marry, she met on the Internet.

**Activity 8: Longer Complex Clauses**

This activity reviews different types of clauses we have explored so far: subordinate clauses and reduced subordinate clauses from Chap. 9, and relative clauses from this chapter.

1. Identify the different types of clauses.
2. If a subordinate or relative clause is reduced, provide the full form.
3. If a relative pronoun is omitted, provide it. (There may be more than one possibility.)

**A.**

Fully grown mules tend to have the height and musculature of their mother, while inheriting the physique and more nimble legs of their jack father ... When mature, the hybrid offspring weigh as much as seven hundred pounds less than their mother, giving the finished mule an extraordinary strength-to-weight ratio and agility far beyond its roots in the horse. [Buck, R. (2015). *The Oregon Trail: A new American journey*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)]

**B.**

They knew that the bustling tent cities and outfitting depots mushrooming around the jumping-off towns created market conditions favorable to them ... Once safely ferried across the Missouri, the wagon trains disappeared beyond the bluffs into a prairie wilderness that was, literally, a no-man's land, a vaguely mapped "Northwest Territory," or "Indian Country," large parts of which were disputed by Mexico, Great Britain, and the United States. [Buck, R. (2015). *The Oregon Trail: A new American journey*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)]

**Activity 9: Error Analysis**

The following excerpts were written by ESL students. There are relative clause errors. Because these excerpts have not been edited, there are other errors also.

1. What errors are the learners making?
2. What teaching suggestions can you offer? Focus **only** on the problems the learners are having with **relative clauses**.

**A.**

I think that a hobby, which is reading a book, is a good hobby for children. It doesn't have to be a difficult book. There are lots of people still do not know how to pronounce all words.

**B.**

In my reading, described the story of the immigrant family, I found the message of hope. The author said that there are some difficulties faced by immigrants caused by language, which is the inability to communicate with the host country people. There are also other problems that are lack of ability to get a good job, or missing family, or feeling everything strange.

**10.6 Answer Key****Discussion: Discovery Activity 1***Excerpt A*

**which** was quickly followed by three others on the island; nonessential  
**which** is approximately the size of West Virginia; nonessential

*Excerpt B*

**that** spread as far away as Atlanta and Birmingham; essential

*Excerpt C*

**whose** name Gail had already forgotten; nonessential

*Excerpt D*

**that** was my own first language; essential  
**who** was working this land; nonessential

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 3**

who	Sentences (a), (b), (d), (e), (h), and (j)
whom	Sentences (c), (f), (g), and (i)

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 4**

- The relative pronouns can only be omitted in Sentences (b), (c), and (f).
- They can be omitted in these sentences because they are the objects of the verb phrases.
- In Sentence b, the formal form of the relative pronoun is *whom*, not *who* because it is in object position.

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 5**

In very formal English, *whom* is the preferred object relative pronoun. *Who* is commonly used for both subject and object position. *That* is also used to refer to people, although frowned upon in formal English.

- The textbook that Nora bought cost over \$100.
- The new flight attendants whom/who/that the airline had hired quit last week.
- The children got all the toys that they asked for.
- He finally met the woman whom/who/that he wanted to marry.
- The animal shelter has many wonderful animals that you can adopt.
- The movie that the kids rented was PG-13.
- The science teacher whom/who/that all the students love is retiring at the end of the year.
- Tina bought the car that my brother was selling.

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 6***Excerpt A*

- *that* moves the lever
- the lever is trying to move; relative pronoun *that* omitted
- *on which* the lever moves; preposition *on* necessary before *which* to specify place or location

*Excerpt B*

- *whose* cultures are the products of long histories

*Excerpt C*

- they could bring back to camp and process; relative pronoun *that* omitted
- *that* were too heavy to be carried easily from place to place
- *that* were revisited again and again
- we find among modern day ...; relative pronoun *that* omitted

*Excerpt D*

- I committed; relative pronoun *that* omitted
- a dark-haired girl I repeatedly called Claire; relative pronoun *who(m)/that* omitted

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 7***Excerpt A*

who	modifying <i>heroic knights</i> , subject of <i>slew</i>
-----	--

*Excerpt B*

that	modifying <i>magical property</i> , subject of <i>prevented</i>
who	modifying <i>the warrior</i> , subject of <i>wore</i>

*Excerpt C*

which	modifying <i>scabbard</i> , subject of <i>would not permit</i>
who	modifying <i>Morgan</i> , subject of <i>stole</i>

*Excerpt D*

whom	modifying <i>the two extras</i> , object of <i>conversed</i>
------	--

*Excerpt E*

that	modifying <i>the letter</i> , subject of <i>needs to be retyped</i> (passive infinitive)
that	modifying <i>the team</i> , subject of <i>cannot produce results</i>
who	modifying <i>the physician</i> , subject of <i>faces</i>

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 8***Excerpt A*

She pushed open the door and battled her way through bucolic humanity to the side bar *where* (**relative adverb, modifying *the side bar*, introducing relative clause**) the cast and crew *who* (**relative pronoun, modifying *the cast and crew*, introducing relative clause**) were allowed to stay out after ten o'clock had gathered in a dismal group.

*Excerpt B*

I know a man *who* (**relative pronoun, modifying *a man*, introducing relative clause**) runs an important media business *who* (**relative pronoun, modifying *a man*, even though not immediately preceding, introducing relative clause**) suffers terribly *before* (**subordinator introducing adverbial clause of time**) he

gives a speech, *who* (**relative pronoun, modifying a man, even though not immediately preceding, introducing relative clause**) in fact for 20 years devoted considerable energy and ingenuity to successfully avoiding ever having to make one...

*Excerpt C*

In winter waist-high snowfields transform the western steppe into an immense featureless sea *that* (**relative pronoun, modifying an immense featureless sea, introducing relative clause**) billows and swirls *when* (**subordinator introducing adverbial clause of time**) the Arctic wind whips down from the Siberian tundra.

*Excerpt D*

*Because* (**subordinator introducing adverbial clause of reason**) he was certainly not busy enough writing newspapers, creating the library system, and inventing various scientific innovations, Franklin also composed classical music and learned how to play the violin, the harp, and the guitar as well, *while* (**subordinator introducing adverbial clause of time**) also becoming one of the first people *who* (**relative pronoun, modifying first people, introducing relative clause**) learned to play chess in the American colonies.

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 9**

**Part I**

*Excerpt A*

where	modifying <i>a ramp</i>
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*Excerpt B*

why	modifying <i>reasons</i>
-----	--------------------------

*Excerpt C*

when	two instances, both modifying <i>times</i>
------	--

*Excerpt D*

where	modifying <i>a man-made private development</i>
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**Part II***Excerpt A*

*from which* could be substituted for *where*

*Excerpt B*

*that* could be substituted for *why*, although somewhat awkward and less common

*Excerpt C*

*that* could be substituted for both instances of *when*

*Excerpt D*

*at which* or *in which* could be substituted for *where*; more formal and less common

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 10**

- (a) The cat went after the dog ~~that tried~~ *trying* to chase her.
- (b) The trophy ~~that was~~ awarded at the end of the season went to the best new player.
- (c) I have a friend ~~who hopes~~ *hoping* to get on reality TV.
- (d) The movie star ~~who is~~ on Blair's favorite show graduated from my high school.
- (e) After dark, the boys ~~who were~~ ice skating in the park went home.

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 11***Excerpt A*

Most of us are not great leaders (*who are*) speaking at great moments. Most of us are businessmen (*who are*) rolling out next year's financial goals, or teachers at a state convention (*who are*) making the case for a new curriculum, or nurses at a union (*who are*) meeting explaining the impact of managed care on the hospitals in which we work.

*Excerpt B*

She saw people (*who were*) sitting under a mildewed bus shelter, others (*who were*) walking a path along the side of the road ... Closer to the city, they followed a truck (*which was*) laying down a fog of blue smoke through a quivering exhaust pipe... The Vegas lived in a sprawling, flat-roofed tri-level (*that/which had been/or which/that was*) built around 1950 for someone with a great deal of money.

# Chapter 11

## Complex Sentences Continued: Noun Clauses

**Abstract** In this chapter we explore noun clauses. The chapter is divided into two main sections. Section 11.1 examines noun clauses in general, their function, some common types of noun clauses, and how they are formed. Section 11.2 explores a major subclass of noun clauses, reported speech, also known as indirect speech.

**Keywords** noun clauses • *that* noun clause patterns • reported speech • *wh*-noun clauses • yes/no noun clauses

### 11.1 Section 1: Noun Clauses

A noun clause is a subordinate clause that is used in the same ways a noun is. Like a noun, a noun clause can be used as a subject, an object, or a complement.

Noun clauses are introduced by subordinate conjunctions. These subordinate conjunctions are *that*, *whether (or not)*, *if*, or *wh*-question words, depending on the type of noun clause:

- *That* introduces noun clauses following certain verbs, adjectives, or nouns.
- *Whether (or not)* or *if* clauses introduce noun clauses derived from yes/no questions.
- *Wh*-question words (e.g., *who*, *when*, *what*) introduce noun clauses derived from information questions.

We generally find noun clauses placed after the main clause where they function as objects. They can also be placed in initial position, particularly if the writer or speaker wishes to emphasize the noun clause. Depending on the sentence, a noun clause in initial position can function as either the subject or, less commonly, the object.

<b>Examples: Noun Clauses</b>		
	<b>position</b>	<b>type</b>
The soldiers learned <i>that a patrol had been attacked</i> .	after main clause	<b>statement</b>
<i>That a patrol had been attacked</i> was just announced.	initial position, subject	<b>statement</b>
They didn't know <i>why they had been attacked</i> .	after main clause	<b>wh-question word</b>
<i>Why they had been attacked</i> they didn't know.	initial position, object	<b>wh-question word</b>

*Which type of noun clauses are the most common?*

### 11.1.1 That Noun Clauses

*That* noun clauses are the most common type of noun clause. Unlike the relative clauses in Chap. 10 introduced by *that*, the *that* in noun clauses does not refer to anything preceding it. The function of *that* is to subordinate the noun clause to the main clause. In other words, *that* serves to introduce a noun clause. Some grammar books refer to the *that* of noun clauses as “complementizer *that*.” There are various patterns for *that* noun clauses. We start by looking at *that* noun clauses after verbs.

#### 11.1.1.1 That Noun Clause Patterns After Verbs

Different verbs may

- be immediately followed by a *that* noun clause.
- require an indirect object before a *that* noun clause.
- allow an optional indirect object before the noun clause (which is functioning as the direct object).
- allow an optional *to* + indirect object before the noun clause (which is functioning as the direct object).

Certain verbs, especially those expressing mental activities or feelings, can be followed immediately by noun clauses. These noun clauses function as objects of the verb.

Muriel **believes** *that she was right*.

The weather channel **predicted** *that it would rain*.

I **understand** *that you want to leave class early*.

Common Verbs Followed by Noun Clauses					
admit	claim	doubt	guess	pretend	remember
assume	complain	dream	hear	promise	say
(dis)agree	conclude	know	imagine	prove	show
allege	decide	expect	learn	realize	tell
announce	declare	explain	notice	recognize	think
assert	deny	feel	observe	regret	understand
believe	discover	find out	predict		

### 11.1.1.2 Verbs + Required Indirect Object

Some verbs require an *indirect object* before the *that* introducing the noun clause.

Haydn **assured his mother** *that he would be home on time.*

The students **convinced the teacher** *that they didn't need a review session.*

Anita and James **notified their attorney** *that they wanted to change their will.*

Common verbs requiring this pattern include *assure, convince, inform, notify, promise, remind, and tell.*

### 11.1.1.3 Verbs + Optional Indirect Object

For some verbs, the verb can first be followed by an indirect object and then the noun clause. Alternatively, the noun clause can follow the verb directly without an indirect object:

He wrote **her** *that he needed help.*

He wrote *that he needed help.*

Common verbs following this pattern include *write, promise, teach, and show.*

### 11.1.1.4 Verbs + *to* + Optional Indirect Object

He explained **to her** *that he could help.*

He explained *that he could help.*

As in these examples above, other verbs may take an optional indirect object that must include *to*. Common verbs include *admit, complain, explain, mention, prove, and reply.*

***Is it difficult for ESL/EFL learners to remember these different verb patterns for that noun clauses?***

- **Learner difficulties**

Learners of English often have difficulty remembering which verbs take which pattern. For example, ESL/EFL learners may incorrectly insert *to* before the object:

\*Roy told **to him** that he had a problem.

Or, learners may forget to insert a required *to* before an optional indirect object between the verb and the noun clause:

\*He explained **me** that he could help.

### *Do noun clauses only come after verbs?*

#### 11.1.1.5 Other *That* Noun Clause Patterns

We will look at two other structures can be followed by *that* noun clauses:

- main verb *be* followed by certain adjectives
- certain nouns

##### 11.1.1.5.1 *Be* + Adjective + *That* Noun Clause

Noun clauses also follow *be* + certain adjectives. In this construction, noun clauses function as complements. The adjectives that follow this pattern are ones referring to feelings and mental states.

I am **happy** *that we finished on time.*

She had been **nervous** *that she would miss her flight.*

#### ***Be* + Common Adjectives Followed by Noun Clauses**

afraid	concerned	obvious
amazed	disappointed	pleased
annoyed	glad	sorry
angry	grateful	sure
aware	happy	surprised
certain	nervous	worried
clear		

When a *that* noun clause follows *be* + adjective, the noun clause functions as a complement. Previously, we discussed complements as any sentence constituents needed to complete and/or expand the meaning of the sentence. *That* clauses are sentence constituents that expand the meaning of the *be* + adjective clause. The *that* noun clause provides explanatory information about the main clause. This type of *that* noun clause is often labeled a *noun complement that clause*.

11.1.1.5.2 Noun + *That* Noun Clause

Certain nouns are also followed by noun clauses. These are nouns that express feelings, mental states, or some aspect of possibility.

It was his **idea** *that we go to Rome*.  
 I have a **feeling** *that the airfare is going to increase*.

**Common Nouns Followed by Noun Clauses**

advice	claim	hope	opinion
agreement	conclusion	idea	prediction
assumption	decision	impression	promise
belief	fact	message	threat
feeling	notion	warning	

Like the *that* noun clause following *be* + adjective, the *that* noun clause following a noun functions as a complement to complete or expand the meaning of the sentence.

**11.1.1.6 The Use of the Simple or Base Verb in *That* Noun Clauses**

After certain verbs and after certain *it + be* + adjective constructions, English requires the use of the simple or base form of the verb in *that* noun clauses. As we saw in previous chapters, a simple or base verb is the verb without any inflectional endings and a verb that is not part of a *to* infinitive. Many grammar books refer to this noun clause structure as the *subjunctive*.

---

I <i>suggest</i> that he <b>clean</b> the room.	
Daryl <i>recommended</i> that she <b>leave</b> .	<b>verb + noun clause with simple (base) verb</b>
The principle <i>will demand</i> that they <b>be</b> respectful.	
<i>It is necessary</i> that he <b>sell</b> his condo.	
<i>It was essential</i> that they <b>complete</b> the form.	<b>be + adjective + noun clause with simple (base) verb</b>
<i>It has been important</i> that the girl suffering from asthma <b>visit</b> her doctor regularly.	

---

Common Verbs + <i>that</i> Noun Clause + Simple Verb		Common Adjectives in <i>it + be + adjective + that</i> Noun Clauses + Simple Verb
advise	propose	advisable
ask	request	essential
command	require	necessary
demand	recommend	important
direct	suggest	urgent
insist	urge	vital

### *Is this subjunctive common in English?*

This so-called subjunctive form or the use of the simple verb in *that* noun clauses is considered formal English. Native speakers frequently avoid this structure and generally prefer to use verbs that do not follow this pattern or a *to* infinitive verb phrase:

The principal *thought that Justin should apply* to Columbia.

The principal thought that it was *important for Justin to apply* to Columbia.

In the first sentence, we see the use of *thought* followed by a *that* clause with the modal *should*. Since modals are always followed by a simple verb, this is a more “natural” or “comfortable” use of the simple verb form. In the second sentence, we see the use of a *to* infinitive clause.<sup>1</sup>

#### 11.1.1.7 Omission of *That*

In Chap. 10, we discussed the omission of the relative pronoun *that* when an essential relative clause is functioning as the object of the verb. The *that* introducing noun clauses can also be omitted when the noun clause:

- is in *object* position.
- comes after *be + adjective*, complement position.

*That* cannot be omitted when the noun clause is in subject position:

*That* she came early was a surprise.

\*She came early was a surprise.

#### Omission of *That* in Noun Clauses

noun clause	
Dorrie <i>dreamed that</i> she was flying.	after verb <i>dreamed</i> , object
Dorrie <i>dreamed</i> she was flying.	
Muriel <i>was glad that</i> she had come.	after <i>be + adjective</i> , complement
Muriel <i>was glad</i> she had come.	

<sup>1</sup>Some grammar books classify an infinitive clause as a reduced noun clause.

The omission of *that* in noun clauses is especially common in spoken and informal English.

***Should I or shouldn't I teach my students to omit that in noun clauses?***

Important considerations include whether or not the omission of *that* could be confusing to the meaning of the sentence or if the inclusion of *that* is too wordy in a given context. Different usage or style guides provide additional guidelines for the omission of *that* in object noun clauses.

In Discovery Activity 1, practice identifying *that* noun clauses. Remember that the *that* introducing a noun clause is often omitted. Try three excerpts and if you find you have no difficulties in identifying *that* noun clauses, feel free to move on to the next section. The answers to all the Discovery Activities in this chapter are at the end in the Answer Key.

**Discovery Activity 1: That Noun Clauses**

1. Underline the *that* noun clauses.
2. Describe the pattern of each noun clause, for example, does it come after a *be* + adjective construction?
3. In some of the noun clauses *that* has been omitted. Decide where it would go.

**A.**

I remembered that Father's tack had been mysteriously cleaned while it hung on a rack overnight. [McKinley, R. (1978). *Beauty: A retelling of the story of Beauty & the Beast* (p. 103). New York: HarperTrophy.]

**B.**

Louisa was glad she had not sold the book outright .... *Little Women* brought in thousands of dollars each year and ensured that she and her family would never again experience the hardships of poverty. [Ruth, A. (1998). *Louisa May Alcott* (p. 100). Minneapolis, MN: Lerner.]

**C.**

Now I understand the South has a lot of secrets ... but there is no secret to how barbecue is cooked ... Thirteen people assured me that they used wood, although in this region wood cooking is usually indirect ... A number of owners who were cooking with wood warned me that their way of life was dying out ... [Richman, A. (2004). *Fork it over: The intrepid adventures of a professional eater* (p. 212). New York: HarperCollins.]

**D.**

The Jeromes were unhappy that the Marlboroughs did not consider their daughter to be an acceptable bride. Mrs. Jerome was herself disappointed that Randolph was a second son ... [Kehoe, E. (2004). *The titled Americans: Three American sisters and the British aristocratic world into which they married* (p. 51). New York: Atlantic Monthly Press.]

**E.**

As the *Matthew* set sail for home, Cabot probably believed that his journey had been a success. He thought he had reached northeastern Asia. He believed he had discovered rich fishing waters ... Cabot was sure that they would be willing to pay for another voyage. [Doak, R. (2003). *John Cabot and the journey to Newfoundland* (pp. 31–32). Minneapolis, MN: Compass Point Books.]

### 11.1.2 The Different Functions of *That*

In different chapters we have discussed that, in English, form is no guarantee of function—a fact that is underscored by the word *that*. The following chart summarizes the different uses of *that*.

Summary of the Different Uses of <i>That</i>	
	function
I want <i>that</i> book.	demonstrative adjective
I want <i>that</i> .	demonstrative pronoun
He was <i>so</i> excited <i>that</i> he dropped his cell phone. It was <i>such</i> a good book <i>that</i> I couldn't stop reading it.	adverbial clauses of result
I wanted to borrow that book <i>so that</i> I could read it.	adverbial clause of purpose
I want to read the book <i>that</i> you recommended.	relative pronoun
I knew <i>that</i> he didn't want the book. They were sure <i>that</i> they couldn't come earlier.	noun clause subordinator (complementizer)

***Are all these different functions of that confusing in trying to understand the structure of the language?***

Of the various functions, ESL/EFL learners, as well as native speakers, generally have the greatest difficulties in distinguishing the relative pronoun *that* from the noun clause *that*. Distinguishing between these two uses of *that* is difficult because the clauses look very similar.

***How can we distinguish between these two types of clauses?***

### 11.1.2.1 Distinguishing Relative Clauses and Noun Clauses with *That*

In a relative clause, *that* always modifies a preceding noun phrase. Because in a relative clause *that* is a type of a pronoun, it must refer back to something else. A relative pronoun also serves as the subject or object of the relative clause.

In a noun clause, *that* does not modify anything. It does not function as a pronoun but as a subordinator (complementizer) that serves to introduce a noun clause. It is not the subject or object of the noun clause. It is the noun clause that functions as a subject, object, or complement.

To see how noun clauses introduced by the subordinator *that* differ from relative clauses introduced by the relative pronoun *that*, consider these two sentences:

She found *the book* **that** Jeremy wanted.

Pat *knew* **that** Craig would be late.

In the first sentence, *that* is modifying the noun phrase *the book* and is a relative pronoun introducing the relative clause *Jeremy wanted*.

In the second sentence, *that* is a subordinator, specifically a complementizer, introducing the noun clause *Craig would be late*. The verb *knew* is a verb that is followed by either an object or a noun clause. When a noun clause follows a verb such as *know*, it is functioning as the object of the verb. The *that* of noun clauses is generally preceded by a verb, *be* + adjective, or the certain nouns discussed previously.

The tricky part is that, in some instances, a *that* noun clause is also preceded by a noun phrase. This is limited to nouns that express feelings, mental states, or some aspect of possibility such as *feeling*, *idea*, and *fact*.

Paula had a *feeling* *that* they wouldn't finish the test on time.

Many people make the *assumption* *that* there is an easy solution.

See how well you can distinguish the different functions of *that* in Discovery Activity 2. As you complete this activity, think about what comes before and after *that*.

#### Discovery Activity 2: Identifying *That* in Relative Clauses Versus Noun Clauses

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline all the instances of *that* you can find.
2. Decide if *that* introduces a relative clause or a noun clause.

*Example:*

Sam knew that Barb and Jenny would pay back the money that they needed so badly.

*that:* introduces noun clause *Barb and Jenny would pay back the money*

*that:* relative pronoun modifying *the money*

Lionel was entranced by his uncle's sporting tales and, inspired by his feats of derring-do, caught a few large fish, nearly a foot long, in a pool that he came

upon in the forest. When he returned with his proud haul, he was met with dismay, as the grown-ups informed him that he had caught rainbow trout from a hatchery that Moreton had established ... Moreton, relatively untroubled by the fiasco, merely suggested that they have them for dinner. [Kehoe, E. (2004). *The titled Americans: Three American sisters and the British aristocratic world into which they married* (p. 258). New York: Atlantic Monthly Press.]

*In addition to that-type noun clauses, what other kinds of noun clauses are there?*

### 11.1.3 Noun Clauses Derived from Questions

There are two types of noun clauses derived from questions, *wh*-question word noun clauses and yes/no noun clauses. The *wh*-question words introduce noun clauses derived from information questions. Noun clauses derived from yes/no questions are introduced by *whether*, *whether (or not)*, or *if*. Unlike *that* noun clauses, we cannot omit the *wh*-question words or *whether (or not) if*.

#### 11.1.3.1 Wh-Question Word Noun Clauses

The question words, as you will remember from Chap. 8, are *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why* *which*, and *how*. When the *wh*-question words introduce a noun clause, the noun clause follows normal **affirmative sentence word order**.

**Examples: Noun Clause Word Order After Wh-Question Words**

main clause	<i>wh</i> -question word	noun phrase	verb phrase	complement
I don't know	<b>where</b>	<i>Melanie</i>	<i>is</i>	right now.
This boutique has	<b>what</b>	<i>the women</i>	<i>need</i>	for the party.
The train left	<b>when</b>	<i>all the passengers</i>	<i>had boarded.</i>	

*What is the sentence position of noun clauses introduced by wh-question words?*

Noun clauses introduced by *wh*-question words usually follow a main clause. They can also appear in initial position, with the main clause following. Regardless of the position of the *wh*-noun clause, normal affirmative word order follows the *wh*-question word:

*What we are doing* is important.

but not:

\**What are we doing* is important.

**Can the *wh*-questions words combine with anything?**

**11.1.3.2 *Wh + ever* Question Word Noun Clauses**

We can also combine *wh*-question words with *-ever* to form *whoever*, *whatever*, and *whenever* to introduce noun clauses:

A breeze gusted in **whenever** the door opened.

Lights that had been strung in the trees lower branches were turned on, attracting **whatever** insects were still alive.

Lily had anticipated that **whoever** was watching Wesley wouldn't want to let her see him. [Thompson, M. (2013). *Hurricane season*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from Amazon.com]

What problems do ESL/EFL learners have with these types of noun clauses?

- **Learner difficulties**

The greatest difficult for ESL/EFL learners is using normal affirmative sentence word order after a *wh*-question noun clause. They will frequently produce sentences with question word order:

\*I don't know **where** *is Melanie* right now.

\*The market has **what** need the women for cooking.

**11.1.3.3 Yes/No Question Noun Clauses**

Yes/no question noun clauses are introduced by *whether* or *if*. The word *whether* is often followed by *or not*. Like *wh*-question noun clauses, normal affirmative sentence word order is used in the noun clause:

Examples: Noun Clause Word Order After Yes/No Question Words				
main clause	<i>whether/if</i>	noun phrase	verb phrase	complement
I don't know	<b>whether</b>	<i>the teacher</i>	<i>assigned</i>	homework.
Dave isn't sure	<b>whether or not</b>	<i>the dog</i>	<i>was barking</i>	all day.
They wondered	<b>if</b>	<i>the library</i>	<i>allowed</i>	talking.

The use of *whether*, both with and without *or not*, is considered somewhat more formal than *if*. In spoken and informal written English, speakers will routinely use *if* instead of *whether* (*or not*) to introduce a noun clause.

She forgot **whether or not** *Karen was coming home*.

She forgot **whether** *Karen was coming home*.

She forgot **if** *Karen was coming home*.

### ***When can we leave out or not after whether?***

In most instances, using *or not* with *whether* is optional. It is often a question of stylistics: Does including *or not* make the sentence wordy, awkward, or redundant? The one important exception is when the *whether* noun clause is **modifying the verb**, in which case *or not* must be included. Leaving out *or not* will otherwise change the intended meaning.

<b><i>Whether + (or Not)</i></b>	
The students wondered whether (or not) the test would be hard.	optional: object of verb <i>wonder</i>
The teacher bases part of the grade on whether (or not) the students complete all the assignments.	optional: object of preposition <i>on</i>
Whether (or not) he can graduate depends on his grade in this course.	optional: subject of sentence <i>Whether (or not) he can graduate next semester</i>
The graduation ceremony will be held outdoors, whether or not it rains.	<b>not optional:</b> modifying verb <i>will be held</i>

The next Discovery Activity provides practice in identifying different noun clauses derived from questions.

### **Discovery Activity 3: Noun Clauses Derived From Questions**

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline the noun clauses.
2. Mark the words that introduce the noun clauses.

#### **A.**

The next day, Raymond was not at the corner. Herbie wondered what had happened to his buddy. [Kline, S. (1988). *Herbie Jones and the class gift* (p. 36). New York: Putnam's Sons.]

#### **B.**

As a somewhat reserved and very new member of the team, I don't know what possessed me, but I raised my hand and said, "I'll look into it" ... I decided then to see whether our precious cutlery was leaking out through the loading dock ... [Allen, K. (2013). *The case of the missing cutlery: A leadership course for the rising star*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from Amazon.com]

**C.**

He wondered if he'd be helping Grandpa hay this summer. He remembered how the chaff stuck to his sweaty body and itched like a thousand mosquitoes and how his arms had ached from lifting and throwing hay bales. [Kinsey-Warnock, N. (1998). *In the language of loons* (p. 10). New York: Cobblehill Books.]

**D.**

"What's his name?" Mr. Kaspian wanted to know. I didn't know his name. I didn't even know if any of the cats had names ... I don't even know what they eat." [Sachs, M. (2002). *The four ugly cats in Apartment 3D* (pp. 25–26). New York: Atheneum.]

We now move on to Sect. 11.2 to explore reported speech, a major subclass of noun clauses.

*What does the term reported speech refer to?*

## 11.2 Section 2: Reported Speech

As the term itself implies, reported speech—which some grammar books call *indirect speech*—refers to utterances that are not quotations but that reflect what someone has said. In contrast to reported speech, *direct speech* refers to the actual words spoken by a person and is enclosed in quotation marks. Reported speech is commonly found in newspapers, magazines, and fiction. Reported speech includes a noun clause introduced by such verbs as *say*, *tell*, *shout*, *ask*, and *remark*:

Joy said, "I like that book."	<b>direct speech, exact quotation</b>
Joy said that she liked that book.	<b>indirect speech, report of quote</b>

Reported speech noun clauses report or convey a sense of what someone else has said or written. There are different types of reported speech noun clauses, depending on the type of clause the noun clause is derived from. They are introduced by the same subordinating conjunctions as the noun clauses we have already seen:

- *That* introduces noun clauses that report statements someone has said.
- *Whether (or not)* and *if* introduce yes/no questions someone has asked.
- *Wh*-question words introduce information questions someone has asked.

<b>Examples: Reported Speech Noun Clauses</b>		
<b>quote (direct speech)</b>	<b>reported speech (indirect speech)</b>	<b>derived from</b>
Sue said, "I'm hungry."	Sue said <i>that</i> she was hungry.	statement
Sue asked, "Are the kids hungry?"	Sue asked <i>whether</i> the boys were hungry.	yes/no question
Sue asked, "When did the kids eat?"	Sue asked <i>when</i> the kids had eaten.	<i>wh</i> -question

Another way to think of noun clauses as deriving from yes/no or *wh*-questions is to think of them as *embedded* questions.

***My students are always confusing say and tell. How can I explain the difference to them?***

### **Say Versus Tell**

*Say* and *tell* are similar in meaning but take different sentence patterns. After the verb *say*, **an object is optional**. If *say* is followed by an indirect object, it is introduced by *to* and then followed by the noun clause: *We say something* or *we say to someone something*.

The verb *tell*, on the other hand, **must be followed by an object** and then the noun clause. This object cannot be preceded by *to*. We use *tell* in the sense of *we tell someone something*.

<b>Examples: Say Versus Tell</b>	
Barney said that he was tired.	<i>said</i> followed directly by noun clause <i>that he was tired</i>
Barney <b>said to me</b> that he was tired.	<i>said</i> followed by preposition <i>to</i> + object pronoun <i>me</i>
Milo <b>said to the new school principal</b> that he wasn't returning next year.	<i>said</i> followed by object noun phrase
Patti <b>told me</b> that she had to leave.	<i>told</i> followed by object pronoun <i>me</i> , then noun clause <i>that she had to leave</i>
Milo <b>told the principal</b> that he wasn't returning next year.	<i>told</i> followed by object noun phrase <i>the principal</i>
*Patti <b>told to me</b> that she had to leave	Ungrammatical; <i>to</i> cannot come before object after <i>tell</i>

## 11.2.1 *Word Order in Reported Speech*

### 11.2.1.1 Statements

When statements from direct speech are changed to reported speech, we use normal **affirmative sentence word order**:

Lee said, "The dog has had enough treats for today."  
Lee said that the dog had had enough treats for today.

"*I am declaring* a state of emergency," the governor announced.  
The governor announced that *she was declaring* a state of emergency.

### 11.2.1.2 Questions

When reported speech noun clauses are derived from yes/no and *wh*-question words, we also use normal **affirmative sentence word order**. This means that when we change questions from direct speech to reported speech, we must change the *question* word order to *affirmative sentence* word order. The original question becomes *embedded* in the noun clause:

Pam asked, "Is Sue here?"  
Pam asked *if Susan was here*.

The president wondered, "Has the bill passed both Houses of Congress yet?"  
The president wondered *whether the bill had passed* both Houses of Congress.

Sue asked, "Where can I find a good restaurant?"  
Sue asked *where she could find* a good restaurant.

The president inquired, "When was the bill debated?"  
The president inquired *when the bill had been debated*.

***What are the changes I see between direct speech and reported speech?***

## 11.2.2 *Changes Between Direct Speech and Reported Speech*

### 11.2.2.1 Formal Sequencing of Verb Tenses

When changing from direct speech to reported speech, traditional prescriptive grammar requires the *formal sequencing of tenses*. This means that when you change from direct speech to reported speech, you must:

- change verbs in *present* tense to *past* tense.
- change *past* tense verbs to *past perfect*.

<b>Examples: Formal Sequencing of Verb Tenses</b>				
<b>quote (direct speech)</b>	<b>tense</b>	<b>→</b>	<b>reported speech (indirect speech)</b>	<b>tense</b>
Sue said, "I <i>am</i> hungry."	present		Sue said that she <i>was</i> hungry now.	past
Sue said, "I <i>ate</i> a long time ago."	past		Sue said that she <i>had eaten</i> a long time ago.	past perfect
Joe asked, "Can Pat <i>come</i> over?"	present		Joe asked whether Pat <i>could</i> come over.	past
Joe's mom asked, " <i>Did</i> you do your homework?"	past		Joe's mom asked whether he <i>had done</i> his homework.	past perfect

### ***Do native speakers always observe this formal sequencing of tenses?***

Most native speakers will observe this rule for changing present tense in direct speech to past tense in reported speech; however, many speakers will not observe this rule for changing past tense to the past perfect and will use past tense only, particularly in spoken and informal written English.

In addition, native speakers will not always follow this sequencing of tenses for actions, events, or facts that are still current and/or true:

"I *like* to go to the movies," said Meg.  
Meg said that she *likes* to go to the movies.

Here the speaker chose to use present tense because the fact that Meg likes the movies is still true.

Now consider these sentences:

"The moon *revolves* around the earth," said the teacher.

The teacher said the earth *revolved* around the moon.  
The teacher said the earth *revolves* around the moon.

In the first sentence, we see that the formal sequencing of tenses is used but not in the second one. Again, depending on the context, native speakers may prefer to use the present tense in reported speech because they feel it makes more "sense." For them, using the past tense, even though "grammatically" correct, implies that the fact is no longer true.

***We've discussed verb tense changes, but don't I also see also pronoun changes occurring?***

#### **11.2.2.2 Pronoun and Other Changes**

Pronouns and possessive adjectives change when going from direct speech to reported speech. Expressions of time and place, adverbs, and demonstratives may also need to change, depending upon the perspective and distance to the speaker.

For instance, if the reference in reported speech refers to a place close to the speaker, *here* can still be used. Similarly, if the reference in reported speech is something near the speaker, *this* can still be used. However, if the distance changes, either actual or perceived (see Chap. 3), these will be changed accordingly.

<b>Examples: Pronoun and Related Changes</b>		
<b>quote (direct speech)</b>	<b>reported speech (indirect speech)</b>	<b>change</b>
Blair said, “ <i>I</i> have a dog.”	Blair said that <i>she</i> had a dog.	I → she
Blair said, “ <i>My</i> dog likes bones.”	Blair said that <i>her</i> dog liked bones.	my → her
Blair said, “He always sleeps here under the porch by this door.”	Blair said that he always sleeps <i>there</i> under the porch by <i>that</i> door.	here → there this → that

Discovery Activity 4 provides practice in changing from direct speech to reported speech. Part I uses teacher-created sentences. Part II uses authentic excerpts.

#### **Discovery Activity 4: Changing Direct Speech to Reported Speech**

As you complete both Part I and Part II, consider what different elements ESL/EFL learners have to remember.

##### **Part I**

A common activity for English language learners is to give them sentences in direct speech like these and to ask them to rewrite these sentences in reported speech, observing the rules of traditional prescriptive grammar.

1. Change the sentences to reported speech, observing the formal sequencing of tenses.
  2. Describe the changes you made.
- (a) “Claire said, “I saw a great movie on Saturday.”
  - (b) “Here is a very interesting book,” said Tony.
  - (c) Maeve asked, “When will the Ramirez family arrive?”
  - (d) James asked, “Are you coming to class?”
  - (e) “Has Kelly driven her friends home?” asked Helen.

##### **Part II**

1. Change the sentences to reported speech, observing the formal sequencing of tenses.
2. Describe the changes you made.

This is more difficult than the sentences in Part I because the sentences are from authentic excerpts. Some of these require some extra thought because of punctuation and word order as you change them to reported speech.

**A.**

“You won’t see your roses bloom,” [said] Hope. “I’ll plant them tomorrow” ... [Beauty] said. [McKinley, R. (1978). *Beauty: A retelling of Beauty & the Beast* (p. 79). New York: HarperTrophy.]

**B.**

“I have to add a little more water to the stew,” [Melinda] said. [McKinley, R. (1978). *Beauty: A retelling of Beauty & the Beast* (p. 34). New York: HarperTrophy.]

**C.**

“Why did the telegram come addressed to Mrs. Spaulding?” Mrs. Ellington asked....  
 “That is the name which appears as my byline,” [Diana replied] ...  
 “I never intended to write anything negative about the Hotel Grant. My editor, I admit, likes sensational stories ...” [Emerson, K. L. (2007). *No mortal reason* (p. 98). Coronal del Mar, CA: Pemberly Press

*Are these all the types of reported speech?*

### 11.2.3 Other Patterns in Reported Speech

#### 11.2.3.1 Imperatives

Imperatives or commands, another type of reported speech, tell someone to do something. Imperatives in direct speech change to the *to* infinitive form in reported speech. If it is a negative imperative, we drop the auxiliary *do* and place *not* before the *to* infinitive:

Pam said, “Eat something.”	Pam said <i>to eat</i> something.	<b>affirmative</b>
Pam said, “Don’t eat anything.”	Pam said <i>not to eat</i> anything.	<b>negative</b>

#### 11.2.3.2 Exclamations

Exclamations, or interjections, are also found in reported speech. Exclamations refer to expressions of surprise, dismay, pleasure, or other similar emotions. Exclamations in reported speech **retain the same word order** they have in direct speech.

Pam said, “What a mistake I made!”	Pam realized <i>what a mistake she had made</i> .
Pam said, “How happy I am!”	Pam exclaimed <i>how happy she was</i> .

Both noun clause are introduced by a *wh*-question word but follow normal affirmative word.

***Is reported speech always an exact report of what someone has said?***

### ***11.2.4 Reported Speech as More Than a Mirror Image***

Up to this point, we have discussed reported speech as though it were a mirror of direct speech, which is how reported speech is usually taught to ESL/EFL learners. Many times, however, reported speech is not an exact replica of direct speech with the appropriate verb tense and pronoun changes. Instead, we often find that reported speech is more an approximation of what someone said. You will have noticed that our two previous examples of sentences in reported speech use different verbs than do the quotes. To convey the sense of exclamation, reflected in quotes through the sentence structure and exclamation mark, writers choose to use other verbs such as *exclaim*, *realize*, *shout*, or *scream*.

When reported speech is an exact reflection of what was said, we see no changes in reported speech:

“Is there any new information about the murderer?” asked Sophie.

Sophie asked whether there was any new information about the murderer

When we want to convey a general impression of the words actually spoken, there is usually more than one way to structure the sentences:

“He is thought likely to be either a student or a Master in the Faculty of Arts,” he replied. “Who else would think of setting us a philosophical riddle?” [Gross, C. (2004/2002), *Scholarium*. H. Atkins, Transl. New Milford, CT: Toby Press. p. 70].

He replied that he was thought likely to be either a student or a Master in the Faculty of Arts because who else would think of setting them a philosophical riddle.

*or*

He replied that he was thought likely to be either a student or a Master in the Faculty of Arts. After all, who else would think of setting them a philosophical riddle?

Reported speech may also reflect the writer’s interpretation of what was said by using certain verbs to introduce the noun clause. These verbs include *claim*, *demand*, *insist*, and *allege*. Compare, for example, the quote with the reported statements:

“The man grabbed my purse and ran through the lobby,” said the woman.

The woman *said* that the man had grabbed her purse and run through the lobby.

The woman *claimed* that the man had grabbed her purse and run through the lobby.

The woman *insisted* that the man had grabbed her purse and run through the lobby.

Using *claimed* in the first of the reported speech clauses can be looked at two ways. On one hand, we can think of it as casting a slight element of doubt as to the truth of the woman's statement. Perhaps she is issuing a false report. Perhaps it is not clear that the man ran through the lobby instead of down the hall. Another way to understand *claimed* is that it is a way to avoid asserting something that might prove to be wrong later. In the second sentence, by using *insisted*, the writer conveys something of the strength of emotion and certainty the woman was feeling.

Discovery Activity 5 provides additional practice in changing from direct speech to reported speech. You will need to make more changes than just changing verb tenses and pronouns.

### Discovery Activity 5: Conveying Intent: Direct Speech to Reported Speech

1. Change the sentences to reported speech.

When you do this activity, keep in mind that it is not always possible nor advisable to make reported speech an exact mirror image of the direct speech. Use your judgment. Decide whether or not to follow the formal sequencing of tenses. If you choose not to, explain why.

The excerpts are taken from a conversation between a journalist, Diana Spaulding, and an author, Damon Bathory, in *Deadlier Than the Pen*.

"It is my job to comment on all current books and plays" ... [stated Diana]  
 "Will my reading tonight be covered in your critique?" ...  
 "I will write about what I saw and heard," she said ... "Won't you reconsider granting me an interview?"  
 "I think not."  
 [Emerson, K.L. (2010). *Deadlier than the pen*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from Amazon.com]

### Do ESL/EFL student have trouble with reported speech?

- **Learner difficulties**

In completing Discovery Activities 4 and 5, you saw that reported speech is not always an exact replica of direct speech. It is important for teachers to help their ESL/EFL learners to gain an understanding of the use and meanings of reported speech. One difficulty for learners is using affirmative sentence word order in noun clauses after *wh*-question words and whether (*or not*)/if:

\*Last night, my friend asked me *where was I* going.

Another area of difficulty is the formal sequencing of tenses:

\*Last night, my friend **asked** what I **am** doing.

Learners may produce sentences that have wrong word order and tense:

\*Last night, my friend asked me *where* **am I** going.

In addition, as we discussed earlier, learners confuse *say* and *tell* and the grammatical constructions following these two verbs:

He said **me** that he was tired.

He told **to me** that he was tired.

Teachers should not rely exclusively on exercises that simply ask learners to mechanically change direct quotations to reported speech. Such exercises are useful in practicing structures at the beginning levels and for later review. More advanced learners should have opportunities to examine exceptions to the rules in order to understand when and where they are likely to encounter variations to these rules, and in recognizing and understanding the roles of direct speech and reported speech.

### 11.3 Summary

#### Types of Noun Clauses

Emma heard <i>that we were coming</i> . Emma heard <i>we were coming</i> .	<b>statement</b>	<i>that</i> may be omitted when clause in object position
Emma wondered <i>if</i> we were coming. Emma wondered <i>whether</i> we were coming. Emma wondered <i>whether or not</i> we were coming. <i>Whether or not</i> we were coming was questionable.	<b>embedded yes/no question</b>	<i>if</i> less formal than <i>whether</i> ; <i>or not</i> may be omitted except when noun clause is modifying verb
Emma wondered <i>when</i> we were coming.	<b>embedded wh-question</b>	normal affirmative word order, not question word order
Emily said <i>to come</i> right now.	<b>imperative</b>	imperative (command) verb form changes to the <i>to</i> infinitive
Emily exclaimed <i>how excited she was</i> .	<b>exclamation</b>	normal affirmative sentence word order

### Say Versus Tell

<i>say</i> + (to + object) + (that) + noun clause	<i>tell</i> + object + (that) + noun clause
Kay said <i>to Mary</i> that she wasn't coming.	Kay told <i>Mary</i> that she wasn't coming.
Kay said she wasn't coming	Kay told <i>Mary</i> she wasn't coming.

### Formal Sequencing of Tenses in Reported Speech

present → past form of:		
• simple	April said, "I <i>know</i> you."	April said that she <i>knew</i> me.
• progressive	April said, "I'm <i>talking</i> to you."	April said that she <i>was talking</i> to me.
• perfect	April said, "I've <i>met</i> him before."	April said that she <i>had met</i> him before.
simple past → past perfect	April said, "I <i>wrote</i> you."	April said that she <i>had written</i> me.
progressive forms → past or perfect progressive forms	April said, "I <i>was talking</i> to you." April said, "I've <i>been waiting</i> a long time."	April said that she <i>had been talking</i> to me. April said that she <i>had been waiting</i> a long time.
past perfect → no change	April said, "I <i>had never heard</i> of him."	April said that she <i>had never heard</i> of him.

### Formal Sequencing of Tenses in Reported Speech: Modals

change in form present →	past	no change in form
can	could	should
will	would	should have
may (in sense of possibility)	might	could have
must (in sense of necessity, obligation)	had to	must have

## 11.4 Practice Activities

### Activity 1: Identifying Noun Clauses

1. Look at the excerpts.
2. Underline the noun clauses.
3. Remember, *that* is often omitted in noun clauses.

**A.**

For years, we've been told how bad the sun is for our skin, our eyes, our looks, our you-name-it ... But it's also true that some sun exposure is absolutely necessary for good health ... Recent studies have found that vitamin D helps lower the risk of breast, colon, prostate and other cancers. [Cherry, R. (2005, June). For once, there's some good sun news. *Vegetarian Times*, Retrieved from <http://www.vegetariantimes.com/article/for-once-there-s-some-good-sun-news/>]

**B.**

Maeve told him about the discussion she and the Deckers had earlier about whether or not Truett could be the killer. "Mrs. Decker still thinks he didn't know about the robbery ..." [Thompson, V. (2016). *Murder on St. Nicholas Avenue*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from Amazon.com]

**C.**

I had not expected Emerson would have any difficulty in persuading Mr. Salt to violate a visitor's privacy ... The chambermaid had reported that the lady's bed had not been slept in, nor the towels in the bath changer used. [Peters, E. (2005). *The serpent on the crown* (p. 211). New York: Harper Collins.]

**D.**

"Would you join us at the hotel for a little refreshment. I believe that that is customary after a funeral." I assumed the invitation included me, though she had looked only at Emerson and Ramses. [Peters, E. (2005). *The serpent on the crown* (p. 195). New York: Harper Collins.]

### **Activity 2: Changing From Direct Speech to Reported Speech**

Change the quotes to reported speech, observing the rule of sequencing of tenses.

- When you change from direct speech to reported speech, you may want to combine some of the sentences together.
- When you change the quotes to noun clauses, note which introductory words you need to add.
- Also note what happens to word order in the quotes that include questions.

"I have enough copy for my column without the addition of Mr. Bathory's comments or opinions."

"Who cares about his opinions? ... I suppose it's too much to hope that he'll turn out to be another Blackbeard, but that's the sort of thing that pulls in readers ..."

"The readers of my column want and expect only my review, which I will most assuredly give them. If, however, you feel I must also conduct interviews, then I can think of several people more interesting than Damon Bathory."

[Emerson, K.L. (2010). *Deadlier than the pen*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from Amazon.com]

### Activity 3: Exploring Direct Speech Versus Reported Speech

1. Choose a dialogue excerpt of about 4–6 sentences from an interview or work of fiction. Alternatively, you can choose an excerpt from one of the interviews in Activity 4 in Chap. 8.
2. Rewrite the quotes into reported speech.
3. Exchange your original dialogue selection with a partner. Do not exchange reported speech versions.
4. Rewrite the quotes from the excerpt your partner gave you into reported speech.
5. When you finish, compare and discuss your versions of both excerpts:
  - What changes did you have to make and why?
  - Were you able to change all the quotes verbatim to reported speech?
  - What kinds of changes did you have to make?
  - How did you keep the “flavor” or tone of the quotes?
  - Why were there differences between your versions of reported speech?

### Activity 4: Multiple Subordinate Clauses

As we have seen in previous chapters, sentences can consist of more than one subordinate clause of any type.

Look at the excerpts. Be careful; some relative clauses and noun clauses have an omitted relative pronoun.

1. Underline the different subordinate clauses
2. Label each one:
  - AC = adverbial clause
  - RC = relative clause
  - NC = noun clause

#### A.

The control systems of the mind signal that something unexpected has arisen, that we are in uncharted waters and are going to have to switch off the automatic pilot and the help ourselves. There’s a reef where we least expect it ... People in real-life situations don’t actually see it this way, because the almost inevitable response is to deny that the reef is there until one has run aground. [Hall, E. T. (1976/1981). *Beyond culture* (p. 46). New York: Anchor Books.]

#### B.

With the war mostly over, aid officials warn that thousands of displaced persons and refugees might venture back to their former homeland only to be greeted by an environment that can no longer support them. [Fink, S. (2005). Saving Eden. *Discover*, 26. Retrieved from <http://discovermagazine.com/2005/jul/saving-eden>]

#### C.

It was not inevitable, said Columbus, that Eastern goods should arrive from the East; nor that Westerners should pay such a premium ... The world being round, was it not simple logic that spices might also come around the other way: round the back of the globe, from the west?

(Contrary to one hoary myth, hardly any well-informed medieval Europeans were flat-earthers. That the earth was spherical had been accepted by all informed opinion since ancient times). [Turner, J. (2004). *Spice: The history of temptation* (pp. 5–6). New York: Knopf.]

#### D.

The first law states that any floating object will displace a volume of water whose mass equals the object's mass. An iceberg that is 90 percent as dense as seawater, for instance, displaces 90 percent of its volume, so 90 percent of it lies below the surface. The second law determines how objects of different shapes and densities orient themselves as they float. [Mackenzie, D. (2005). Tilt! *Discover*, 26. Retrieved from: <http://discovermagazine.com/2005/jul/tilt>]

#### Activity 6: Error Analysis

The following excerpts were written by EFL students with noun clause errors. Because these are authentic excerpts, there are other errors as well.

1. Read the excerpts and identify the problems the learners are having with noun clauses.
2. Only focus on **noun clause errors**.

#### A.

I know that someone who had an accident because of the construction. I'm suggesting the mayor improves the transportation.

#### B.

The teacher was telling us a joke. At the end of the class I asked my friend Rosa what was the joke about.

#### C.

My mother suddenly fell down and the other people who worked in the factory immediately called the ambulance. I talked with the doctor and he told that her blood pressure was high. Then the doctor told I have to take care of mother. He said don't worry, if she takes care, she is going to be alright.

#### D.

A book can contribute to a child's development. There are lots of different examples that show children what is the right thing and what should do they for that age.

#### Activity 7: Error Analysis in the Classroom

These sentences were heard in an ESL classroom.

1. Explain the learners' problem(s).
2. Discuss why the students may be making such error(s).
  - (a) The teacher, she say me I got to write again.
  - (b) He never told how old he is.
  - (c) One group taught us what was asthma was.
  - (d) In my chart I have the phases of the moon, and how does it change.
  - (e) Lee told to me he got to go early so he can't finish with me.

## 11.5 Answer Key

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 1

#### Excerpt A

*that* Father's tack had been mysteriously cleaned

#### Excerpt B

she had not sold the book outright. *That* omitted; noun clause follows *be* + the adjective *glad*

*that* she and her family would never again experience the hardships of poverty

#### Excerpt C

the South has a lot of secrets. *That* omitted

*that* they used wood; follows the verb *assured* + indirect object *me*; rest of sentence adverbial clause introduced by *although*

*that* their way of life was dying out; follows the verb *warned* + indirect object *me*

#### Excerpt D

*that* the Marlboroughs did not consider their daughter to be an acceptable bride; follows *be* + the adjective *unhappy*

*that* Randolph was a second son; follows *be* + adjective *disappointed*

#### Excerpt E

*that* his journey had been a success

he had reached northeastern Asia. *That* omitted

he had discovered rich fishing waters. *That* omitted

*that* they would be willing to pay for another voyage; follows *be* + adjective *sure*

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 2

relative pronoun	in a pool <u>that</u> he came upon in the forest; <i>that</i> modifying <i>a pool</i>
noun clause	the grown-ups informed him <u>that</u> he had caught
relative pronoun	from a hatchery <u>that</u> Moreton had established; <i>that</i> modifying <i>a hatchery</i>
noun clause	merely suggested <u>that</u> they have them

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 3***Excerpt A***what** happened to his buddy*Excerpt B***what** possessed me; **whether** our precious cutlery ...*Excerpt C***if** he'd be helping Grandpa ... **how** the chaff stuck ...; **how** his arms had ached ...*Excerpt D***if** any of the cats ...; **what** they eat**Discussion: Discovery Activity 4****Part I**

- (a) Claire said that she saw a great movie on Saturday.
- pronoun change from *I* to *she*
- (b) Tony said that he had a very interesting book.
- word order change; noun clause introduced by *that*
  - present changes to past missing bullet•pronoun change from *I* to *he*
- (c) Maeve asked when the Ramirez family would arrive.
- embedded *wh*-question, normal affirmative sentence word order
  - present changes to past
- (d) James asked whether I was coming to class.
- insertion of *whether*; whether (or not) or if also possible; embedded yes/no question, normal affirmative sentence word order
  - pronoun change from *you* to *I*
  - present changes to past
- (e) Helen asked whether Kelly had driven her friends home.
- insertion of *whether*; *whether (or not)* or *if* also possible
  - embedded yes/no question, normal affirmative sentence word order
  - past changes to past perfect

**Part II***Excerpt A*

Hope said that you wouldn't see your roses bloom. **Or** Hope said that she wouldn't see her roses bloom. Beauty said that she would plant them tomorrow.

- pronoun change from *you, I* to *she* in second option
- *will* changes to *would*

*Excerpt B*

Melinda said that she had to add a little more water to the stew.

- pronoun change from *I* to *she*
- present changes to past

*Excerpt C*

Mrs. Ellington asked why the telegram had come addressed to Mrs. Spaulding.

- embedded *wh*-question, normal affirmative sentence word order
- past changes to past perfect

Diana replied that that was the name which appeared as her byline.

- first *that* complementizer; second *that* demonstrative pronoun
- present changes to past

She said that she had never intended to write anything negative about the Hotel Grant.

- pronoun change from *I* to *she*
- past changes to past perfect

She admitted that her editor liked sensational stories. **OR** Her editor, she admitted, liked sensational stories.

- present changes to past
- pronoun change from *my* to *her*

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 5**

There may be different options in changing the quotes to reported speech. Here you will find one for each quote, but other options are possible, especially when writers try to capture more of the flavor of an excerpt and/or provide their interpretation of events.

Diana stated that it was her job to comment on all current books and plays.  
 Damon wondered whether his reading tonight would be covered in her critique.  
 Diana responded that she would write about what she saw and heard.  
 She asked whether he wouldn't reconsider granting her an interview.  
 He said that he did not think so.

# Chapter 12

## Verbal Constructions

**Abstract** In this chapter we look at some structures to which you have already been introduced at various times in the text. This chapter focuses on the form and function of verbal constructions. The chapter is divided into three parts, each one of which explores a different type of verbal construction. Section 12.1 examines gerund phrases. Section 12.2 delves into participial phrases. Section 12.3 considers the *to* + verb or infinitive phrases.

**Keywords** verbal phrases • gerund phrases • participial phrases • infinitive phrases

### Introduction

Certain structures are called verbals because they are derived from verbs but do not inflect for person and tense, nor combine with an auxiliary verb to form verb phrases. In other words, although they are formed from verbs, they do not function as verbs. Verbals include *gerunds*, *participles*, and *infinitives*. These combine with other elements to form gerund, participial, and infinitive phrases.<sup>1</sup>

### 12.1 Section 1: Gerunds and Gerund Phrases

Verbals are classified into three types: *gerunds*, *participles*, and *infinitives*. Gerunds and present participles look identical since they both end in *-ing*. Since form does not equal function in English, we distinguish between gerunds and the different functions of present participles based on the role of each in a sentence. Infinitives consist of *to* + base verb.

(1) They like <i>swimming</i> .	<b>gerund</b> , object of verb <i>like</i>
(2) I am <i>going</i> home right now.	<b>present participle</b> , part of verb phrase <i>am going</i>
(3) This is a <i>birding</i> course.	<b>participial adjective</b> , modifying <i>course</i>
(4) Ray needs <i>to leave</i> soon.	<b>infinitive</b> , object of verb <i>needs</i>

<sup>1</sup>Some grammar books call verbal phrases non-finite phrases.

In the first sentence, *swimming* occurs after the main verb *like*. It occurs without an auxiliary verb, so it cannot be part of a progressive verb phrase. In the second sentence, we know that *going* is part of a verb phrase, *am going*. As we saw in Chap. 6, *am* is the auxiliary verb *be* for *going* and is inflected for person (1st person singular) and tense (present). Together, *am* and *going* form the present progressive. In the third sentence, *birding* comes before the noun *course* to describe which type of course. In the last sentence, the main verb *needs* inflects for person (3rd person singular) and tense (present) and is followed by the infinitive, *to leave*.

### **What is a gerund phrase?**

A gerund is a verbal that functions as a *noun*. A gerund phrase consists of a verbal, modifier(s), object(s), and/or complement(s). Because a gerund, and by extension a gerund phrase, functions as a noun, it occupies and acts in a sentence the way a noun does: as subject, direct object, object of the preposition, and complement.

#### **Examples: Functions of Gerunds and Gerund Phrases**

<i>Studying</i> is hard work. <i>Studying English grammar</i> is hard work.	<b>subject</b> , non-count noun, singular verb
Some students enjoy <i>studying</i> . Some students enjoy <i>studying English grammar</i> .	<b>object of verb</b> <i>enjoy</i> ; certain verbs followed by nouns or gerund
Nothing stops Lucy from <i>studying</i> . Nothing stops Lucy from <i>studying English grammar</i> .	<b>object of preposition</b> <i>from</i>
Lucy's favorite activity is <i>studying</i> . Lucy's favorite activity is <i>studying English grammar</i> .	<b>subject complement</b> renaming or identifying subject of verb

A gerund or gerund phrase can be made negative by adding *not*:

*Not studying* can be a problem.

*Not studying English grammar* can be a problem.

Both Discovery Activities 1 and 2 focus on helping you distinguish between gerund phrases and verb phrases. Discovery Activity 1 is easier than Discovery Activity 2 because it uses short, teacher-made sentences. Discovery Activity 2 is more difficult because it uses authentic material. Try both and see how well you do. The answers to all Discovery Activities in this chapter are at the end of the chapter in the Answer Key.

### Discovery Activity 1: Gerunds Versus Participles

Identify the *-ing* forms in the sentences below.

- If the *-ing* is a gerund, underline and label only this form.
- If the *-ing* is part of a progressive verb phrase, underline and label the entire verb phrase.

*Example:*

Lucy's favorite activity is studying. **gerund**

Lucy is studying at the library. **present progressive verb phrase**

- Her sole occupation was writing short stories.
- Teaching is a special vocation.
- Their grandmother was vacationing in Florida when the storm hit.
- The club is holding a social next month.
- Driving without a license is illegal.
- The long trip with her young children was driving her crazy.
- Joseph's hobby is rebuilding antique cars.
- Never eat strawberries without washing them.

This second Discovery Activity is similar to the previous one but uses authentic excerpts. You may find this Discovery Activity more challenging than the first one.

### Discovery Activity 2: Identifying the Different Functions of Gerunds and Gerund Phrases

Look at the following excerpts.

- Underline the gerunds and gerund phrases.
- Identify the function of each gerund and gerund phrase you underlined.

#### A.

I worked the last shift at Dave's Dogs, and I was supposed to start shutting down a half hour before closing so I could clean up for the day crew. [Evanovich, J. (2005). *Eleven on top* (p. 1). New York: St. Martin's.]

#### B.

"They'll be investigating you, Mrs. Pollack, because the reporters are much better at investigating than the police are." [Thompson, V. (2016). *Murder on St. Nicholas Avenue*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from Amazon.com]

#### C.

Challenging each other's opinions comes so naturally to Americans that most of the time they aren't even aware that they are doing it. [Sakamoto, S., & Naotsuka, R. (1982). *Polite fictions: Why Japanese and Americans seem rude to each other* (p. 56). Tokyo: Kinseido.]

**D.**

Knowing the rules is not at all the same thing as playing the game. Even now, during a conversation in Japanese I will notice a startled reaction, and belatedly realize that once again I have rudely interrupted by instinctively trying to hit back the other person's bowling ball.[Sakamoto, S. & Naotsuka, R. (1982). *Polite fictions: Why Japanese and Americans seem rude to each other* (p. 85). Tokyo: Kinseido.]

***Are gerunds difficult for ESL/EFL learners?***

- ***Learner difficulties***

ESL/EFL learners are sometimes confused by sentences where a gerund is functioning as a subject complement after the verb. In the sentence *Lucy's favorite activity is studying*, for instance, *is studying* looks identical to the present progressive verb phrase *Lucy is studying*.

In addition, low-proficiency ESL/EFL learners may be confused by words that end in *-ing* but are not gerunds or participles. Such words include *during*, *nothing*, *wedding*, *evening*, and *morning*.

***Since gerunds function as nouns, can we also use them in a possessive sense?***

**12.1.1 Possessive Gerunds**

Since gerunds function as nouns, they can take possessive pronouns or be preceded by nouns with the possessive 's inflection.

<i>His coming late</i> created problems.	possessive pronoun before gerund phrase
<i>Jude's writing</i> was very good.	possessive 's inflection, proper noun before gerund phrase
<i>The cat's purring</i> soothed the baby.	possessive 's inflection on noun phrase before gerund phrase

***Is the possessive gerund structure unusual?***

Although the possessive gerund is not the most common gerund construction, it is found in both written and spoken English. Consider this excerpt, taken from an interview with actress Julia Louis-Dreyfus in a popular magazine, *Entertainment Weekly*.

To Louis-Dreyfus, Moore embodied a strong 1970s career woman who wasn't perfect—far from it. “*Her being* able to play humiliation as well as she did was very appealing,” says the actress, 45, no stranger to self mockery. [Stack, T. (2006, December 1). Julia Louis-Dreyfus' inspiration: Mary Tyler Moore. *Entertainment Weekly*. Retrieved from <http://www.ew.com/article/2006/11/24/what-julia-louis-dreyfus-loves-about-mary-tyler-moore>]

Consider also this headline from the website mom.me:

Cats' Purring Proven to Help Human Health in Numerous Ways [<http://mom.me/pets/cats/19946-cats-purring-proven-help-human-health-numerous-ways/>]

This ends our discussion of gerunds and we will now explore participles.

## 12.2 Section 2: Participles and Participial Phrases

A participle is derived from a verb with the *-ing* or *-ed* inflection. A participial phrase consists of a participle, either *-ing* or *-ed*, modifier(s), object(s), and/or complement(s). Participial phrases function like *adjectives* and modify nouns or pronouns, and occasionally function as *adverbs*. Consider the sentence:

*Driving all day*, Tony arrived home in time for the party.

Here *Driving all day* is a participial phrase modifying the noun *Tony*, the subject of the verb *arrived*.

### ***What do you mean by “modifying Tony”?***

*Driving all day* is telling us something about Tony. In this case, it is describing what he did. We will see more examples of participial phrases and what they modify in this section.

***We've looked at so many present participles and their different functions. Could you review what the different functions of present participles are before exploring participial phrases?***

### 12.2.1 *Types of Participles*

In Chap. 4, we looked at adjectives ending in *-ing* and *-ed*, which we called participial adjectives. As you will recall, we labeled these types of adjectives participial adjectives because they are derived from verbs but are not part of full verb phrases (auxiliary + past or present participle).

In Chaps. 5 and 6, we discussed participles as being the *-ing* or *-ed* form of the main verb that accompanies an auxiliary verb in order to form a verb phrase. As you will remember, *present participle* refers to the *-ing* form used with present progressive forms of the verb phrase. *Past participle* refers to the *-ed* form used

with past progressive forms of the verb phrase or with passive voice.<sup>2</sup> In Chaps. 9 and 10, we looked at adverbial and relative clauses, which we saw can be reduced. When these clauses are reduced, they become participial clauses.<sup>3</sup>

<b>The Different Types of Participles</b>	
I read a <i>boring</i> book last night.	<b>participial adjective</b> modifying <i>book</i>
I am <i>reading</i> a good book today. I was <i>reading</i> a good book all night long.	<b>present participle</b> , part of present and past progressive verb phrases, both parts of verb phrase required ( <i>be</i> + <i>V-ing</i> )
The mother has <i>scolded</i> her child many times. The mother had <i>scolded</i> her child repeatedly.	<b>past participle</b> , part of present and past perfect verb phrases, both parts of verb phrase required ( <i>have</i> + <i>V-ed</i> )
<i>Running too quickly</i> , the child fell down.	<b>participial phrase</b> with present participle, modifying <i>the child</i>
<i>Concerned for her health</i> , Nora made a doctor's appointment.	<b>participial phrase</b> with past participle, modifying <i>Nora</i>

Often *-ed* participial phrases are closely related to the passive voice:

The teacher <i>was annoyed</i> by the students' behavior.	<b>past passive voice</b>
<i>Annoyed by the students' behavior</i> , the teacher gave them extra work.	<b>participial phrase</b>

### *What are the different functions of verbs with the -ed endings?*

<b>The Different Functions of -ed</b>	
The students <i>asked</i> about their grades.	<b>simple past tense</b>
The teacher has <i>e-mailed</i> them the assignment.	<b>past participle</b> , part of verb phrase <i>has e-mailed</i> ( <i>have</i> + <i>V-ed</i> )
The land was <i>conquered</i> in the 1700s.	<b>past participle</b> , part of past passive verb phrase <i>was conquered</i> ( <i>be</i> + <i>V-ed</i> )
The <i>agitated</i> politician called the reporter.	<b>participial adjective</b> modifying <i>politician</i>
The people in my neighborhood are <i>concerned</i> citizens.	<b>participial adjective</b> , complement position describing subject, <i>The people in my neighborhood</i>
<i>Disturbed by the loud music</i> , the neighbors complained.	<b>participial phrase</b> modifying <i>the neighbors</i>

<sup>2</sup>The *-ed* participles also include the irregular *-en* forms such as *chosen*, *drunk*, and *forgotten*.

<sup>3</sup>Note that not all participial phrases are reduced relative or adverbial clauses.

Discovery Activity 3 focuses on identifying the various functions of the *-ed*. The excerpts include simple past tense verbs, verb phrases with past participles, participial adjectives, and participial phrases. Be sure to focus on sentence position and function to help you in identifying each type of *-ed*.

### Discovery Activity 3: Identifying the Different Functions of *-ed*

Look at the following excerpts.

Underline all the *-ed* forms you find and identify each one.

- Remember that there are numerous irregular forms that do not end in *-ed*, such as *eaten* or *drunk*.

*Example:*

The tired scientist had finished the research praised by his peers when he retired.

tired: participial adjective

finished: part of past perfect verb phrase *had finished*

praised: part of participial phrase *praised by his peers* modifying *the research*

retired: regular past tense verb

#### A.

... living on the bacon and coffee supplied by the nation's charity, people in Memphis remained fascinated by character. [Keith, J. (2012). *Fever season: The story of a terrifying epidemic and the people who saved a city*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from Amazon.com]

#### B.

Case studies, supplemented by simulations, are not the cornerstone of business school education. Revered above all else are the lessons to be learned from "just going out and doing it." Entrepreneurship... has become the avocation of young men and women raised to believe they can do anything... [Bennis, W. & Thomas, R. (2002). *Geeks & geezers* (p. 64). Boston: Harvard University Press.]

#### C.

While the CRC made hurried plans to evacuate the people left in town, a crime spree underlined the city's precarious position. At least two hundred robbers moved into the city, attracted by the thousands of unoccupied houses stretching down the streets... [Keith, J. (2012). *Fever season: The story of a terrifying epidemic and the people who saved a city*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from Amazon.com]

## 12.2.2 Sentence Position of Participial Phrases

We find participial phrases in three positions: before a main clause (initial position), after a noun phrase they are modifying (middle position), or after a main clause (final position).

Examples: Different Sentence Positions of Participial Phrases	
<p><i>Wanting to improve her grade</i>, the student asked the teacher for help.</p> <p><i>Worried about the coming snowstorm</i>, they stocked up on supplies.</p>	<p><b>initial</b> modifying <i>the student</i></p> <p><b>initial</b> modifying <i>they</i></p>
<p>The children's mother, <i>insisting on their cooperation</i>, asked them to clean their rooms.</p> <p>The students, <i>concerned about their grades</i>, e-mailed the instructor.</p>	<p><b>middle</b> modifying <i>the children's mother</i></p> <p><b>middle</b> modifying <i>the instructor</i></p>
<p>The neighbor noticed the tall man <i>talking on his cell phone</i>.</p> <p>We couldn't get out the car <i>blocked in by a truck</i>.</p>	<p><b>final</b> modifying <i>the tall man</i></p> <p><b>final</b> modifying <i>the car</i></p>

### ***What kind of punctuation do we need to use when participial phrases occur in different positions?***

As illustrated in the sentences above, when the participial phrase occurs in

- initial position, that is, before a main clause, we put a comma after the participial phrase.
- middle position, we put a comma before and after the participial phrase *unless* it is *essential* to the meaning of the sentence:

Students *needing extra help* should contact the Writing Center.  
 The girl *wearing the red dress* is Jason's fiancée.

In these two examples we see how the participial phrases serve to add crucial information about the noun phrases they are modifying.

- final position, we put a comma before the participial phrase unless it is *essential* to the meaning of the sentence.

There is a new rule *requiring different documentation for student loans*.  
 I didn't call him, *thinking it was too late*.

Here in the first example, the participial phrase is essential to the meaning of the sentence. In the second example, the participial phrase is providing "extra" or non-essential meaning.

### ***12.2.3 Functions of Participial Phrases***

Participial phrases generally function as adjectives modifying nouns and noun phrases, and occasionally function as adverbs. These are often reduced adverb clauses (see Chap. 9). Because participial phrases are a more formal form of sentence structure, we usually use them in writing rather than in speaking.

<b>Examples: Functions of Participial Phrases</b>	
The passengers, <i>waiting for takeoff</i> , began to complain.	<b>adjectival</b> modifying <i>the passengers</i>
<i>Realizing they were in danger of failing</i> , the students studied harder.	<b>adverbial</b> modifying verb <i>studied</i>

*How can I tell the difference between gerund phrases and participial phrases?*

### 12.2.3.1 Participial Phrases Versus Gerund Phrases

The key to distinguishing gerund and participial phrases is to consider their function in a sentence. An *-ing* participle is functioning as a **noun** and part of a **gerund phrase** if it is:

- the subject of the verb
- the direct object of the verb
- the object of a preposition, or
- the subject complement of a linking verb

An *-ing* participle is functioning as an **adjective** and part of a **participial phrase** if it is:

- modifying a noun or a noun phrase

and functioning as an adverb if it is:

- modifying a verb or verb phrase

*Is there anything else that will help me distinguish the -ing participle in a gerund phrase versus a participial phrase?*

An easy way to help you differentiate between the two structures is to try substituting *it*. If the gerund or gerund phrase is functioning as a noun, you can substitute *it* and the sentence is still grammatical. *Doing crossword puzzles* relaxes Lyle.

*It* relaxes Lyle. The snowstorm prevented us from *driving home*.

The snowstorm prevented us from *it*.

If, on the other hand, the participle is part of a participial phrase and functioning as an adjective, substituting *it* will give you a nonsense sentence:

*While waiting for takeoff*, the flight attendants passed out magazines.

\**It*, the flight attendants passed out magazines.

The man, *speeding too quickly*, slid off into a ditch.

\*The man, *it*, slid off into a ditch.

Discovery Activity 4 practices identifying gerund phrases and participial phrases. This activity uses teacher-generated sentences. Discovery Activity 5 also practices identifying gerund and participial phrases but with authentic excerpts.

#### Discovery Activity 4: Distinguishing Between Gerund Phrases and Participial Phrases

Look at the following excerpts.

Decide whether the italicized phrases are participial phrases or gerund phrases.

- If you are unsure, try substituting *it* for the underlined phrase.

*Example:*

participial phrase

*Concerned about the cost of gas*, Geraldine decided to carpool.

- The candidate contested the outcome of the election, *claiming voter fraud*.
- Working even after retirement age*, George has been indispensable to the company.
- You should consider *doing your homework more carefully*.
- Exhausted by the climb*, Taylor collapsed by the side of the road.
- Taking a vacation* is important for all of us.
- Brenda, *taking a deep breath*, continued her talk.
- Getting up early* is hard when you're tired.

Try two or three excerpts in this next Discovery Activity. Compare your answers to those in the Answer Key. If you have no mistakes, you may wish to move on to the next section.

#### Discovery Activity 5: Gerund Phrase or Participial Phrase?

The gerund phrases and participial phrases have been italicized in the following excerpts.

Label each one.

- If it is a gerund phrase, label it **GP**.
- If it is a participial phrase, label it **PP**.

**A.**

*Drawing conclusions from chimpanzees and gorillas* overlooks an important point: At some moment back then, we got language (and all that goes with it) and they did not. [Lakoff, R. (2004). *Language and women's place: Text and commentaries* (p. 117). In M. Bucholtz (Ed.), New York: Oxford.]

**B.**

*Looking back over three years of magazines*, we found twenty-three articles hyping plastic surgery, and one hundred more whose tone presumed or implied that their readers were unhappy with aging. [Blyth, M. (2004). *Spin sisters* (p. 101). New York: St. Martin's Press.]

**C.**

*Using the backside of its bucket*, the loader awkwardly patted the reeking mass into one solid rectangular cube. [Royte, E. (2005). *Garbage land: On the secret trail of trash* (p. 45). New York: Little, Brown & Company.]

**D.**

*Frowning in his dress shirt and polished brown shoes*, Apuzzi picked is way over a sofa cushion, across the slippery frame of a foldout bed, and in between two black garbage bags. [Royte, E. (2005). *Garbage land: On the secret trail of trash* (p. 46). New York: Little, Brown & Company.]

**E.**

*Achieving a rich, moist brown humus in a sanitary landfill* is nothing but a romantic fantasy! [Royte, E. (2005). *Garbage land: On the secret trail of trash* (p. 89). New York: Little, Brown & Company.]

**F.**

*Watching Twla Tharp and her dancers*, I was reminded that business managers routinely complain that they don't have time to "practice" being leaders. [Bennis, W., & Thomas, R. (2002). *Geeks & geezers* (p. xiv). Boston: Harvard Business School Press.]

Discovery Activity 6 practices recognizing and identifying the different functions of the *-ed* and *-ing* participles.

### Discovery Activity 6: Identifying the Different Participles and Functions

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline all the examples of participles you can find.
2. Identify the function of each participle you have identified.

*Example:*

Sitting by the lake, I was watching the diving loons.

Sitting: part of participial phrase by the lake

watching: present participle, part of past progressive verb phrase *was watching*

diving: participial adjective modifying noun *loons*

**A.**

I opened the door and there was Mel, standing in the hallway, with a tall gentlemen standing behind him. [Wilder, G. (2005). *Kiss me like a stranger* (p. 95). New York: St Martin's.]

**B.**

President Johnson watched the developing demonstrations in St. Augustine warily. Just a year earlier, as vice president, he had attended a dinner in preparation for the upcoming anniversary. [Kotz, N. (2005). *Judgment days* (p. 126). New York: Houghton Mifflin.]

**C.**

Stepping out of his darkened, oddly painted pickup and gaining his footing, he swallowed a little, his lower lip drooping and damp. [Theroux, P. (2015). *Deep South: Four seasons on back roads*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from Amazon.com]

**D.**

The biggest problem I had during the seven weeks of filming was trying not to break up laughing when I was acting in a scene with Bob Newhart... I always felt like saying, "Well, Bob started it... " On the last day of filming... we were outside in downtown Los Angeles, which was supposed to be New York. We finished filming at midnight, and the producer sent Bob and me home in the same fake Yellow Cab, along with a pile of our own clothing that we had loaned to the production... When we got to Bob's home in Beverly Hills, we both got out of the cab, carrying a bundle of Bob's clothes. [Wilder, G. (2005). *Kiss me like a stranger* (p. 111). New York: St. Martin's.]

*Since participles don't inflect for time, do all participial phrases refer to the same time?*

## **12.2.4 Time in Participial Phrases**

### **12.2.4.1 Perfect Participial Phrases**

As we discussed in the beginning of this chapter, participles in participial phrases are called verbals because they do not inflect for time the way verbs do. However, participles, unlike gerunds, do have two different forms for a type of time reference. The basic *-ing* or *-ed* participle, with which we have been working up to now, indicates general or non-specific time. When we want to indicate a sequence of events, we use a *perfect participial phrase* to indicate the *earlier* event. The perfect participial phrase consists of *having* + past participle:

**Having reached** a decision, the jurors returned to the courtroom.  
The crowd dispersed, **the concert having ended**.

Keeping in mind again that form is not equal to function, do not confuse perfect participial phrases with participial phrases with the main verb *have*:

**Having one's own house** is a goal of many adults.  
Many people feel stressed, **having too much to do and too little time to relax**.

Perfect participial phrases must include the past participle, as in *having reached* or *having ended* in the example sentences.

**Are there also passive participial phrases?**

#### 12.2.4.2 Passive Participial Phrases

Participial phrases can be in the passive (see Chap. 8). Passive participial phrases can also express two different types of time references. Passive participial phrases referring to general time consist of *being* + past participle:

*Being watched by millions of viewers*, the news anchor became a household name throughout the country.

To indicate a sequence of events in the passive, we use *having* + *been* + past participle:

*Having been sequestered for two weeks during the trial*, the jurors were happy to return home.

**Do ESL/EFL learners have difficulties with participial phrases and gerund phrases?**

- **Learner difficulties**

More proficient ESL/EFL learners, especially those enrolled in writing courses, may be encouraged to use participial phrases to add variety to their writing and to avoid short, choppy sentences. For practice, they may be given sentences and asked to rewrite or combine them to include participial phrases. While learners may have little trouble with such exercises, in their own writing they may avoid the use of such phrases or use them incorrectly, especially if these structures are not found in or are different from those in their own language. For example, instead of using a participle, ESL/EFL learners may use an inflected verb:

\*The girl *sits* over there is a student in Professor Danik's class.

Both ESL/EFL learners and inexperienced native speakers may write participial phrases in sentences and create what are called *dangling modifiers*. After a participial phrase, the noun or noun phrase immediately following

refers to the preceding participial phrase. At times, however, when the participial phrase is in initial sentence position, writers will use a noun or noun phrase in the main clause that cannot logically be the one the participial phrase is supposed to refer to.

\*Rushing to get to class, Anne's computer fell down and broke.

\*Driven by panic, the banks experienced a run on money.

Although these sentences may initially sound correct, the questions to ask is whether or not a computer can rush to class or whether banks can be driven by panic. Since an introductory participial phrase modifies the noun or noun phrase immediately following it, the answer here is "no." The sentences need to be rewritten as, for instance:

Rushing to get to class, Anne dropped her computer and broke it.

Driven by panic, people ran to withdraw their money from the banks.

This type of error is of concern in formal writing but not in informal writing. As such, it tends to be focused on in advanced ESL/EFL writing classes. The first error, using an inflected verb instead of a participle, is grammatically incorrect in spoken as well as in informal and formal written English.

The last type of verbal we will look at in this chapter is the *infinitive*.

### 12.3 Section 3: Infinitives and Infinitive Phrases

The infinitive, as we have seen previously, is *to* + base or simple verb. Infinitives can combine with other words to form *infinitive phrases*. You may be puzzled why many grammarians categorize infinitives as verbals. The reason is that infinitives do not inflect for person and number, and can function as nouns, objects, adjectives, adverbs, and complements.

#### Examples: Functions of Infinitive Phrases

<i>To find a good job</i> is an important goal	<b>subject</b> of verb <i>is</i>
Most people want <i>to find a good job</i> .	<b>object</b> of verb <i>want</i>
The teacher has a lot of work <i>to do tonight</i> .	<b>adjective</b> modifying <i>work</i>
The teacher is leaving now <i>to get to her class</i> .	<b>adverb</b> modifying <i>is leaving now</i>
Her class is difficult <i>to teach in a lecture hall</i> .	<b>adjective complement</b> modifying <i>difficult</i>

Although infinitives can function as the subject of the clause and come in initial position, this is considered formal and generally not found in informal spoken or written English.

Infinitives and infinitive phrases function as *adjectives* when they modify a preceding *noun*. They function as *adverbs* when they modify a *verb* or an entire *sentence*. When infinitives and infinitive phrases function as adverbs, they are expressing a purpose.

***How can I decide if the infinitive or infinitive phrase is functioning as an adverb?***

Crucial to deciding whether or not an infinitive or infinitive phrase is functioning as an adverb is to ask the question “Why?” For example, in the sentence *The teacher is leaving now to get to her class*, we can ask, “Why is the teacher leaving now?” The response, *to get to her class*, answers the “why” and tell us that the infinitive phrase is functioning as an adverb to modify the verb phrase *is leaving now*.

***How do we make infinitives negative?***

Infinitives can be made negative by placing *not* before *to* + the simple or base verb.

She decided **not** *to go* home.

We find it difficult **not** *to yawn* in Mr. Davie’s class.

***Can we make infinitives passive?***

Infinitives can be made passive by using *to* + *be* + past participle. Because *be* follows *to*, it does not change form. In Discovery Activity 3, Excerpt B, we saw an example of the passive infinitive:

Revered above all else are the lessons *to be learned* from “just going out and doing it.” [Bennis, W., & Thomas, R. (2002). *Geeks & geezers* (p. 64). Boston: Harvard University Press.]

***Can infinitives make time references?***

### ***12.3.1 Perfect Infinitives and Infinitive Phrases***

Infinitives do not inflect for time, but, like participial phrases, infinitive phrases can indicate time sequence by using *to* + *have* + past participle:

The parents were lucky *to have found* this specialist for their sick child.

The perfect infinitive can be used with the progressive aspect to emphasize duration. This construction consists of *to* + *have* + *been* + present participle:

He was too scared *to have been telling* lies the entire time.

The perfect infinitive can also be used in passive voice. This construction consists of *to* + *have* + *been* + past participle:

Shelly was surprised *to have been offered* the job.

## 12.3.2 Sentence Patterns with Infinitive Phrases

### 12.3.2.1 Infinitives as Direct Objects of Verbs

The most common sentence position of infinitives and infinitive phrases is after a main verb. When infinitives and infinitive phrases follow verbs, they are functioning as objects. We examined this pattern in Chap. 5 when we discussed which verbs are followed by gerunds, which by infinitives, and which by a gerund or an infinitive. In this chapter, we focus on the verbs that are followed exclusively by infinitives.

**Common Verbs Followed by Infinitives**

afford	come	forget	offer	resolve	use
agree	consent	happen	pretend	seem	volunteer
arrange	decide	hope	proceed	struggle	want
ask	deserve	learn	profess	tend	wait
care	determine	manage	prove	threaten	wish
claim	fail	mean	refuse	undertake	

The verbs in this chart are followed immediately by an infinitive or an infinitive phrase and function as the direct object of the verb.

At times adverbs may come before the infinitive or an infinitive phrase:

He agreed **immediately** *to come for the interview*.

In formal prescriptive grammar, an adverb should not come between the *to* and simple verb of an infinitive. When this does occur, it is referred to as a *split infinitive*.

He prepared *to* **immediately** *come* for the interview.

Although the split infinitive is frowned upon in formal prescriptive grammar, many native speakers ignore this prohibition in both spoken and written English.

### 12.3.2.2 Verb + Indirect Object + Infinitive

Some verbs in English follow a slightly different pattern. These verbs require an *indirect object* between the main verb and the infinitive or the infinitive phrase. The indirect object may be either a noun or pronoun. Remember that the infinitive or infinitive phrase is the direct object of the verb.

Some teachers allow **their students** *to use the textbook during the test*.

The sergeant commanded **them** *to leave*.

Common Verbs Followed by Indirect Object + Infinitive				
advise	command	get (=cause)	order	require
allow	convince	hire	permit	teach
authorize	direct	inspire	persuade	tell
appoint	encourage	instruct	remind	urge
cause	forbid	invite	request	warn
challenge	force	motivate		

### *Does this pattern always apply?*

When these verbs are used in the passive, the original **indirect object becomes the subject** of the passive sentence. Thus, there is no longer an indirect object between the verb and the infinitive:

Some teachers allow **their students** *to use the textbook during the test*.  
**Students** were allowed to use the textbook during the test.

The sergeant commanded **them** *to leave*.  
**They** were commanded *to leave*.

### *Are there any other patterns with the infinitive?*

#### 12.3.2.3 Verb + (Indirect Object) + Infinitive

Some verbs may or may not take an indirect object before the infinitive. The difference lies in the meaning. When the verb is followed only by an infinitive or an infinitive phrase, it is being used intransitively (see Chap. 5). When it is followed by an object + infinitive, it is being used transitively.

The teacher expected <i>to leave</i> late.	<b>intransitive</b> ; teacher is expecting to leave
The teacher expected <b>us</b> <i>to leave</i> late.	<b>transitive</b> ; teacher is expecting someone else ( <i>us</i> ) to leave

Common Verbs + Optional Indirect Object + Infinitive				
ask	choose	like	prefer	want
beg	expect	need	prepare	wish

### 12.3.2.4 Infinitives After *Be* + Certain Adjectives

Infinitives or infinitive phrases can follow *be* + certain adjectives. These adjectives generally express mental states or emotion:

She was **eager** to hear the news.

I am **pleased** to meet you.

#### ***Be* + Common Adjectives Followed by Infinitives**

amazed	content	eligible	lucky	sad
angry	difficult	fortunate	pleased	shocked
anxious	delighted	glad	proud	sorry
ashamed	determined	happy	ready	surprised
astonished	disappointed	hesitant	relieved	upset
careful	disturbed	likely	reluctant	wrong
certain				

Some of the *-ed* participial adjectives here have *-ing* participial adjective counterparts that can also be followed by an infinitive or an infinitive phrase. When the *-ing* participial adjective counterpart is used, the sentence often includes the filler or dummy *It* subject:

*It* was surprising to see how quickly he recovered after the accident.

*It* was shocking to hear the news.

The subject pronoun *It* is referred to as a “filler” or “dummy” subject because it does not refer to anything. This *It* simply fulfills the grammatical requirement of English that every main verb must have a subject.

### 12.3.3 *Base Verbs or “Bare Infinitives” and Causative Verbs*

Certain verbs are followed by the verb without the *to*. This type of verb as we have seen, is frequently referred to as a *bare* or *simple* infinitive or just the simple or base verb. These verbs include the so-called causatives verbs.

#### ***What is a causative verb?***

In Chap. 8 we discussed the causative verb *get*. The label *causative* is also commonly used with the verbs *help*, *have*, *let*, and *make* because they express the idea that “X” causes “Y” to do something. The causative verbs *have*, *let*, and *make* are followed by an object and the base verb.

The verb *make* when used in a causative sense implies that “X” compels “Y” to do something:

Marcia’s dad *made* her *do* her homework this afternoon.

The verb *let* when used in a causative sense implies that “X” allows “Y” to do something.

Marcia’s dad *let* her *watch* a movie last night.

The verb *help* may be followed by either a base verb or the infinitive:

They *helped clear* the yard of debris.

They *helped to clear* the yard of debris.

See how well you do in identifying infinitives in Discovery Activity 7.

### Discovery Activity 7: Identifying Infinitives

Underline the infinitives in the excerpts.

#### A.

Practice and performance come to be viewed as inseparable... The key to practicing in the midst of performance is to identify where opportunities exist... Find ways to notice yourself in action, to experiment with different ways of behaving in real time, and to adjust your behavior... [Bennis, W., & Thomas, R. (2002). *Geeks & geezers* (p. 178). Boston: Harvard University Press.]

#### B.

Since one man’s patron is generally another man’s client, a chain of such relationships extends from the top to the bottom of society... The anthropologist Julian Pitt-Rivers coined the term “lopsided friendship” to describe this bond between social unequals. To call such an arrangement friendship may seem to stretch the word beyond all recognition. [Bellow, A. (2003). *In praise of nepotism: A natural history* (p. 37). New York: Doubleday.]

#### C.

References to *The Godfather* permeate popular culture... Real gangsters are even said to have adopted the rituals and language of the Corleone family... [Bellow, A. (2003). *In praise of nepotism: A natural history* (p. 29). New York: Doubleday]

***What kinds of problems do ESL/EFL learners have with infinitives and infinitive phrases?***

- **Learner difficulties**

Low-proficiency ESL/EFL learners at times confuse infinitives with prepositional phrases beginning with *to*. For such ESL/EFL learners, it is helpful to stress that the *to* of an infinitive is followed by a verb describing an action, an event, or a state, such as *to write*, *to walk*, and *to teach*. Prepositional phrases beginning with *to*, in contrast, have a noun or noun phrase after the *to*. Compare, for instance:

The girl wants <i>to walk</i> .	<b>infinitive</b>
The girl is walking <i>to the store</i> .	<b>prepositional phrase</b>
The girl wants <i>to walk to the store</i> .	<b>infinitive + prepositional phrase</b>

In our first sentence, *to* is followed by the verb *walk*. We know that it is not the noun *walk* because of sentence position and the lack of other preceding words that indicate noun function, such as articles. In the second sentence, *to* is followed by *the* + a noun. This indicates that *to* is functioning as a preposition and part of a prepositional phrase. In the last sentence, *to walk* is an infinitive followed by a prepositional phrase. We know this because of the sentence position of *to walk* after the verb *wants* and the words following the second *to* (article *the* + noun *store*). This tells us that the first *to* is part of the infinitive and the second *to* a preposition. An analysis such as this can help learners see how to focus on context rather than on form since, in English, form is not related to function.

A related area of difficulty for many ESL/EFL learners is remembering which verbs require an indirect object before the infinitive and which ones do not:

The teacher arranged *me* to have a tutor.

Still another area of difficulty for ESL/EFL learners, particularly at lower levels of proficiency, is remembering to include the *to* before an infinitive when an object comes between it and the main verb:

\*Her friend encouraged her *study* for the university.

On the other hand, ESL/EFL learners may include *to* after verbs that take only the base verb:

\*The teacher made me *to do* my homework over again.

\*Allison let the teacher *to give* her extra help.

## 12.4 Summary

### Verbals

- There are three types of verbals: gerunds, participles, and *to* infinitives. They are called verbals because they lack inflections for person, number, and, in the case of gerunds, time.

Gerunds	Participles	Infinitives
• are <i>-ing</i> forms of verbs.	• are <i>-ing</i> and <i>-ed</i> forms of verbs.	• consist of <i>to</i> + base verb.
• function as nouns. • can be in subject, object, or complement position.	• function as adjectives and sometimes as adverbs.	• function as subject, object, adjective, adverb, and complement.
	• can indicate general time or prior time.	• can indicate general time or prior time.
	• can be used in passive voice.	• can be used in passive voice.

### Forms of the Participle in Participial Phrases

	active	passive
<b>general time</b>	requiring	required
<b>progressive aspect</b>	∅	being required
<b>perfect (first event in a sequence)</b>	having required	having been required
<b>perfect progressive form</b>	having been requiring	∅

### Infinitive Patterns

I offered <i>to help</i> .	<b>main verb + infinitive</b>
She convinced <i>him to leave</i> .	<b>main verb + required object + infinitive</b>
I wanted <b>him</b> <i>to leave</i> . I wanted <i>to leave</i> .	<b>main verb + (optional object) + infinitive</b>

### Causative Verbs

- consist of bare or simple verb.
- express idea that “X” causes “Y” to do something.

get	make	let	have	help
-----	------	-----	------	------

## 12.5 Practice Activities

### Activity 1: Identifying Gerund Phrases and Their Functions

Underline each gerund phrase.

Label the function of each gerund phrase.

*Example:*

The boss considered hiring a new office manager. **object of verb**

- (a) Swimming laps is vigorous exercise.
- (b) Avery gave up skiing after she broke her leg.
- (c) Candidates for public office do not object to releasing their tax returns.
- (d) Winning the Tour de France is a significant accomplishment.
- (e) Her favorite hobby is hiking.
- (f) Demanding satisfaction, the customer insisted on seeing the manager.

**Activity 2: Identifying Different Functions of Participles**

1. Underline each participle of a verb phrase, participial adjective, or participial phrase.
2. Identify the function of each one.

*Example:*

Given our soaked clothes, we needed to wait until they had dried.

Given our soaked clothes: participial phrase

dried: past participle, part of past perfect verb phrase *had dried*

- (a) I was awakened by the howling wind rattling the windows.
- (b) The levees broke, letting the heavily polluted water pour through the streets.
- (c) The chef is becoming famous for his amazing dishes using only locally sourced ingredients.
- (d) The yard of the abandoned house is filling with rusting toys, broken machinery, discarded bottles, and decaying vegetation, creating an unwelcome eyesore in the neighborhood.
- (e) Choosing whether to travel to a mountain resort or to a beach in the Caribbean proved to be a difficult decision.

**Activity 3: Identifying the Different Types of –ing Participles**

Look at the following excerpts.

1. Underline all the *–ing* forms you find.
2. Identify each *–ing* form you have underlined.

*Example:*

The people are sitting in a speeding bus, enjoying the view.

sitting: present participle, part of present progressive verb phrase

speeding: participial adjective

enjoying: participle introducing participial phrase

**A.**

I remember my mother telling me when my kids were small and I was working hard that it was the best time of my life. [Blyth, M. (2004). *Spin sisters* (p. 78). New York: St. Martin's Press.]

**B.**

Walking home after the party, I also realized that I had to acknowledge from the start that I was part of the girls' club whose members are experts at telling and selling stories to American women. [Blyth, M. (2004). *Spin sisters* (p. 3). New York: St. Martin's Press.]

**C.**

Watching playful dolphins keep up with speeding boats, diving and leaping near the front, or bow, you'd think that these marine animals must be incredibly fast swimmers. [Gordon, D. (2005, June/July). 10 Cool things about dolphins. *National Geographic Kids*, p. 18]

**D.**

Darkness lurked over the parking lot, and the rain came down in sheets... Alyssa berated herself for forgetting her umbrella. Rushing to the car, she noticed that the lights were out... She sank into the driver's seat of her Honda, resting her forehead on the steering wheel. [Carroll, R. (2008). *Bayou corruption*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from Amazon.com]

**Activity 4: Identifying Participles and Their Functions**

Label the type and function of each italicized participle in the following excerpt. When you paraphrase what's been *said*, or repeat the specifics of what you have *heard*, there can be no doubt that you have *listened* and *understood* the speaker. This is especially effective when you are *disagreeing* with your conversation partner or have *listened* to her explain something highly complex or technical. *Paraphrasing* the speaker clarifies that you understood correctly. Or it can help the speaker recognize that you misunderstood what she was *attempting* to communicate... In an emotionally *charged* situation, you gain a side benefit of *defusing* anger when you repeat the specifics of what the other person stated.... *Skilled* customer service managers know that by *repeating* what an angry customer is *saying*, they can reduce the level of hostility. *Remaining* calm while doing so sends a message about your own professionalism and poise. [Fine, D. (2002). *The fine art of small talk* (p. 52). Englewood, CO: Small Talk Publishers.]

**Activity 5: Identifying Infinitive Phrases versus Prepositional Phrases with To**

1. Underline the infinitive phrases and the prepositional phrases.
2. Label the infinitive phrases **IP** and the prepositional phrases **PP**.
  - Can you explain what clues there are that help you identify the function of *to*?

*Example:*

They go to the school around the corner. PP (indicates direction)  
Some students like to study. IP (part of verb phrase)

- (a) Some residents ignored official orders to leave their homes.
- (b) The risk of widespread contamination and disease had left the police with no choice but to use force, if necessary, to evacuate any resident who refused to leave.
- (c) Those who had lost their homes in the storm were forced to go to relatives or to shelters.
- (d) The sick and elderly asked the police to help them move to other safer areas.

- (e) In a move to defend himself, the politician prepared to come back to his home state to face his accusers of failing to prepare adequately before the storm.

**Activity 6: Distinguishing the Different Verbal Constructions**

- Underline the gerund phrases, participial phrases, and infinitive phrases.
- Identify what each one is.

**A.**

She took a moment to hover in the doorway, drawing in the sweet smell of Tara's lingering perfume... Bending over, she retrieved clean clothes and her personal toiletries before marching into the hall to the bathroom. [Carroll, R. (2008). *Bayou corruption*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from Amazon.com]

**B.**

On this chilly late afternoon, other painters were absorbed in working on separate panels of the mural... A car swung by, music blaring... a heavysset woman got out, leaving the music playing. [Theroux, P. (2015). *Deep South: Four seasons on back roads*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from Amazon.com]

**C.**

After the call, Bo didn't speak to Sue Nell at all, but went ahead with his planning as if she weren't there... Arrayed on the floor in front of her was a tangle of fish hooks... The voices faded as they walked down the steps, Bo accompanying them to their cars. [Thompson, M. (2013). *Hurricane season*. Kindle iPad Version. Retrieved from Amazon.com]

**Activity 7: Dangling Modifiers**

- Rewrite each sentence to avoid dangling modifiers. There may be more than one option to do so.
- Consider what benefits such an activity might or might not have for learners of English.
  - Having successfully completed the paper, the grade was excellent.
  - Sipping margaritas in the bar, the band sounded off-key.
  - Unwilling to evacuate in time, the Red Cross couldn't save all the stranded refugees.
  - Walking along the beach, the wind was blowing sand into their faces.

## 12.6 Answer Key

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 1

- (a) *writing*, part of gerund phrase *writing short stories*  
 gerund phrase functioning as complement describing subject of verb, *Her sole occupation*

- (b) *teaching*, gerund, subject of *is*  
 (c) *vacationing*, present participle, part of past progressive verb phrase *was vacationing*; adverbial clause *when the storm hit* describes past action that interrupted another ongoing past action *was vacationing in Florida*.  
 (d) *holding* part of present progressive verb phrase *is holding*  
 (e) *Driving*, gerund, part of subject gerund phrase *Driving without a license*  
 (f) *driving*, present participle, part of past progressive verb phrase *was driving*  
 (g) *rebuilding antique cars*, gerund phrase, functioning as a complement because naming or describing subject of verb, *Joseph's hobby*  
 (h) *washing* gerund, part of gerund phrase *washing them*, object of preposition *without*

### Discussion: Discovery Activity 2

#### Excerpt A

shutting down	gerund after <i>start</i> ; can be followed by either gerund, as here, or infinitive; object of <i>start</i>
closing	gerund after preposition <i>before</i> object of <i>before</i>

#### Excerpt B

(at) investigating	gerund after preposition <i>at</i> ; first <i>investigating</i> not a gerund but part of future progressive verb phrase <i>will be investigating</i>
--------------------	--

#### Excerpt C

Challenging	gerund, part of gerund phrase <i>Challenging each other's opinions</i> , subject of <i>comes</i>
-------------	--

#### Excerpt D

Knowing	gerund, part of gerund phrase <i>Knowing the rules</i>
playing the game	gerund, part of gerund phrase <i>playing the game</i> , complement of <i>is</i> , functioning as complement because naming or describing subject of verb
trying	gerund, object of the preposition <i>by</i>

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 3***Excerpt A*

supplied	part of participial phrase <i>supplied by the nation's charity</i>
remained	simple past tense
fascinated	participial adjective

*Excerpt B*

supplemented	part of participial phrase <i>supplemented by simulations</i>
Revered	part of participial phrase <i>Revered above all else</i>
learned	part of passive infinitive phrase <i>to be learned</i>
raised	part of participial phrase <i>raised to believe</i>

*Excerpt C*

hurried	participial adjective
underlined	simple past tense
moved	simple past tense
attracted	part of participial phrase <i>attracted by the thousands of... streets</i>
unoccupied	participial adjective

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 4**

Gerund phrases:	Sentences c, e, and g
Participial phrases:	Sentences a, b, d, and f

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 5***Excerpt A. GP**Excerpt B. PP**Excerpt C. PP**Excerpt D. PP**Excerpt E. GP**Excerpt F. PP*

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 6***Excerpt A*

opened	simple past
standing	part of participial phrase <i>standing in the hallway, standing behind him</i>

*Excerpt B*

watched	simple past
developing	participial adjective
attended:	past participle, part of past perfect verb phrase <i>had attended</i>
upcoming:	participial adjective

*Excerpt C*

Stepping	part of participial phrase <i>Stepping out of his darkened, oddly painted pickup</i>
gaining	part of participial phrase <i>gaining his footing</i> (noun)
swallowed	simple past
darkened	participial adjective
painted	participial adjective
drooping	part of participial phrase <i>drooping and damp</i>

*Excerpt D*

filming	gerund, object of preposition <i>of</i>
trying	present participle, part of past progressive verb phrase <i>was trying</i>
laughing	gerund, after phrasal verb <i>break up</i> (verb + preposition, also called particle)
acting	present participle, part of past progressive verb phrase <i>was acting</i>
saying	gerund, after the idiom <i>feel like</i> , which is followed by a gerund or noun
started	simple past
filming	gerund, object of preposition <i>of</i>
supposed	participial adjective, complement position after linking verb <i>was</i>
filming	gerund, after verb requiring gerund, <i>finish</i>
loaned	past participle, part of past perfect verb phrase <i>had loaned</i>
carrying	part of a participial phrase <i>a bundle of Bob's clothes</i>

**Discussion: Discovery Activity 7***Excerpt A*

to be viewed (passive infinitive)

to identify

to notice

to experiment

to adjust

*The key to practicing,* to functioning as preposition, followed by gerund *practicing*

*Excerpt B*

to describe

To call... friendship, functioning as the subject of the main clause

to stretch

*Excerpt C*

*to have adopted,* perfect infinitive

## Appendix A

### Some Patterns of Common Irregular Verbs

ESL/EFL learners find it helpful to learn irregular verbs based on patterns. While this is not a comprehensive list of all the irregular English verb patterns, it does illustrate some of the more common patterns. Note also that there are different ways to group irregular verbs, so do not be surprised if you find patterns other than these in different sources.

#### No Change From Base Form

bet	cost	let	set	spread
bid	cut	put	shed	thrust
broadcast	forecast	quit	shut	wed <sup>a</sup>
burst	hit	rid	split	wet <sup>b</sup>
cast	hurt			

<sup>a</sup>Alternate form possible—wedded

<sup>b</sup>Alternative form possible—wetted

#### Verbs that end in “d” and change to “t” for both Simple Past and Past Participle

bend	bent	send	sent
build	built	spend	spent
lend	lent		

#### Vowel Change in all Three Forms short i → æ → short u

Base Form	Past	Past Participle
begin	began	begun
drink	drank	drunk
ring	rang	rung
shrink	shrank	shrunk
sing	sang	sung

(continued)

(continued)

**Vowel Change in all Three Forms short i → æ → short u**

sink	sank	sunk
spring	sprang	sprung
stink	stank	stunk
swim	swam	swum

**Same Vowel Change in Simple Past and Past Participle short i → short u**

Base Form	Past	Past Participle
cling	clung	clung
dig	dug	dug
fling	flung	flung
hang	hung	hung
sling	slung	slung
spin	spun	spun
stick	stuck	stuck
sting	stung	stung
strike	stuck	stuck
swing	swung	swung
win	won	won

**Same Vowel Change in Past and Present Participle long i → au**

Base Form	Past	Past Participle
bind	bound	bound
find	found	found
grind	ground	ground
wind	wound	wound

**Same Vowel Change in Past and Present Participle short e → aw**

Base Form	Past	Past Participle
bring	brought	brought
buy	bought	bought
catch	caught	caught
seek	sought	sought
teach	taught	taught
think	thought	thought

**Same Vowel in Past and Present Participle (long o) Past Participle ends in *n* or *en***

break	broke	broken
choose	chose	chosen
freeze	froze	frozen
speak	spoke	spoken
swear	swore	sworn
steal	stole	stolen
tear	tore	torn

(continued)

(continued)

**Same Vowel in Past and Present Participle (long o) Past Participle ends in *n* or *en***

wake	woke	woken
wear	worn	worn
weave	wove	woven

**Same Vowel Change in Simple Past and Past Participle long e → short e**

<b>Base Form</b>	<b>Past</b>	<b>Past Participle</b>
bleed	bled	bled
breed	bred	bred
creep	crept	crept
deal	dealt	dealt
feed	fed	fed
feel	felt	felt
keep	kept	kept
leave	left	lwft
lead	led	led
mean	met	met
meet	met	met
read	read <sup>a</sup>	read
sleep	slept	slept
speed	sped	sped
sweep	swept	swept
weep	wept	wept

<sup>a</sup>No spelling change, only pronunciation difference for past and past participle

## Appendix B

# The Eight Functions of the Inflectional Morphemes

Although there are *eight functions* of English inflectional morphemes, there are only *five forms*.

<b>morpheme</b>	<b>function</b>	<b>attaches to</b>	<b>example</b>
-s	plural	count noun	desks, chairs
-’s	possessive	noun	girl’s hat, cat’s tail
-s	3rd person singular	verb, simple present tense	She drives. He talks. It sleeps.
-ed	regular past tense	verb	He walked.
-ed	regular past participle	verb	She has called. She had called
-ing	present participle	verb	They are walking. They have been walking.
-er	comparative	adjective, adverb	taller, higher faster, longer
-est	superlative	adjective, adverb	tallest, fastest fastest, longestt

## Appendix C

# Essential Spelling Rules: Inflections

### Doubling Final Consonants

When a one-syllable word ends in **b, d, g, l, m, n, p, r** or **t**, double the final consonant when adding *-ed*, *-ing*, *-er*, or *-est*:

rob	rob <b>bed</b>	
slip	slip <b>ping</b>	
big	big <b>ger</b>	big <b>gest</b>

When an adjective ends in **y**, change the **y** to **i** when adding *-er* or *-est*:

silly	sill <b>ier</b>	sill <b>iest</b>
shaky	shak <b>ier</b>	shak <b>iest</b>

If a word ends in **b, d, g, l, m, n, p, r** or **t**, consists of more than one syllable and the final syllable is stressed, double the final consonant when adding *-ed* or *-ing*:

prefer	prefer <b>red</b>
begin	begin <b>ning</b>
stop	stop <b>ped</b>

If a word ends with a **silent e**, drop the **e** when adding *-ing*:

make	mak <b>ing</b>
have	hav <b>ing</b>
create	creat <b>ing</b>

### Forming Plurals and 3rd Person Singular Present Tense

If the noun or verb ends in **s, ss, sh, ch, z, or x**, add **-es**:

gas	gases
press	presses
cash	cashes
church	churches
buzz	buzzes
fax	faxes

If the noun or verb ends in a **consonant + y**, change the **y** to **i** and add **-es**:

lady	ladies
fly	flies
hurry	hurries

If the noun or verb ends in a **vowel sound**, simple add **-s**:

toy	toys
drama	dramas
buy	buys
swallow	swallows

## Appendix D

### The Minor Categories: The Structure Words

Unlike the Major Category words, the number of words in the Minor Categories words is small and relatively fixed in the sense that new words rarely enter.

#### Prepositions

aboard	around	besides	for	out	towards
about	as	between	from	outside	under
above	at	beyond	near	over	underneath
across	atop	by	of	through	unlike
after	before	despite	off	throughout	up
against	behind	down	on	till	with
along	below	during	onto	to	within
amidst	beneath	except	opposite	toward	without
among	beside				

<sup>a</sup>Some prepositions also have other function, e.g. *along* can function as an adverb. Likewise, there are other words than can function as prepositions, although they more commonly function as something else, e.g. *but* most commonly functions as a conjunction and can also function as a preposition in certain sentence constructions

according to	because of	except for	instead of	prior to
ahead of	close to	far from	next to	subsequent to
along with	due to	inside of	out of	up to
aside from				

**Determiners**

the, a/an	<b>articles</b>
my, your, his, her, its, our, their	<b>possessive adjectives</b>
this, that, these, those	<b>demonstrative adjectives</b>
some, much, many, few, a few, little, a little, a lot of, no	<b>quantifiers</b>
one, two three, fifteen, one hundred	<b>ordinal numbers</b>
first, second, twentieth	<b>cardinal numbers</b>

**Conjunctions**

and	for	but	not	or	so	yet
-----	-----	-----	-----	----	----	-----

## Appendix E

### Gerunds After Verbs

#### Common Verbs Followed by a Gerund

acknowledge	defer	enjoy	miss	resent
admit	delay	escape	postpone	resist
anticipate	deplore	finish	quit	resume
appreciate	deny	imagine	recall	risk
avoid	detest	keep <sup>a</sup>	recommend	suggest
consider	discuss	mention	recollect	stop
complete	endure	mind	regret	tolerate
defend				

<sup>a</sup>In the sense of *continue*

#### Common Verbs Followed by a Gerund or an Infinitive

attempt	deserve	hesitate	neglect	start
begin	dread	intend	prefer	stop
cease	hate	like	remember	try
continue	forget	love	propose	undertake

#### Sensory and Perception Verbs Followed by an Object + Gerund

verb		object	gerund	complement
feel	We felt	the waves	crashing	into the pier.
see	We saw	the seagulls	flying	over us.
smell	We smelled	the fishermen	gutting	the fish.
notice	We noticed	tourists	coming	by bus.
observe	We observed	them	taking	photos.
watch	We watched	the boats	sailing	in the distance.

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**Common Expressions Followed by a Gerund**


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be used to	can't help	look(ing) forward to	have a good time
get used to	It's no use	have a hard time	have fun
What about _____?	It's no good	have difficulty	have a/no problem
How about _____?	It's not worth		

## Appendix F

### *Wh*-question Words

<b>Who</b>	what or which person or people
<b>Whom</b>	person, object, formal
<b>What</b>	asking for information
<b>When</b>	time
<b>Where</b>	place
<b>Why</b>	reason
<b>Which</b>	asking about choice
<b>Whose</b>	possession
<b>How</b>	manner
<b>How much/many</b>	quantity
<b>How come</b>	informal meaning “why”

## Appendix G

### Common Adverbial Subordinators

<b>subordinator</b>	<b>meaning</b>
if, unless	<b>condition</b>
although, even though, though, while, whereas	<b>contrast</b>
as if, like	<b>matter</b>
where, wherever	<b>place</b>
because, since	<b>reason</b>
so, so that	<b>result</b>
after, as, before, since, until (till), when(ever), while	<b>time</b>

## Appendix H

# Summary of Major Learner Difficulties

This is a general summary of ESL/EFL learner difficulties with a few examples. More extensive information and examples are in each chapter.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correct use of inflections (5 forms, 8 functions)</li> </ul>		Chapter 3, 4, 5 and 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• plural <i>-s</i>, possessive <i>'s</i></li> <li>• present tense 3rd person singular <i>-s</i></li> <li>• past tense <i>-ed</i>, past participle <i>-ed</i></li> <li>• present participle <i>-ing</i></li> <li>• comparative <i>-er</i></li> <li>• superlative <i>-est</i></li> </ul>	books Jane's he, she it walks walked walked (as in <i>I have walked</i> ) walking smaller smallest	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distinguishing between count, non-count, and crossover nouns, and the use of appropriate accompanying modifiers, such as <i>much, many, some, a/n, the, little, few, less</i></li> </ul>	a cat <b>some</b> cats <b>some</b> advice <b>many</b> cats <b>much</b> advice <b>few</b> cats <b>little</b> advice <b>fewer</b> students <b>less</b> time	Chapter 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choosing the correct pronoun for the noun to which it is referring/replacing.</li> </ul>		Chapter 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Placing adjectives in the correct position and in the correct order</li> </ul>	She bought a <b>big beautiful wooden</b> box.	Chapter 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remembering to include all parts of the verb phrase when there is more than one element.</li> <li>• Putting the parts of the verb phrase in the correct form.</li> </ul>	<b>1 auxiliary + participle</b> is walking, has walked <b>2 auxiliaries + participle</b> will be walking, has been walking <b>3 auxiliaries + participle</b> will have been walking, has been walked (as in <i>the dogs have been walked</i> )	Chapters 5 and 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inserting the <i>do</i> auxiliary for questions and the negative in simple present and simple past.</li> <li>• Remembering the correct forms of <i>do</i> and the main verb.</li> </ul>	<b>Does</b> Pam <b>walk</b> home? Pam <b>does not walk</b> home. <b>Did</b> you <b>walk</b> home? We <b>did not walk</b> home.	Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distinguishing between transitive and intransitive verbs</li> <li>• Placing direct and indirect noun phrases, and pronouns correctly after transitive verbs.</li> </ul>	<b>intransitive</b> I walked around the block. I slept.	Chapter 5
	<b>transitive</b> I called my friends. I called <b>them</b> . I hit the ball to Mary. I hit <b>it</b> to <b>her</b> .	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differentiating between verbs followed only by gerunds or by only by infinitives</li> </ul>	I enjoy <b>walking</b> . I want <b>to walk</b> .	Chapter 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding phrasal verbs</li> <li>• Being able to use the different patterns for the different types of phrasal verbs, especially transitive separable phrasal verbs with objects in pronoun form.</li> </ul>	Kari <b>turned in</b> her homework. Kari <b>turned</b> her homework <b>in</b> . Kari <b>turned it in</b> .	Chapter 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remembering the different forms of the verbs and auxiliaries in the different tenses.</li> <li>• Mastering the different time references of the different tenses, especially the present perfect versus the simple past.</li> </ul>		Chapter 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehending and using the modal auxiliary verbs and related structures, which often convey subtle nuances of meaning.</li> <li>• Understanding the differences in time references and meaning change</li> </ul>	<b>logical deduction</b> I don't have my textbook. It <b>must be</b> at home. I <b>must have left</b> it on the desk.	Chapter 7
	<b>necessity</b> Everyone <b>must pay</b> income tax. Mr. Jones <b>had to pay</b> a fine last year because they missed the filing deadline.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Word order in <i>wh</i>- questions, especially when the <i>do</i> auxiliary must be inserted.</li> </ul>	Who lives in this house? Who(m) did you call? What was her name? What does she do? How much does this cost? How many cars have they owned? Where are you going? Where did she go? When will they come? Why hasn't he answered his phone?	Chapter 8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding the meaning and use of transition words and phrases such as <i>thus</i>, <i>consequently</i>, <i>therefore</i>, <i>in spite of</i>, <i>moreover</i></li> </ul>		Chapter 9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding the meaning and use of the different subordinators in adverbial clauses</li> </ul>		Chapter 9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mastering the use and placement of relative pronouns and relative clauses</li> </ul>	I e-mailed the woman <b>who</b> called me. They sold the house <b>that</b> they had renovated.	Chapter 10

(continued)

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differentiating between essential and nonessential relative clauses</li> <li>• Understanding when the relative pronoun can be omitted.</li> </ul>	<p><b>essential</b>                  We lost the pictures <b>that</b> we took of our Florida vacation.                  We lost the pictures we took of our Florida vacation.</p> <p><b>nonessential</b>                  Florida, which is a peninsula, has many beaches.                  The nurse, who is wearing street clothes, has finished her shift.</p>	<p>Chapter <a href="#">10</a></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Word order in embedded <i>yes/no</i> and <i>wh</i>-questions in noun clauses</li> </ul>	<p>Gerry asked <b>if</b> <i>we were leaving</i>.                  Gerry asked <b>when</b> <i>we were leaving</i>.</p>	<p>Chapter <a href="#">11</a></p>

# Glossary

**abstract noun** A noun that denotes an abstract or intangible concept, such as *happiness* or *anger*.

**active (voice)** In an active sentence, the person or thing that is performing or causing the action is the subject of the verb and in which there is an object that receives the action. For example, in the sentence, *The boy hit the ball*, *The boy* performs the action *hit* and *the ball* receives the action.

**adjective** A word that describes or modifies the meaning of a noun, such as *sad* or *large*. An adjective provides lexical or semantic meaning. It is one of the major word class categories.

**adjective phrase** A phrase with an adjective.

**adjective clause** Another term for *relative clause* used in this book. Because a relative clause modifies a noun or noun phrase, it functions as an adjective and therefore also known as an adjective clause.

**adverb** A word that describes or modifies a verb, an adjective, another adverb, a phrase, or a sentence, such as *quickly* or *here*. An adverb provides lexical or semantic meaning. It is one of the major word class categories.

**adverb phrase** A phrase with an adverb.

**affirmative sentence** A sentence that does not have a negative verb; often referred to as a *positive sentence*.

**affix** A term including both suffixes and prefixes.

**agreement** The subject and verb must agree in number. If the subject is singular, the verb form must also be singular. *Jane likes books*. If the subject is plural, the verb must also be plural: *The girls like books*.

**article** The words *a/an*, and *the*. They signal nouns and are members of one of the minor structure word categories.

- aspect** Refers to a choice in the verb phrase expressing time meanings that are related to the duration, repetition, or completion of the action or state of the verb, e.g., *am writing* vs. *have written*.
- attitude adverb** An adverb that conveys an evaluation or judgment of what is said, e.g., *frankly*, *surprisingly*.
- auxiliary verb** A verb that “helps” and or “supports” a main verb, such as *have*, *be*, *do*.
- base verb** The simple form of a verb to which inflections can be attached, e.g., *walk* → *walks*.
- bound morpheme** A morpheme that must be attached to another morpheme. It cannot stand alone. For example, *un-* as in *unhappy* or the plural *-s* as in *boys*.
- causative verb** A verb that indicates a thing or person causes or brings about another thing or person to do something or a new state of affairs.
- closed word class** Function or structure words to which new words are very rarely added, e.g., prepositions or pronouns. A closed word class is a minor structure word class category.
- collective noun** A noun that refers to a group, e.g., *committee*, *team*, *government*.
- comparative** A form of an adjective or adverb that is used to describe differences between two persons, things, or situations. Adjectives or adverbs consisting of one syllable or ending in *-ly* generally add *-er*. Adjectives or adverbs consisting of two or more syllables generally use *more*.
- complement** Anything that comes after the main verb or verb phrase to complete a sentence. See also subject complement.
- complementizer** Used in this text to refer to *that* when it introduces a noun clause.
- complex sentences** A sentence that has a main clause and one or more subordinate clauses.
- compound sentence** A sentence that has two or more main clauses but no subordinate clause. The main clauses are conjoined by coordinators, such as *and*, *or*, and *but*.
- conditional** A sentence that refers to something real or unreal, and that generally has an *if* clause and a clause with *would*, *could*, or *might*.
- conjunction** A word that connects clauses. There are two types of conjunctions: coordinators and subordinators.
- conjunctive adverb** A transition word that connects two ideas between two main clauses, e.g., *therefore*, *however*.

**constituent** The basic unit of a sentence, including noun, adjective, adverb, prepositional, and verb phrases. Sentence constituents are combined in meaningful ways to form sentences.

**coordinator** A type of conjunction that connects two or more main clauses, phrases, or words: *and, but, or, for, and yet*.

**count noun** A noun that can be counted, e.g., *pencil, book, job*.

**crossover noun** A noun that has both a count meaning and a non-count meaning, e.g., They have nice *hair* (non-count); I found *a hair* in my soup (count). Generally, the two meanings are related, although not always.

**definite article** The word *the*. It is used when speakers want to refer to something that is known to the speaker and the hearer

**degree adverb** An adverb that increases or decreases the effect or intensity of that which it is modifying.

**demonstrative** *this, these, that, those*. A demonstrative indicates whether something is near or far in relation to the speaker. There are two types of demonstratives: demonstrative adjectives and demonstrative pronouns. **Demonstrative adjectives** occur before a noun, e.g., *this book*. **Demonstrative pronouns** occur without a noun, e.g., *I want this*.

**dependent clause** A subordinate clause; a clause that cannot stand alone, but that must occur with a main clause and that is introduced by a subordinator.

**derivational morphology** The process of creating new words by adding affixes to a stem, e.g., *sad* → *sadness* or *happy* → *unhappy*.

**descriptive grammar** An approach to grammar that focuses on describing or examining how people use language. This is the linguists' approach to grammar.

**determiner** A structure word that occurs before a noun and specifies or limits it in some way, e.g., *the, those, some*.

**direct object** Something that receives the action of the verb, usually a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase, but can also be a clause.

**direct speech** Quoted speech; the exact words someone has said or written.

**“do” support** Refers to the function of the *do* auxiliary in questions and negatives in simple present and simple past.

**di-transitive verb** A verb that takes both a direct and indirect object, e.g., *Lacie hit the ball to Larry*.

**downtoner** An adverb that lessens the meaning or intensity of an adjective or another adverb, e.g., *slightly nervous*.

**dummy it** When “It” is used as the subject but has no semantic meaning, e.g., *It is cold*.

**essential relative clause** A relative clause that is necessary to the meaning of the sentence.

**expression of quantity** A word or words that occur before a noun to indicate an amount or quantity, e.g., *a slice of, a pound of, a lot of, some*.

**filler verb** A verb that has no semantic meaning, but is necessary for grammatical reasons, e.g., “*do*” *support*.

**focus adverb** An adverb that draws attention to that which it is modifying, e.g., *frankly*.

**form** The construction of a particular word. In English, form is no guarantee of function.

**free morpheme** A morpheme that does not need to be attached or bound to another morpheme.

**frequency adverb** An adverb that tells us *how often* an action occurs, e.g., *always, sometimes, never*.

**function** The role of a word, phrase, or clause. In English, form is no guarantee of function.

**function word** Structure word; a word that expresses a grammatical relationship but has no semantic meaning, e.g., *the, to, and from*.

**future** Time that is yet to come. Usually expressed in English by *will* or *be going to*.

**gradable adjective** An adjective that can be compared using *-er* or *-est* or *more/most*.

**gerund** *-ing* form of a verb that functions as a noun.

**gerund phrase** A phrase with a gerund.

**idiom** A fixed or set expression that cannot be determined from the individual parts, e.g., *eat crow, kick the bucket*.

**if clause** A subordinate clause that begins with *if* and that express a real or unreal situation. See conditional.

**imperative** A command. The base or simple form of the verb at the beginning of a sentence telling someone to do something, e.g., *Eat your vegetables*.

**indefinite article** The word *a* or *an*. It is used when speakers want to refer to something indefinite or undefined meaning, e.g., *an apple, a cock and bull story*.

**independent clause** A main clause. A clause that can stand alone and does not need to be attached to another clause.

**indefinite pronoun** A pronoun without specific reference to a person or thing, e.g., *anybody, someone, anything, something*.

- indirect object** To whom or for whom something is done, e.g., *Miriam gave the book to me*. The direct object can occur immediately after the verb without *to* or *for*, e.g., *Miriam gave me the book*.
- indirect speech** Reported speech. A type of sentence that expresses what someone has said or written, but that is not a direct quote.
- infinitive** A verb form that includes *to* + the simple or base form of the verb, e.g., Craig left early *to drive* home.
- inflection** A morphological change in verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adjectives that signals some kind of grammatical information, e.g., *book* → *books* (–’s shows plural); or *walk* → *ed* (–*ed* shows past tense.) There are only 5 inflectional forms with 8 functions in English, but these cause many difficulties for ESL/EFL learners.
- intransitive verb** A verb that does not take an object.
- inversion** The process of moving the first auxiliary to the front of a sentence to form a question, e.g., *He is walking* → *Is he walking?*
- irregular verb** A verb that does not follow the normal inflectional patterns of English for form the simple past and/or past participle.
- lexical** A word that has semantic meaning, not just grammatical function.
- linking verb** A verb that “links” or joins the subject and complement. Sometimes referred to as a *copula* verb.
- main clause** An independent clause. A clause that can stand alone and does not require another clause. The minimum clause in English consists of a subject + verb, e.g., *Babies sleep*.
- main verb** A verb that has lexical or semantic meaning, not an auxiliary verb. It can be used as the only verb in a sentence.
- major category** This consists of the word classes that have lexical or semantic meaning: nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.
- mass noun** A noun that refers to a substance or abstract concept not divisible into countable units, e.g., *water*, *thunder*. A mass noun is a non-count noun and cannot be used in the plural or with the indefinite article *a/an* or a number.
- minor category** This consists of the word classes that have grammatical meaning, e.g., prepositions, conjunctions, and pronouns.
- modal/modal auxiliary** A special class of auxiliary verbs that convey semantic meaning. A modal occurs with a main verb and modifies the meaning of the main verb by expressing ability, politeness, possibility, necessity, obligation, logical deduction.

**modify** To add to, or specify the meaning of a word. For example, in *beautiful house*, the adjective *beautiful* modifies the noun, *house*.

**morpheme** The smallest unit of meaning. It is not the same as a syllable. A morpheme can be a single word, e.g., *hippopotamus*, or it can be a grammatical unit such as the past tense *-ed* inflection attached to a regular verb. Affixes are also morphemes, e.g., *un-* as in *unhappy*.

**morphology** How morphemes are put together to form words (derivational morphology) and how morphemes provide grammatical information (inflectional morphology).

**non-count noun** A noun that cannot be counted, e.g., *happiness*. It cannot be used in the plural or with the indefinite article *a/an* or a number.

**nonessential relative clause** A relative clause that is not necessary for meaning but that provides extra or additional information about the noun it is modifying.

**nonstandard** A form of the language not accepted in general usage, e.g., *\*He don't know me*.

**noun** A word that is generally thought of as referring to people, animals, places, ideas, or things. A noun provides lexical or semantic meaning. It is one of the major word class categories.

**noun clause** A subordinate clause that functions in the same way a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase does. Noun clauses begin with *that*, *wh-question word*, or *whether (or not)/if*.

**noun phrase** A phrase with a noun or pronoun.

**object** A noun, pronoun, or noun phrase that receives the action of the verb. Only transitive verbs take objects.

**open word class** A category of lexical or semantic words to which new words are easily added, e.g., nouns. An open word class is a major word class category.

**participial adjective** An adjective that has an *-ing* or *-ed* form.

**participle** The *-ing* or *-ed* form of a verb, e.g., *I am writing*; *I have walked*.

**particle** A preposition or adverb that forms part of a phrasal verb. As part of a phrasal verb, the preposition or adverb loses its meaning and is an integral part of the verb.

**past participle** The *-ed* form used to form perfect tenses and the passive, e.g., *have walked* (present perfect), *have been counted* (passive perfect). Sometimes referred to as the *-en* participle to distinguish it from the past tense *-ed* and because many common English participles end in *-en*, e.g., *write, written*; *eat, eaten*.

**part of speech** A traditional way of referring to word class.

**passive (voice)** In a passive sentence, the doer or agent of the action is either unimportant, unknown or the speaker wants to emphasize the original object, e.g., *A flying object hit John* versus *John was hit by flying object*. The passive is formed with a form of *be* + past participle (+ optional *by* phrase). Only transitive verbs can be used in the passive.

**past perfect** A verb form used to express a relationship between two past events or situations. The past perfect indicates the first of these two. The past perfect is formed with *had* + past participle.

**past perfect progressive** Similar to the past perfect, the past perfect progressive is a verb form used to express a relationship between two past events or situations. The past perfect progressive emphasizes the ongoing nature of the event or situation, and is formed with *had* + *been* + present participle.

**past progressive** A verb form used to express an ongoing, continuous action or situation in the past. The past progressive is formed with a past form of *be* + present participle. Also called the past continuous.

**perfect infinitive** Used to show an earlier action than that of the main clause. The perfect infinitive is formed with *to* + *have* + past participle.

**phrasal verb** A verb with one or more prepositions/adverbs, called particles, where the verb and preposition/adverb function as a semantic unit. The verb + particle have a meaning that cannot be determined from looking at the separate parts.

**phrase** A group of words that form a grammatical unit or constituent, e.g., noun phrase, verb phrase, adjective phrase.

**place adverb** An adverb that answers the question *Where?*, e.g., *Here; There*.

**possessive adjective** Possessive determiner. Modifies a noun to indicate possession or ownership: *my, your, our, his, her*.

**possessive pronoun** Indicates possession or ownership and substitutes for a noun phrase, e.g., *mine, yours, ours, his, hers, its*.

**prefix** A morpheme attached to the beginning of a word, e.g., *un* in *unhappy*.

**preposition** A structure class word, e.g., *in, from, to, on*. A preposition introduces a prepositional phrase and links the phrase to other words in a sentence.

**prepositional phrase** A phrase with a preposition followed by a noun or noun phrase.

**prescriptive grammar** An approach to grammar that focuses on the rules for correct and incorrect use of the language. This is traditional grammarians' approach to grammar.

**present participle** A main verb + *-ing* with any necessary spelling changes, e.g., *sitting*.

**present progressive** A verb form used to express an ongoing, continuous, incomplete action or situation. The present progressive is formed with the present form of *be* + present participle. Also called the present continuous.

**present perfect** A verb form used to express a relationship between past and present time. It indicates recent past time, indefinite time, and time that began in the past and continues into the present and into the future. It is formed with the present form of *have* + past participle.

**present perfect progressive** Similar to the present perfect, the present perfect progressive is a verb form used to express a relationship between past and present time. The present perfect progressive emphasizes the ongoing nature of the event or situation. The present perfect progressive is formed with a present form of *have* + *been* + present participle.

**primary auxiliary** *have*, *be*, or *do* used as an auxiliary verb.

**pro-form** A word that functions to substitute for something else, e.g., *Did you see Jane? Yes, I did.* In this example, *did* substitutes for *I saw Jane*.

**pronoun** A structure word that substitutes for a noun or noun phrase.

**quantifier** A word or words that occurs before a noun to indicate a quantity or amount, e.g., *a slice of*, *a pound of*, *a lot of*, *some*. Also called an expression of quantity.

**quoted speech** Direct speech; the exact words someone has said or written.

**reduced clause** A clause that has been reduced from its full form, e.g., *The woman who was living next door moved away.* → *The woman living next door moved away.*

**redundancy** The inclusion of more grammatical information than necessary for meaning, e.g., *two teachers* or *these teachers*. The use of *two* or *these* already tells us that “teacher” consists of more than one; the use of the plural *-s* inflection is redundant.

**reflexive pronoun** A pronoun that usually refers back to the subject of the sentence, e.g., *She bought herself a new car.*

**regular plural** A noun that forms the plural by adding *-s*, with any necessary spelling changes.

**regular verb** A verb that forms the simple past by adding *-ed*, with any necessary spelling changes.

**relative adverb** One of the adverbs *where*, *when*, or *why* used to introduce a relative clause.

**relative clause** A clause that modifies the noun or noun phrase it follows. Because a relative clause modifies a noun or noun phrase, it functions as an adjective.

Relative clauses are also known as *adjective clauses*. A relative clause is usually introduced by a relative pronoun.

**relative pronoun** A pronoun that introduces a relative clause and that refers back to the noun or noun phrase of the main clause. *That, which, who(m), and whose* are relative pronouns.

**reported speech** A type of sentence that expresses the meaning of what someone has said. Reported speech sentences are noun clauses, which may be introduced by *that, wh-questions, and whether (or not)/if*.

**semantic** Having to do with meaning. The major class words, verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs, all have lexical or semantic meaning.

**semi-modal** A structure that is related to the modal auxiliaries in terms of meaning and some grammatical properties. Semi-modals consist of more than one word, e.g., *have to, be able to*.

**simple verb** The base form of a verb to which inflections can be attached, e.g., *walk*→*walks*.

**standard** The language forms generally accepted by most users in formal and informal contexts; the forms that are found in grammar texts and in foreign/second language texts.

**stative verb** A verb that refers to mental states, attitudes, emotions, and conditions. A stative verb is generally not used in the progressive forms.

**stigmatized language** A non-standard form of language that is negatively regarded by users of the standard variety.

**structure word** Function word; a word that expresses a grammatical relationship but has no semantic meaning, e.g., *the, to, and*.

**stylebook** A reference book providing guidance on punctuation, research paper guidelines, grammatical issues of concern and/or confusion, and so on.

**subject** The part of the sentence, usually a noun or noun phrase, that acts as the agent, doer, or experiencer of the verb.

**subject complement** A word or phrase following a linking verb such as *be* and that describes or modifies the subject of this linking verb, e.g., *Jane is tall*.

**subjunctive** Used to refer to the use of the simple form of the verb in clauses following certain verbs. Also used in traditional grammar to refer to the form of the verb indicating hypothetical, contrary-to-fact situations.

**subordinate clause** A dependent clause that cannot stand alone, but that must occur with a main clause and that is introduced by a subordinator.

**subordination** The linking together of a main clause and another clause so that this clause is subordinate or dependent upon the main clause. The subordinate clause is introduced by a subordinator.

**subordinator** A word that subordinates a clause to a main clause. A subordinator introduces a subordinate or dependent clause.

**suffix** A bound morpheme that occurs at the end of a word, e.g., *rude*→*rudeness*.

**superlative** A form of an adjective or adverb that is used to rank a person, thing, or situation in the highest position. Adjectives or adverbs consisting of one syllable or ending in *-ly* generally add *-est*. Adjectives or adverbs consisting of two or more syllables generally use *most*.

**syllable** A unit of language consisting of a single sound, that is a single sound without interruption or breaks. The word *man*, for instance, consist of one syllable; the word *woman* of two syllables.

**tense** Refers to an inflectional morpheme attached to the verb related to time, e.g., *He kicked*.→ past time.

**that-clause** A type of noun clause introduced by the complementizer *that*.

**time adverb** An adverb referring to time, e.g., *since*.

**transition word/phrase** A word used to connect one idea to another. A transition word or phrase can continue a line of reasoning (e.g., *furthermore*, *in addition*), show order of ideas or arguments (e.g., *first*, *finally*), indicate a contrast (e.g., *however*, *on the other hand*), and more.

**transitive verb** A verb that takes an object.

**verb** A semantic class of words that refer to actions, situations, states, attitudes, mental conditions. A verb shows tense by taking the 3rd person singular *-s* in the present and the *-ed* inflection in the past. In the case of an irregular verb, it may change its form in the past (e.g., *brought*), or not change at all (e.g., *cut*).

**verb phrase** A phrase containing a main verb.

**verbal** A form derived from a verb but having another function, e.g., *crying baby*. Here *crying* is a participial adjective.

**verbal phrase** A phrase containing a verbal, e.g., *Screaming loudly, the baby woke us up*. Here *crying* There are three types of verbal phrases: gerund, participial, and infinitive.

**voice** Active or passive type sentence construction, e.g., *Shakespeare wrote Hamlet* (active) versus *Hamlet was written by Shakespeare* (passive).

**wh-question word** A word such as *what*, *who*, *when*, *why* used for questions and to introduce embedded noun clause questions.

**word class** A group of words that are classified together on the basis of semantic meaning and/or grammatical function, e.g., nouns, prepositions.

**yes/no question** A type of question that can be answered with “yes” or “no.”

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