GRAMMAR REVIEW

What are parts of speech?

How are sentences structured?

How can I improve my spoken and written grammar?

When we talk about grammar, we are talking about words that serve the same purpose, known as parts of speech, and also about the relationship between words in sentences. We are also talking about what is preferred and what is to be avoided in word placement in sentences, or syntax, and we can follow the rules or conventions of good sentence structure. It is important to follow these conventions or rules so that our speech and our writing will be adequately understood and respected.

One of the first areas of learning or reviewing grammar is to consider **parts of speech**. Words are classified as **parts of speech** according to their use and form. For example, **nouns** are naming words. They are used to name persons, animals, places, plants, things, substances, qualities and ideas. Matt, dog, San Antonio, Dogwood tree, rain, cloud, gold, friendliness and democracy are some examples of these nouns. Nouns are either common or proper. A **common noun** is the name of a kind or class of person, place or thing: town, hat, salesperson. A **proper noun** is the name of a particular person or place: Albert Einstein, Missouri. Proper nouns are always capitalized.

Nouns can have a plural form. In general, the most common plural nouns are formed by adding s or es. Some examples are stones, clouds, trees, fences. But some nouns change to plural differently: mouse-mice, ox-oxen, and a few, such as deer-deer, have the same form for both singular and plural. If you are in doubt about how to change the singular to the plural form, it is best to check your dictionary.

A second part of speech is the **pronoun**. A **pronoun** is a word used in place of a noun. Words such as he or she refer to a previous noun. It needs to be clear what noun the pronoun refers to. Some examples of **pronouns** are: I, me, we, us, you, she, he, it, him, her, they, them, who, whom, myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves and that. These pronouns may represent persons. Example: Lori keeps <u>her</u> dictionary close to <u>her</u> desk, for <u>she</u> refers to <u>it</u> as often as <u>she</u> reads <u>her</u> assignments.

Some **pronouns** refer to nouns in a more general way: each, everyone, nobody or somebody. These **pronouns** are always considered to be singular. That is, they require a singular verb: each is, everybody *does,* nobody *wants,* somebody *knows*. Other pronouns indicate particular things: .<u>This</u>. is my book. <u>That</u> is your desk. The plural forms of this and that are these and those: <u>These</u> are my assignments. <u>Those</u> are your papers.
Some **pronouns** introduce questions: <u>Which</u> computer is the best? <u>What</u> are the ingredients in that cake?

Another part of speech you may be familiar with is the **verb. Verbs** are words with certain forms that show action or express being. They occur in certain positions within sentences, and usually you can identify them by the action they provide to the sentence.
Examples: The monkey <u>ate</u> the banana. The monkey <u>jumped</u> from tree to tree.

It may not be as easy, however, to identify the being forms of **verbs.** The most common ones are is, was, were, are and am. These words are always verbs. Examples: The natives <u>are </u>on an island in the ocean. I <u>am</u> a loyal Chiefs fan.

The form of the **verb** refers to its tense, meaning the time of the action or being. This time may be in the present or past. Examples: Mary <u>sings</u> the national anthem. Mary <u>sang</u> the national anthem.

Sometimes, a **helping verb** is used with the main verb to show other tenses or times of action or being. She <u>had sung</u> the song many times before. The **helping verb** is had and the main verb is sung; these two words together show a certain time in the past. She <u>will be singing</u> it next week at the season opener. The helping verbs (will be) and the main verb (singing) show a certain time in the future.

The most common position for the **verb** is directly after the subject or after the subject and its modifiers. Examples: The two dogs <u>walked</u> through the field. The dog without the collar <u>ran</u> away from us.

Another part of speech is the **adjective**. **Adjectives** are words that modify nouns and pronouns. An **adjective** usually answers one of the questions--What kind? Which one? How many? The **adjectives** that answer What kind? questions are usually descriptive. They tell the quality, kind, or condition of nouns or pronouns they modify. Examples: *blue* truck, *large* house, *tea* roses, *noisy* room.

Adjectives that answer the Which one? questions clarify or restrict the meaning of the modifier. Some of these are pronouns are used as adjectives. Examples: *my* money, *their* house, *this* school year, *these* cats.

Adjectives that answer the How many? questions are numbering words. Examples: *some* people, *each* dog, *few* people, *four* dollars, *one* shoe.

The next part of speech to consider is the **adverb.** Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives or other adverbs. An **adverb** usually answers one of these questions: How? Where? When? Why? or the How? **Adverbs** that answer the How? question are concerned with manner or way. Example of the How? question: She spoke <u>loudly.</u> Some other examples of **adverbs** that modify verbs are: They did their work <u>quickly</u>. Adverbs that modify adjectives are: She was <u>somewhat </u>happy. **Adverbs** that modify other **adverbs** are: He was <u>almost always</u> sleepy. She ran <u>very quickly</u>.

Most words ending in -ly are **adverbs**; however, there are a few exceptions. Examples: The house had a *lovely* view of the countryside. Lovely is an adjective because it modifies or describes view~ it is <u>not</u> an **adverb**.
The **adverb** should be placed as closely as possible to the word it modifies. Example: The teacher pointed out <u>only</u> one mistake. The man waxed the car until it <u>almost</u> shone. By placing the **adverb** as near as possible to the word it modifies, you avoid confusion.

The next part of speech to consider is the **preposition**: A **preposition** combines a noun or pronoun to form a **prepositional phrase**. It serves as a connective between its object(s) and some other words in the sentence. Examples: The children **ran <u>down</u> the street**, but they were stopped **at the corner** by their brother, who was returning **<u>from</u> work**. The **prepositions** in this sentence are: down, at, and from. The **prepositional phrases** are down the street, at the corner, and from work.

Some of the most common **prepositions** are: about, above, across, after, against, among, around, before, behind, below, beneath, beside, between, beyond, but, by, despite, down, for, from, in, into, like, near, of, off, on, over, past, to, toward, under, until, upon and with.

Another part of speech is the **conjunction**. A **conjunction** connects and shows a relationship between words, phrases, or clauses. A phrase is two or more words acting as a part of speech, such as a verb phrase or prepositional phrase. A clause is a group of words with a subject and a verb. One kind of clause is **independent**

and can stand by itself. She plays the steel guitar. The other kind is **dependent** and can not stand alone. When she plays the steel guitar.

It is important to remember that there are two kinds of **conjunctions**: the *coordinating* and the *subordinating*. *Coordinating* **conjunctions** connect phrases, words, and clauses of equal rank: noun with noun, adjective with adjective, verb with verb, phrase with phrase, main clause with main clause, and subordinate with subordinate clause.

The seven common *coordinating* **conjunctions** are: for, and, nor, but, or yet and so. Some examples of the use of coordinating **conjunctions** are: Bring some paper **and** a pen. (two nouns are connected by the *coordinating* conjunction--and). Another example is: Did she go to the mall or the center? (Two phrases are connected by the *coordinating* conjunction--or.) Paired **conjunctions** such as either/or, neither/nor, and both/and are usually classified as *coordinating* **conjunctions**. Example: **Neither** the man **nor** the woman was at fault.

Subordinating **conjunctions** connect dependent clauses with main clauses.
Example: **Although** she was tired,. she still finished her homework. Although is the *subordinating* **conjunction** and the dependent clause is: Although she was tired. Sometimes, the dependent clause comes after the main clause and is not set off by a comma. Example: She finished her homework **because** she knew she would need to be prepared for class. The *subordinating* **conjunction** is because and the dependent clause is because she knew she would need to be prepared for class.

Some of the most common *subordinating* **conjunctions** are: after, although, as, as if, as long as, as soon as, because, before, besides, but that, if, in order that, notwithstanding, provided, since, so that, till, until, when, whenever, where, whereas, and wherever.

The last part of speech is the **interjection**. An **interjection** is one or more words used to convey strong emotion or surprise. When an interjection is used alone, it is usually punctuated with an exclamation mark: Oh! Wow! When it is used as part of a sentence, an **interjection** is usually followed by a comma: Oh, I did not consider that problem. You should use interjections infrequently in your formal writing.

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After this review of the parts of speech, it is important to consider how you put sentences together. Basically, there are four kinds of conventional sentences in writing English**: Simple, compound, complex and compound** and **compound- complex**. These may sound complicated, but as long as you can recognize subjects or nouns and verbs (action or being words) and know the difference between independent and dependent clauses, you can plan and be able to structure your sentences correctly.

Let's review simple and compound sentences. A **simple sentence** consists of an independent clause with no dependent clauses. It may contain phrases and have more than one subject and one verb. Examples: The river looked beautiful by moonlight. The word river is the subject; the word looked is the verb. We sang and danced happily at the wedding. We is the subject; sang and danced are the verbs. The Army, Navy, and Marines sent troops to the disaster area. Army, Navy, and Marines are the three subjects; sent is the verb. My mother. father and sister came to the school play, applauded the performances and attended the party afterward. Mother, father and sister are the three subjects; came, applauded and attended are the three verbs.

A **compound sen*tence*** consists of two or more independent clauses with no dependent clauses. *Examples:* He opened the door, and he found the missing paper. He opened the door is one independent clause, and he found the missing paper is the other independent clause. These two independent clauses are connected by the coordinating conjunction-and. Independent clauses in a compound sentence are usually connected by either a coordinating conjunction or a semicolon. Example: He opened the door, and he found the missing paper. (Two independent clauses connected by the coordinating conjunction--and). He opened the door; he found the missing paper. (Two independent clauses connected by a semicolon).

A **complex sentence** consists of one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses. Examples: When roses are in bloom, we like to visit our grandmother in the country. (One **dependent** clause--when roses are in bloom, and one **independent** clause--we like to visit our grandmother). Although it rained last night, we decided to take the path that led through the woods. (One independent clause--we decided to take the path; one dependent clause--although it rained last night).

A **compound-complex** sentence consists of two or more independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses. Example: Mark enlisted in the Army, and Robert, *who was his older brother*, joined him a week later. (**Independent clauses**--Mark enlisted in the Army; Robert joined him a week later. **Dependent clause**--who was his older brother.)

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Now that we have reviewed the **parts of speech and the kinds of sentence structure**, it is time to think about practical ways to help you improve your grammar and your writing. One way to help you correct your grammar is by making a list of recurring problems you know you may have or that your instructor points out to you so that you can make a conscious effort to correct them. Another way is to read your papers, journals, and any written work aloud to yourself or have someone else read it also to listen for problem areas.

For instance, you may notice a particular problem remembering what verb tense or type to use. If you have written: They does not know the answers, and you read that sentence aloud, you may be more likely to hear your mistake. Or, if you have a friend, a family member or another class member read it aloud, you or your reader may notice problems more easily. It is a good idea to start a running list or notebook of areas you may want to work on in your writing. That way you can be more aware of any problems you encounter with spelling, punctuation, or grammar and can work to understand and correct them more effectively.