

Foundational Information on Grammar

Grammar is composed of four separate scientific fields that operate simultaneously.

1. **Phonology:** This is a science in and of itself; it is the science of sounds, the sound system of any language. Words are composed of phonemes. Any of the perceptually distinct units of sound in a specified language that distinguish one word from another, for example *p*, *b*, *d*, and *t* in the English words *pad*, *pat*, *bad*, and *bat*.
2. **Semantics:** This refers to the meaning of words. Includes denotation and connotation. This is learned both formally and informally.
3. **Morphology:** This is the study of word forms. Regular morphology includes the changes from singular to plural, past to present, prefixes and suffixes, adverbial changes, and comparative-superlative changes
Eg: Tree to Trees, Study to Studied, Ask /Asked, Tall/Taller, Moral/Immoral
4. **Syntax:** Syntax refers to the relationship BETWEEN AND AMONG words in a sentence.

Subject: The agent of action (or being) in a sentence.

Predicate: The verb(s) and all modifying phrases.

Eg: The doctor (subject) sent (verb) the letter (direct object) to the board of medicine (prepositional phrase acting as the indirect object).

Eg: She is dancing on stage for the first time.

Eg: My family are arriving early tomorrow.

Eg: She was upset for a long time over the break-up.

Eg: I have been studying for hours.

The Four Basic Communication Skills:

1. Speaking
2. Listening
3. Reading
4. Writing

Sentence Purposes:

1. *Declarative*: To make a statement.
2. *Interrogative*: To ask a question.
3. *Imperative*: To give a command. The verb is in the present tense, and you is understood. Eg: (You) Take out the trash!
4. *Exclamatory*: Exclaims something. Marked with an exclamation point. Rarely seen in fiction or professional writing.

Two Schools for the Presentation and Study of Language:

1. *Prescriptive*: This places a judgement on the language, what is correct/acceptable and what is incorrect/unacceptable.
2. *Descriptive*: This seeks to describe the language, its etymology, usage, and evolution without judgement.

The Four Linguistic Processes:

1. **The Process of Predication**: This is the element in the sentence that makes the point. This must include at least one verb but may have a verb phrase.

Capital letter [SUBJECT] + [PREDICATE].

The dog barks incessantly.

The line has not moved.

(You) Stop!

2. **The Process of Coordination**: This permits the bringing together of equal grammatical units, the coordination of equal grammatical units. Neither the

,so: predicts a result or consequence. Use “so” with caution as it is not always used as a conjunction.

Eg: The president did not come because of illness, so someone else gave the achievement awards on her behalf. ▲

; (the semi-colon): Lacks the semantic prediction of all of coordinating conjunctions but retains a visual advantage. The ; does NOT force word inversion.

Eg: I cannot tolerate impudence; it is sheer rudeness. ▲

The semi-colon and the conjunctive adverb:

[S + P] ; CONJUNCTIVE ADVERB , [S + P].

Eg: I studied all night; therefore, I passed the test with distinction.

Eg: John went out on a date; however, he forgot his wallet.

Eg: The woman at the box office said tickets were available; nevertheless, it was sold out when we got there.

- 3. The Process of Subordination:** The process of connecting a major (independent) idea to a minor (dependent) one. The minor idea is **subordinate** to the major idea.

An independent clause expresses a major (complete) idea with a subject and predicate.

A dependent clause expresses a minor (incomplete) idea with a subject and verb and a subordinating conjunction.

Complete sentence: I will go when I get up in the morning.

Incomplete sentence (fragment): When I get up in the morning.

C [S + P] subordinating conjunction [S + P].

Eg: When I met Susan, her eyes were red **because** she had been crying. (cause and effect)

Eg: The State Attorney was removed from the case **after** he decided not to prosecute the hacker. (time)

The subordinate conjunction also clearly indicates the importance of the main clause. The dependent clause is always introduced by the subordinate conjunction.

Eg: The gods thundered in the heavens, **while** the mortals below cowered in fear.

Eg: **Until** she pays her debts, she cannot buy anything else.

Eg: So tight was her hold upon his arm, that he feared to detach himself **lest** he should hurt her. (Sometimes the comma can come after the major idea.)

Eg: You would know **if** you paid attention in class.

4. The Process of Modification: This process deals with how words, phrases, or clauses can interrupt the process a sentence. This focuses on how additional information—both essential and non-essential—is integrated into prose.

Three Ways to Signal An Interruption:

1. , _____, **Least intrusive.** May interrupt with relative clauses (who, whom, which, that) and Restrictive and Non-Restrictive Appositive Phrases.

Eg: The course, which can be deadly, is required of all graduate students.

Eg: *Middle Passage*, which won the American Book Award, was written by Charles Johnson.

Eg: *Middle Passage*, winner of the American Book Award, sold out at the store.

Look at the difference between these two sentences:

- A. My brother Joseph went on his mission six months ago.
(Restrictive Appositive) One of multiple brothers.
Joseph restricts “brothers.”
- B. My brother, Joseph, went on his mission six months ago.
(Non-Restrictive Appositive) Only one brother. The name is additional, non-essential information.

2. (_____) **Moderately intrusive.** The information in parentheses is somewhat removed from the semantic load (meaning) of the sentence. It can provide additional information that is peripheral, contextual and somewhat

removed from what is being discussed. It is also used when internal punctuation already exists.

Eg: *Glory* (a movie about the Civil War) provides material for serious discussion of both society and psychology.

Eg: Toni Morrison's eight novels (*The Bluest Eye, Sula, Tar Baby, Beloved, Jazz, Paradise, Love, A Mercy, and God Help the Child*) should be read in sequence.

3. —this is an interruption with a dash— **Most intrusive.** Indicates that the material is far removed from the subject and meaning of the sentence. It can also indicate an abrupt and jarring interruption. Use sparingly and only with the correct intent.

Eg: "The problem with the dash—as you may have noticed!—is that it discourages truly efficient writing. It also—and this might be its worst sin—disrupts the flow of a sentence. Don't you find it annoying—and you can tell me if you do, I won't be hurt—when a writer inserts a thought into the midst of another one that's not yet complete?"

Eg: Even the simplest tasks—washing, dressing, and going to work—were nearly impossible after I broke my leg.

Eg: Math, science, English, even P.E.—he hated all of them.

Eg: Books, paper, pencils—many students lacked even the simplest tools for learning in nineteenth-century America.