St Nicolas & St Mary CE Primary



English Glossary

| Term | Guidance | Example |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **adjective** | The surest way to identify adjectives is by the ways they can be used:   * before a noun, to make the noun’s meaning more specific (i.e. to [modify](#modifymodifier) the noun), or * after the verb *be*, as its [complement](#complement).   Adjectives cannot be modified by other adjectives. This distinguishes them from [nouns](#noun), which can be.  Adjectives are sometimes called ‘describing words’ because they pick out single characteristics such as size or colour. This is often true, but it doesn’t help to distinguish adjectives from other word classes, because [verbs](#verb), [nouns](#noun) and [adverbs](#adverb) can do the same thing. | *The pupils did some really good work.* [adjective used before a noun, to modify it]  *Their work was good.* [adjective used after the verb *be*, as its complement]  Not adjectives:  *The lamp glowed.* [verb]  *It was such a bright red!* [noun]  *He spoke loudly.* [adverb]  *It was a French grammar book.* [noun] |
| **adverb** | The surest way to identify adverbs is by the ways they can be used: they can [modify](#modifymodifier) a [verb](#verb), an [adjective](#adjective), another adverb or even a whole clause.  Adverbs are sometimes said to describe manner or time. This is often true, but it doesn’t help to distinguish adverbs from other word classes that can be used as [adverbials](#adverbial), such as [preposition phrases](#prepositionphrase), [noun phrases](#nounphrase) and [subordinate clauses](#subordinateclause). | *Usha soon started snoring loudly*. [adverbs modifying the verbs *started* and *snoring*]  *That match was really exciting!* [adverb modifying the adjective *exciting*]  *We don’t get to play games very often*. [adverb modifying the other adverb, *often*]  *Fortunately, it didn’t rain*. [adverb modifying the whole clause ‘it didn’t rain’ by commenting on it]  Not adverbs:   * *Usha went up the stairs.* [preposition phrase used as adverbial] * *She finished her work this evening*. [noun phrase used as adverbial] * *She finished when the teacher got cross*. [subordinate clause used as adverbial] |
| **apostrophe** | Apostrophes have two completely different uses:   * showing the place of missing letters (e.g. *I’m* for *I am*) * marking [possessives](#possessive) (e.g. *Hannah’s mother*). | *I’m going out and I won’t be long*. [showing missing letters]  *Hannah’s mother went to town in Justin’s car*. [marking possessives] |
| **conjunction** | A conjunction links two words or phrases together.  There are two main types of conjunctions:   * [co-ordinating](#coordinatecoordination) conjunctions (e.g. *and*) link two words or phrases together as an equal pair * subordinating conjunctions (e.g. *when*) introduce a [subordinate clause](#subordinateclause). | *James bought a bat and ball.* [links the words *bat* and *ball* as an equal pair]  *Kylie is young but she can kick the ball hard.* [links two clauses as an equal pair]  *Everyone watches when Kyle does back-flips.* [introduces a subordinate clause]  *Joe can’t practise kicking because he’s injured.* [introduces a subordinate clause] |
| **consonant** | A sound which is produced when the speaker closes off or obstructs the flow of air through the vocal tract, usually using lips, tongue or teeth.  Most of the letters of the alphabet represent consonants. Only the letters *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u* and *y* can represent [vowel](#vowel) sounds. | /p/ [flow of air stopped by the lips, then released]  /t/ [flow of air stopped by the tongue touching the roof of the mouth, then released]  /f/ [flow of air obstructed by the bottom lip touching the top teeth]  /s/ [flow of air obstructed by the tip of the tongue touching the gum line] |
| **co-ordinate, co‑ordination** | Words or phrases are co-ordinated if they are linked as an equal pair by a co‑ordinating [conjunction](#conjunction) (i.e. *and, but, or*).  In the examples on the right, the co-ordinated elements are shown in bold, and the conjunction is underlined.  The difference between co‑ordination and [subordination](#subordinatesubordination) is that, in subordination, the two linked elements are not equal. | ***Susan*** *and* ***Amra*** *met in a café*. [links the words *Susan* and *Amra* as an equal pair]  ***They talked*** *and* ***drank tea*** *for an hour.* [links two clauses as an equal pair]  ***Susan got a bus*** *but* ***Amra walked***. [links two clausesas an equal pair]  Not co-ordination: *They ate before they met*. [*before* introduces a subordinate clause] |
| **digraph** | A type of [grapheme](#grapheme) where two letters represent one [phoneme](#phoneme).  Sometimes, these two letters are not next to one another; this is called a split digraph. | The digraph *ea* in *each* is pronounced /i:/.  The digraph *sh* in *shed* is pronounced /ʃ/.  The split digraph *i–e* in *line* is pronounced /aɪ/. |
| **etymology** | A word’s etymology is its history: its origins in earlier forms of English or other languages, and how its form and meaning have changed. Many words in English have come from Greek, Latin or French. | The word *school* was borrowed from a Greek word *ó÷ïëÞ* (*skholé*) meaning ‘leisure’.  The word *verb* comes from Latin *verbum*, meaning ‘word’.  The word *mutton* comes from French *mouton*, meaning ‘sheep’. |
| **grapheme** | A letter, or combination of letters, that corresponds to a single [phoneme](#phoneme) within a word. | The grapheme *t* in the words *ten*, *bet* and *ate* corresponds to the phoneme /t/.  The grapheme *ph* in the word *dolphin* corresponds to the phoneme /f/. |
| **grapheme-phoneme correspondences** | The links between letters, or combinations of letters ([graphemes](#grapheme)) and the speech sounds ([phonemes](#phoneme)) that they represent.  In the English writing system, graphemes may correspond to different phonemes in different words. | The grapheme *s* corresponds to the phoneme /s/ in the word *see*, but…  …it corresponds to the phoneme /z/ in the word *easy.* |
| **homophone** | Two different words are homophones if they sound exactly the same when pronounced. | *hear*, *here*  *some*, *sum* |
| **main clause** | A [sentence](#sentence) contains at least one [clause](#clause) which is not a [subordinate clause](#subordinateclause); such a clause is a main clause. A main clause may contain any number of subordinate clauses. | *It was raining but the sun was shining*. [two main clauses]  *The man* ***who wrote it*** *told me* ***that******it was true***. [one main clause containing two subordinate clauses.]  *She said, “It rained all day.”* [one main clause containing another.] |
| **noun** | The surest way to identify nouns is by the ways they can be used after [determiners](#determiner) such as *the*: for example, most nouns will fit into the frame “The \_\_ matters/matter.”  Nouns are sometimes called ‘naming words’ because they name people, places and ‘things’; this is often true, but it doesn’t help to distinguish nouns from other [word classes](#wordclass). For example, [prepositions](#preposition) can name places and [verbs](#verb) can name ‘things’ such as actions.  Nouns may be classified as **common** (e.g. *boy, day*) or **proper** (e.g. *Ivan*, *Wednesday*), and also as **countable** (e.g. *thing, boy*) or **non-countable** (e.g. *stuff, money*). These classes can be recognised by the determiners they combine with. | *Our dog bit the burglar on his behind!*  *My big brother did an amazing jump on his skateboard.*  *Actions speak louder than words.*  Not nouns:   * *He’s behind you!* [this names a place, but is a preposition, not a noun] * *She can jump so high!* [this names an action, but is a verb, not a noun]   common, countable: *a book, books, two chocolates, one day, fewer ideas*  common, non-countable: *money, some chocolate, less imagination*  proper, countable: *Marilyn, London, Wednesday* |
| **noun phrase** | A noun phrase is a [phrase](#phrase) with a noun as its [head](#head), e.g. *some foxes*, *foxes with bushy tails*. Some grammarians recognise one-word phrases, so that *foxes are multiplying* would contain the noun *foxes* acting as the head of the noun phrase *foxes*. | *Adult foxes can jump.* [*adult* modifies *foxes*, so *adult* belongs to the noun phrase]  *Almost all healthy adult foxes in this area can jump.* [all the other words help to modify *foxes*, so they all belong to the noun phrase] |
| **object** | An object is normally a [noun](#noun), [pronoun](#pronoun) or [noun phrase](#nounphrase) that comes straight after the [verb](#verb), and shows what the verb is acting upon.  Objects can be turned into the [subject](#subject) of a [passive](#passive) verb, and cannot be [adjectives](#adjective) (contrast with [complements](#complement)). | *Year 2 designed puppets.* [noun acting as object]  *I like that.* [pronoun acting as object]  Some people suggested a pretty display. [noun phrase acting as object]  Contrast:   * *A display was suggested*. [object of active verb becomes the subject of the passive verb] * *Year 2 designed pretty*. [incorrect, because adjectives cannot be objects] |
| **past tense** | [Verbs](#verb) in the past tense are commonly used to:   * talk about the past * talk about imagined situations * make a request sound more polite.   Most verbs take a [suffix](#suffix) –*ed*, to form their past tense, but many commonly-used verbs are irregular.  See also [tense](#tense). | *Tom and Chris showed me their new TV*. [names an event in the past]  *Antonio went on holiday to Brazil*. [names an event in the past; irregular past of *go*]  *I wish I had a puppy.* [names an imagined situation, not a situation in the past]  *I was hoping you’d help tomorrow.* [makes an implied request sound more polite] |
| **phoneme** | A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound that signals a distinct, contrasting meaning. For example:   * /t/ contrasts with /k/ to signal the difference between *tap* and *cap* * /t/ contrasts with /l/ to signal the difference between *bought* and *ball*.   It is this contrast in meaning that tells us there are two distinct phonemes at work.  There are around 44 phonemes in English; the exact number depends on regional accents. A single phoneme may be represented in writing by one, two, three or four letters constituting a single [grapheme](#grapheme). | The word *cat* has three letters and three phonemes: /kæt/  The word *catch* has five letters and three phonemes: /kaʧ/  The word *caught* has six letters and three phonemes: /kɔ:t/ |
| **phrase** | A phrase is a group of words that are grammatically connected so that they stay together, and that expand a single word, called the ‘head’. The phrase is a [noun phrase](#nounphrase) if its head is a noun, a [preposition phrase](#prepositionphrase) if its head is a preposition, and so on; but if the head is a [verb](#verb), the phrase is called a [clause](#clause). Phrases can be made up of other phrases. | *She waved to her mother.* [a noun phrase, with the noun *mother* as its head]  *She waved to her mother*. [a preposition phrase, with the preposition *to* as its head]  *She waved to her mother*. [a clause, with the verb *waved* as its head] |
| **plural** | A plural [noun](#noun) normally has a [suffix](#suffix) –*s* or –es and means ‘more than one’.  There are a few nouns with different [morphology](#morphology) in the plural (e.g. *mice, formulae*). | *dogs* [more than one dog]*; boxes* [more than one box]  *mice* [more than one mouse] |
| **possessive** | A possessive can be:   * a [noun](#noun) followed by an [apostrophe](#apostrophe), with or without ­*s* * a possessive [pronoun](#pronoun).   The relation expressed by a possessive goes well beyond ordinary ideas of ‘possession’. A possessive may act as a [determiner](#determiner). | *Tariq’s book* [Tariq has the book]  *The boys’ arrival* [the boys arrive]  *His obituary* [the obituary is about him]  *That essay is mine*. [I wrote the essay] |
| **prefix** | A prefix is added at the beginning of a [word](#word) in order to turn it into another word.  Contrast [suffix](#suffix). | *overtake, disappear* |
| **present tense** | [Verbs](#verb) in the present tense are commonly used to:   * talk about the present * talk about the [future](#future).   They may take a suffix *–s* (depending on the [subject](#subject)).  See also [tense](#tense). | *Jamal goes to the pool every day.* [describes a habit that exists now]  *He can swim.* [describes a state that is true now]  *The bus arrives at three.* [scheduled now]  *My friends are coming to play*. [describes a plan in progress now] |
| **pronoun** | Pronouns are normally used like [nouns](#noun), except that:   * they are grammatically more specialised * it is harder to [modify](#modifymodifier) them   In the examples, each sentence is written twice: once with nouns, and once with pronouns (underlined). Where the same thing is being talked about, the words are shown in bold. | ***Amanda*** *waved to* ***Michael****.*  ***She*** *waved to* ***him****.*  ***John’s*** *mother is over there.* ***His*** *mother is over there.*  *The* ***visit*** *will be an overnight* ***visit****.* ***This*** *will be an overnight* ***visit****.*  ***Simon*** *is the person:* ***Simon*** *broke it.* ***He*** *is the one* ***who*** *broke it.* |
| **punctuation** | Punctuation includes any conventional features of writing other than spelling and general layout: the standard punctuation marks . , ; : ? ! - – ( ) “ ” ‘ ’ , and also word-spaces, capital letters, apostrophes, paragraph breaks and bullet points. One important role of punctuation is to indicate [sentence](#sentence) boundaries. | *“I’m going out, Usha, and I won’t be long,” Mum said.* |
| **root word** | [Morphology](#morphology) breaks words down into root words, which can stand alone, and [suffixes](#suffix) or [prefixes](#prefix) which can’t. For example, *help* is the root word for other words in its [word family](#wordfamily) such as *helpful* and *helpless*, and also for its [inflections](#inflection) such as *helping.* [Compound](#compoundcompounding) words (e.g. *help-desk*) contain two or more root words. When looking in a dictionary, we sometimes have to look for the root word (or words) of the word we are interested in. | *played* [the root word is *play*]  *unfair* [the root word is *fair*]  *football* [the root words are *foot* and *ball*] |
| **sentence** | A sentence is a group of [words](#word) which are grammatically connected to each other but not to any words outside the sentence.  The form of a sentence’s main clause shows whether it is being used as a statement, a question, a command or an exclamation.  A sentence may consist of a single clause or it may contain several clauses held together by subordination or co-ordination. Classifying sentences as ‘simple’, ‘complex’ or ‘compound’ can be confusing, because a ‘simple’ sentence may be complicated, and a ‘complex’ one may be straightforward. The terms **‘single-clause sentence**’ and **‘multi-clause sentence**’ may be more helpful. | *John went to his friend’s house. He stayed there till tea-time.*  *John went to his friend’s house, he stayed there till tea-time.* [This is a ‘comma splice’, a common error in which a comma is used where either a full stop or a semi-colon is needed to indicate the lack of any grammatical connection between the two clauses.]  *You are my friend.* [statement]  *Are you my friend?* [question]  *Be my friend!* [command]  *What a good friend you are!* [exclamation]  *Ali went home on his bike to his goldfish and his current library book about pets.* [single-clause sentence]  *She went shopping but took back everything she had bought because she didn’t like any of it.* [multi-clause sentence] |
| **split digraph** | See [digraph](#digraph). |  |
| **Standard English** | Standard English can be recognised by the use of a very small range of forms such as *those books, I did it* and *I wasn’t doing anything* (rather than their non-Standard equivalents); it is not limited to any particular accent. It is the variety of English which is used, with only minor variation, as a major world language. Some people use Standard English all the time, in all situations from the most casual to the most formal, so it covers most [registers](#register). The aim of the national curriculum is that everyone should be able to use Standard English as needed in writing and in relatively formal speaking. | *I did it because they were not willing to undertake any more work on those houses.* [formal Standard English]  *I did it cos they wouldn’t do any more work on those houses.* [casual Standard English]  *I done it cos they wouldn’t do no more work on them houses.* [casual non-Standard English] |
| **subject** | The subject of a verb is normally the [noun](#noun), [noun phrase](#nounphrase) or [pronoun](#pronoun) that names the ‘do-er’ or ‘be-er’. The subject’s normal position is:   * just before the [verb](#verb) in a statement * just after the [auxiliary verb](#auxiliaryverb), in a question.   Unlike the verb’s [object](#object) and [complement](#complement), the subject can determine the form of the verb (e.g. *I am*, *you are*). | *Rula’s mother went out.*  *That is uncertain.*  *The children will study the animals.*  *Will the children study the animals?* |
| **subordinate, subordination** | A subordinate word or phrase tells us more about the meaning of the word it is subordinate to. Subordination can be thought of as an unequal relationship between a subordinate word and a main word. For example:   * an adjective is subordinate to the noun it [modifies](#modifymodifier) * [subjects](#subject) and [objects](#object) are subordinate to their [verbs](#verb).   Subordination is much more common than the equal relationship of [co-ordination](#coordinatecoordination).  See also [subordinate clause](#subordinateclause). | *big dogs* [*big* is subordinate to *dogs*]  *Big dogs need long walks.* [*big dogs* and *long walks* are subordinate to *need*]  *We can watch TV when we’ve finished.* [*when we’ve finished* is subordinate to *watch*] |
| **subordinate clause** | A clause which is [subordinate](#subordinateclause) to some other part of the same [sentence](#sentence) is a subordinate clause; for example, in *The apple that I ate was sour*, the clause *that I ate* is subordinate to *apple* (which it [modifies](#modifymodifier)). Subordinate clauses contrast with [co-ordinate](#coordinatecoordination) clauses as in *It was sour but looked very tasty*. (Contrast: [main clause](#mainclause))  However, clauses that are directly quoted as direct speech are not subordinate clauses. | *That’s the street where Ben lives.* [[relative clause](#relativeclause); modifies *street*]  *He watched her as she disappeared*. [[adverbial](#adverbial); modifies *watched*]  *What you said was very nice.* [acts as [subject](#subject) of *was*]  *She noticed an hour had passed*. [acts as [object](#object) of *noticed*]  Not subordinate: *He shouted, “Look out!”* |
| **suffix** | A suffix is an ‘ending’, used at the end of one word to turn it into another word. Unlike [root words](#rootword), suffixes cannot stand on their own as a complete word.  Contrast [prefix](#prefix). | *call – called*  *teach – teacher* [turns a [verb](#verb) into a [noun](#noun)]  *terror – terrorise* [turns a noun into a verb]  *green – greenish* [leaves [word class](#wordclass) unchanged] |
| **syllable** | A syllable sounds like a beat in a [word](#word). Syllables consist of at least one [vowel](#vowel), and possibly one or more [consonants](#consonant). | *Cat* has one syllable.  *Fairy* has two syllables.  *Hippopotamus* has five syllables. |
| **tense** | In English, tense is the choice between [present](#presenttense) and [past](#pasttense) [verbs](#verb), which is special because it is signalled by [inflections](#inflection) and normally indicates differences of time. In contrast, languages like French, Spanish and Italian, have three or more distinct tense forms, including a future tense. (See also: [future](#future).)  The simple tenses (present and past) may be combined in English with the [perfect](#perfect) and [progressive](#progressive). | *He studies.* [present tense – present time]  *He studied yesterday*. [past tense – past time]  *He studies tomorrow, or else!* [present tense – future time]  *He may study tomorrow*. [present tense + infinitive – future time]  *He plans to study tomorrow*. [present tense + infinitive – future time]  *If he studied tomorrow, he’d see the difference!* [past tense – imagined future]  Contrast three distinct tense forms in Spanish:   * *Estudia.* [present tense] * *Estudió.* [past tense] * *Estudiará.* [future tense] |
| **trigraph** | A type of [grapheme](#grapheme) where three letters represent one [phoneme](#phoneme). | *High, pure, patch, hedge* |
| **verb** | The surest way to identify verbs is by the ways they can be used: they can usually have a [tense](#tense), either [present](#presenttense) or [past](#pasttense) (see also [future](#future)).  Verbs are sometimes called ‘doing words’ because many verbs name an action that someone does; while this can be a way of recognising verbs, it doesn’t distinguish verbs from [nouns](#noun) (which can also name actions). Moreover many verbs name states or feelings rather than actions.  Verbs can be classified in various ways: for example, as [auxiliary](#auxiliaryverb), or [modal](#modalverb); as [transitive](#transitiveverb) or [intransitive](#intransitiveverb); and as states or events. | *He lives in Birmingham.* [present tense]  *The teacher wrote a song for the class.* [past tense]  *He likes chocolate.* [present tense; not an action]  *He knew my father.* [past tense; not an action]  Not verbs:   * *The walk to Halina’s house will take an hour.* [noun] * *All that surfing makes Morwenna so sleepy!* [noun] |
| **vowel** | A vowel is a speech sound which is produced without any closure or obstruction of the vocal tract.  Vowels can form [syllables](#syllable) by themselves, or they may combine with [consonants](#consonant).  In the English writing system, the letters *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u* and *y* can represent vowels. |  |
| **word** | A word is a unit of grammar: it can be selected and moved around relatively independently, but cannot easily be split. In punctuation, words are normally separated by word spaces.  Sometimes, a sequence that appears grammatically to be two words is collapsed into a single written word, indicated with a hyphen or apostrophe (e.g. *well-built, he’s*). | *headteacher* or *head teacher* [can be written with or without a space]  *I’m* going out.  *9.30 am* |
| **word class** | Every [word](#word) belongs to a word class which summarises the ways in which it can be used in grammar. The major word classes for English are: [noun](#noun), [verb](#verb), [adjective](#adjective), [adverb](#adverb), [preposition](#preposition), [determiner](#determiner), [pronoun](#pronoun), [conjunction](#conjunction). Word classes are sometimes called ‘parts of speech’. |  |
| **word family** | The [words](#word) in a word family are normally related to each other by a combination of [morphology](#morphology), grammar and meaning. | *teach – teacher*  *extend – extent – extensive*  *grammar – grammatical – grammarian* |