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MICHAEL SWAN

Practical English Usage

Fully Revised International Edition

- complete topic-by-topic **grammar**
- guide to over 250 **vocabulary** problems

OXFORD

PRACTICAL ENGLISH USAGE

Michael Swan

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Fourth Edition

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Dedication

To John Eckersley, who first encouraged my interest in this kind of thing.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to all the people who have helped me with the preparation of this fourth edition. I owe a particular debt to Professor Bas Aarts of University College, London, and Dr Catherine Walter, of Linacre College, Oxford, who both read all of the material in draft, and whose detailed comments and suggestions have substantially improved the book. I am equally indebted to Professor Loretta Gray of Central Washington University, who also read the whole text, and whose comprehensive advice on questions of American usage has provided valuable support for this aspect of the revision. Many teachers in different countries were good enough to respond to a request for suggestions for possible additions and improvements: my thanks to the individuals and organisations concerned. My thanks also to members of the staff of the London School of English, who kindly participated in a very constructive workshop designed to explore ways of using the book. Several specialists have generously shared their knowledge of specific areas of language and usage, and numerous teachers, students and colleagues have taken the trouble to make comments and suggestions regarding particular entries. Their input, too, has benefited the book considerably. I must also reacknowledge my debt to the many consultants and correspondents whose help and advice with the preparation of earlier editions continue as an important contribution to the fourth.

Any pedagogic grammarian owes an enormous debt to the academic linguists on whose research he or she is parasitic. There is not enough space to mention all the scholars of the last hundred years or so on whose work I have drawn directly or indirectly, even if I had a complete record of my borrowings. But I must at least pay homage to two monumental reference works of the present generation: the *Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*, by Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik (Longman, 1985), and the *Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*, by Huddleston, Pullum and others (Cambridge University Press, 2002). Their authoritative accounts of the facts of English structure and usage constitute an essential source of information for anyone writing pedagogic grammar materials today.

Finally, it is with particular pleasure that I express my gratitude, once again, to the editorial, design and production team at Oxford University Press, whose professional expertise is matched only by their concern to make an author's task as trouble-free as possible.

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Introduction

What is Practical English Usage?

Practical English Usage is a combined usage guide and learner's grammar. It is intended mainly for advanced students and teachers of English as a foreign or second language; it may also be useful to teacher trainers and materials writers. It is not addressed to native speakers of English, who need a rather different kind of reference book.

A usage guide

Usage guides deal with problem points: words and structures that people have difficulty with, or disagree about. English, like all languages, is full of problems for the foreign learner. Some of these points are easy to explain – for instance, the formation of questions, the difference between *since* and *for*, or the meaning of *after all*. Other problems are more tricky, and cause difficulty even for advanced students and teachers. How exactly is the present perfect used? When do we use past tenses to be polite? What are the differences between *at*, *on* and *in* with expressions of place? We can say *a chair leg* – why not ~~*a cat leg*~~? When can we use the expression *do so*? When is *the* used with superlatives? Is *unless* the same as *if not*? What are the differences between *come* and *go*, between *each* and *every*, between *big*, *large* and *great*, or between *fairly*, *quite*, *rather* and *pretty*? Is it correct to say *There's three more bottles in the fridge*? How do you actually say *3 x 4 = 12*? And so on, and so on.

Practical English Usage is a guide to problems of this kind. It deals with over 1,000 points which regularly cause difficulty to foreign students of English. It will be useful, for example, to a learner who is not sure how to use a particular structure, or who has made a mistake and wants to find out why it is wrong. It will also be helpful to a teacher who is looking for a clear explanation of a difficult language point. There is very full coverage of grammar, as well as explanations of a large number of common vocabulary problems. There are also some entries designed to clarify more general questions (e.g. formality, slang, the nature of standard English and dialects) which students and teachers may find themselves concerned with.

Problems are mostly explained in short separate entries. This makes it possible to give a clear complete treatment of each point, and enables the user to concentrate just on the question that he or she needs information about. In longer entries, basic information is generally given first, followed by more detailed explanations and discussion of more advanced points.

A complete student's grammar

The grammatical entries in *Practical English Usage* are grouped into 28 Sections, each dealing with a major grammatical topic (e.g. present tenses, passives, nouns and noun phrases, prepositions, relative clauses). So the book can be used not only as a guide to particular usage problems, but also as a systematic reference grammar. For users who like to work in this way, each Section begins with one or two pages giving a general introduction to the grammatical topic, together with a list of common mistakes that are dealt with in the entries that follow.

Vocabulary

The grammar Sections include a good deal of information about the structures used with particular words. In addition, the last three Sections of the book deal specifically with vocabulary questions, and include an A–Z guide to over 250 common word problems of various kinds.

Approach and style

I have tried to make the presentation as practical as possible. Each entry contains an explanation of a problem, examples of correct usage, and (when this is useful) examples of typical mistakes. In some cases, an explanation may be somewhat different from that found in many learners' grammars; this is because the rules traditionally given for certain points (e.g. conditionals or indirect speech) are not always accurate or helpful. Explanations are, as far as possible, in simple everyday language. Where it has been necessary to use grammatical terminology, I have generally preferred to use traditional terms that are simple and easy to understand, except where this would be seriously misleading. Some of these terms (e.g. future tense) would be regarded as unsatisfactory by academic grammarians, but I am not writing for specialists. There is a glossary of the terminology used in the book on pages xx–xxix.

The kind of English described

The explanations deal mainly with standard everyday southern British English, but contrasts between British and American English are given detailed attention. There are also brief notes on several other varieties (e.g. Australian and Indian English). Information about stylistic differences (e.g. between formal and informal usage, or spoken and written language) is provided where this is appropriate.

Correctness and rules

If people say that a form is not 'correct', they can mean several different things. They may for instance be referring to a sentence like ~~*I have seen her yesterday*~~, which normally only occurs in the English of foreigners. They may be thinking of a usage like *less people* (instead of *fewer people*), which is common in standard English but regarded as wrong by some people. Or they may be talking about forms like ~~*ain't*~~ or 'double negatives', which are used in speech by many British and American people, but which do not occur in the standard dialects and are not usually written. This book is mainly concerned with the first kind of 'correctness': the differences between British or American English and 'foreign' English. However, there is also information about cases of divided usage in standard English, and about a few important dialect forms.

The rules given in this book are **descriptive**: they explain what actually happens in standard spoken and written English. Some usage guides give **prescriptive** rules – rules devised by people who feel that the language should be tidied up or protected against corruption. Such rules do not always correspond to actual usage (the rule about not using *less* with plurals is an example). In *Practical English Usage*, I avoid giving rules which do not describe the language as it is actually used, though I mention their existence where this is useful.

What this book does not do

Practical English Usage is not a complete guide to the English language. As the title suggests, its purpose is practical: to give learners and their teachers the most important information they need in order to deal with common language problems. Within this framework, the explanations are as complete and accurate as I can make them. However, it is not always helpful or possible in a book of this kind to deal with all the details of a complex structural point; so readers may well find occasional exceptions to some of the grammatical rules given here. Equally, the book does not aim to replace a dictionary. While it gives information about common problems with the use of a number of words, it does not attempt to describe other meanings or uses of the words beside those points that are selected for attention. Nor does it attempt to cover all the vocabulary problems that learners may meet: for this, another complete book would be needed.

Changes in the fourth edition

After consultation with users, the alphabetical organisation which was used in previous editions has been replaced by a thematic arrangement (see above), so as to make it easier to search for information. A number of amendments have also been made to particular entries to reflect recent changes in the language – for instance, the reduced frequency of some modal verbs, the disappearance of *shall*, or cases where British English is adopting American usage.

How much do mistakes matter?

It depends on how much people need, or want, a high level of correctness when speaking or writing another language. For many learners this is important – for instance for work, examinations, or their own personal goals – and *Practical English Usage* will help them to approach standard British/American native-speaker usage. However, it it is important for such learners not to become obsessed with correctness, or to worry every time they make a mistake. It is quite unnecessary to speak or write a language like a native speaker in order to communicate effectively, and very few adults in fact achieve a perfect command of another language. For some learners, on the other hand, accuracy is relatively unimportant: people can use English successfully for international communication even when their grammar differs considerably from native-speaker models. However, too many such differences can make a speaker or writer difficult to understand, so it is good even for these learners to aim at a reasonable level of correctness.

Note also that 'mistake' is a relative term. The mistakes listed in this book are wrong if produced by someone aiming to write standard British or American English. They would not necessarily be incorrect in some other varieties of the language.

How to find things: the Index

The best way to find information about a particular point is to look in the Index at the end of the book. Most points are indexed under several different names, so it is not difficult to locate the entry you need. For instance, if you want to know about using *to* instead of a whole infinitive, in structures like *I hope to, I'd like to,* you can find the number of the entry where this is explained by looking in the Index under 'to', 'infinitives', 'ellipsis' or 'leaving out words'. (On the other hand, it would obviously not be helpful to look under 'hope' or 'want': the rule is a general one about infinitive structures, not about these two verbs in particular.)

Using the Index

to (infinitive marker) 89.6; used instead of whole infinitive 280.1; weak and strong pronunciation 315.3

infinitives SECTIONS 8–10; introduction 88; progressive, perfect, passive and negative infinitives 89; split infinitive 89.7; perfect infinitives (e.g. *to have left*) 90; without *to* 91; *to* instead of whole infinitive 280.1; as subject, object or complement 92; infinitive or *-ing* form 95; infinitive or *-ing* form with different uses 105; after verbs 97; after verb + object 98; after *hear, see,* etc + object 110; after adjectives 101; after *easy, difficult, impossible,* etc 101.4; after superlatives (e.g. *the youngest person to*) 101.3; after nouns and pronouns 102; after

280 ellipsis: infinitives

1 *to* used instead of whole infinitive: *We hope to.*

We can use *to* instead of the whole infinitive of a repeated verb (and following words), if the meaning is clear.

*'Are you and Gillian getting married?' 'We hope **to**.'*
*'Let's go for a walk.' 'I don't want **to**.'*
*I don't dance much now, but I used **to** a lot.*
*Sorry I shouted at you. I didn't mean **to**.*
*'Somebody ought to clean up the bathroom.' 'I'll ask Jack **to**.'*

Be and *have* (used for possession) are not usually dropped.

*There are more flowers than there used **to be**.* (NOT . . . *than there used to.*)
*She hasn't been promoted yet, but she ought **to be**.* (NOT . . . *but she ought to.*)
*You've got more freckles than you used **to have**.* (NOT . . . *but she ought to.*) *than you used to.*) (NOT *You've got more freckles*

ellipsis (leaving out words) 275–280; after adjectives 278.1; after *and, but* and *or* 276; after *as* and *than* 275.7; after auxiliary verbs 279; after conjunctions 275.11; after determiners 278.2; after *if* 244.6; after question words 275.8; at the beginning of a sentence 277; before question tags 306.8; in advertisements, instructions, etc 291; in emails, etc 290.2; in headlines 292.1; in infinitives (e.g. *I don't want to*) 280.1; in noun phrases 278; in replies 275.1; leaving out articles 142; leaving out *if* 244.4; leaving out prepositions 214; leaving out prepositions before *that* 210.1; leaving out *that* 265; object relative pronoun 234.4; subject relative pronoun 237.19; ellipsis causing comprehension problems 285.6–7

leave preposition 213; + object + infinitive 98; and *forget* 470; with preparatory *it* (e.g. *I'll leave it to you to decide*) 269.4; with two objects 8.1
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How to find things: the Contents overview

Larger grammatical topics (e.g. 'simple present', 'articles', 'reflexive pronouns') can also be found quite easily by looking through the Contents Overview on pages x–xvi.

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37 simple present for future 38 *will*
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42 *be to* + infinitive: *I am to . . ., you are to . . .*, etc 43 future in the past

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180 *somebody, someone, anybody, anyone*, etc
181 *one, you* and *they*: used for people in general
182 *one* (substitute word): *a big one*

However, many smaller topics will not show up in the Contents Overview, because they do not have their own separate entries. So for instance to find what structures can be used with *expect* or *hope*, or what is the correct plural form of *phenomenon*, it is best to go to the Index.

Contents overview

This overview gives a general picture of the topics covered in the book; it is not a complete guide to the contents. References are to entry numbers. To find information about a particular point, consult the Index at the back of the book.

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Language terminology

The following words and expressions are used in this book to talk about grammar and other aspects of language.

abstract noun (the opposite of a **concrete noun**) the name of something which we experience as an idea, not by seeing, touching, etc. Examples: *doubt*; *height*; *geography*.

active An active verb form is one like *breaks, told, will help* (not like *is broken, was told, will be helped,* which are **passive** verb forms). The subject of an active verb is usually the person or thing that does the action, or that is responsible for what happens.

adjective a word like *green, hungry, impossible,* which is used when we describe people, things, events, etc. Adjectives are used in connection with nouns and pronouns. Examples: ***a green apple***; ***She's hungry***.

adjective clause another name for **relative clause**

adverb a word like *tomorrow, once, badly, there, also,* which is used to say, for example, when, where or how something happens.

adverbial an adverb, or a longer expression which has a similar function to an adverb in a clause. Examples: ***I usually** get up **at seven o'clock on weekdays***.

adverbial clause a clause which functions as an adverbial. Examples: *On Sundays I usually get up **when I wake up***; *I'll phone you **if I have time***.

adverb particle a short adverb like *up, out, off,* often used as part of a phrasal verb (e.g. *clean **up**, look **out**, tell **off***).

affirmative an affirmative sentence is one that makes a positive statement – not a negative sentence or a question. Compare *I agree* (affirmative); *I don't agree* (negative).

agent In a passive sentence, the agent is the expression that says who or what an action is done by. Example: *This picture was probably painted **by a child***.

article *A, an* and *the* are called 'articles'. *A/an* is called the 'indefinite article'; *the* is called the 'definite article'.

aspect Many grammarians prefer to talk about progressive and perfective aspect, rather than progressive and perfect tense, since these forms express other ideas besides time (e.g. continuity, completion). However, in this book the term *tense* is often used to include aspect, for the sake of simplicity.

attributive Adjectives placed before nouns are in 'attributive position'. Examples: ***a green shirt***; ***my noisy son***. See also **predicative**.

auxiliary verb a verb like *be, have, do* which is used with another verb to make tenses, passive forms, etc. Examples: *She **was** writing*; *Where **have** you put it*? See also **modal auxiliary verb**.

base form the form of a verb that has no endings or other changes, used for example in infinitives, imperatives and present tenses (except third person singular). Examples: ***I'd like to phone***; ***Pass** the salt*.

clause a stretch of language which contains a subject and a finite verb. Sentences consist of one or more clauses. Examples: ***Alex couldn't come today. I'll be glad** when **Harry gets back***. The word *clause* is also sometimes used for some structures containing participles or infinitives. Example: ***Not knowing what to do**, I telephoned Robin*. See also **co-ordinate clause**, **main clause**, **subordinate clause**.

cleft sentence a sentence in which special emphasis is given to one part (e.g. the subject or the object) by using a structure with *it* or *what*. Examples: *It was you that caused the accident*; *What I need is a drink.*

collective noun a singular word for a group. Examples: *family*; *team*.

comparative the form of an adjective or adverb made with *-er* (e.g. *older*, *faster*); also the structure *more* + adjective/adverb, used in the same way (e.g. *more useful*, *more politely*).

complement **1.** (predicative complement) a part of a sentence that gives more information about the subject (after *be*, *seem* and some other verbs), or, in some structures, about the object. Examples: *You're* ***the right person to help***; *She looks* ***very kind***; *They elected him* ***President***.
2. a structure or words needed after a noun, adjective, verb or preposition to complete its meaning. Examples: *the intention* ***to travel***; *full* ***of water***; *try* ***phoning***; *down* ***the street***.

compound a compound noun, verb, adjective, preposition, etc is one that is made of two or more parts. Examples: *bus driver*; *get on with*; *one-eyed*.

concrete noun (the opposite of an **abstract noun**) the name of something which we can experience by seeing, touching, etc. Examples: *cloud*; *petrol*; *raspberry*.

conditional a clause or sentence containing *if* (or a word with a similar meaning). Examples: *If you try you'll understand*; *I would be surprised if she knew*; *Supposing the train had been late, what would you have done?*

conjunction a word like *and*, *but*, *although*, *because*, *when*, *if*, which can be used to join clauses together. Example: *I rang* ***because I*** *was worried.*

consonant for example, the letters *b*, *c*, *d*, *f*, *g* and their usual sounds (see **Phonetic alphabet**, page xxx). See also **vowel**.

continuous the same as **progressive**.

contraction a short form in which a subject and an auxiliary verb, or an auxiliary verb and the word *not*, are joined together into one word. Contractions are also made with non-auxiliary *be* and *have*. Examples: *I'm*; *who've*; *John'll*; *can't*.

co-ordinate clause one of two or more clauses of equal 'value' that are connected. Examples: ***Shall I come to your place*** *or* ***would you like to come to mine?***; ***It's cooler today*** *and* ***there's a bit of a wind***. See also **clause**, **main clause**, **subordinate clause**.

co-ordinating conjunction a conjunction that joins co-ordinate clauses or other co-ordinate structures. Examples: *and*, *but*, *or*.

countable noun a noun like *car*, *dog*, *idea*, which can have a plural form, and can be used with the indefinite article *a/an*. See also **uncountable noun**.

declarative question a question which has the same grammatical form as a statement. Example: *That's your girlfriend?*

definite article *the*.

defining relative see **identifying relative**.

demonstrative *this*, *these*, *that*, *those*.

determiner one of a group of words that begin noun phrases. Determiners include *a/an*, *the*, *my*, *this*, *each*, *either*, *several*, *more*, *both*, *all*.

direct object see **object**.

direct speech speech reported 'directly', in the words used by the original speaker (more or less), without any changes of tense, pronouns, etc. Example: *She looked at me and said, **'This is my money'**.* See also **indirect speech**.

discourse marker a word or expression which shows the connection between what is being said and the wider context. A discourse marker may, for example, connect a sentence with what comes before or after, or it may show the speaker's attitude to what he/she is saying. Examples: *on the other hand*; *frankly*; *as a matter of fact*.

duration how long something lasts. The preposition *for* can be used with an expression of time to indicate duration.

ellipsis leaving out words when their meaning can be understood from the context. Examples: *(It's a) Nice day, isn't it?*; *It was better than I expected (it would be).*

emphasis giving special importance to one part of a word or sentence (for example by pronouncing it more loudly; by writing it in capital letters; by using *do* in an affirmative clause; by using special word order).

emphatic pronoun reflexive pronoun (*myself, yourself,* etc) used to emphasise a noun or pronoun. Examples: *I'll tell him **myself**; I wouldn't sell this to the president **himself**.* See also **reflexive pronoun**.

ending something added to the end of a word, e.g. *-er, -ing, -ed*.

finite verb Verbs which show time (e.g. *goes, went*) are often called 'finite' in grammars; other forms (e.g *written, playing*) are called 'non-finite'.

first person see **person**.

formal the style used when talking politely to strangers, on special occasions, in some literary writing, in business letters, etc. For example, *commence* is a more formal word than *start*.

frequency Adverbials of frequency say how often something happens. Examples: *often*; *never*; *daily*; *occasionally; every three days*.

fronting moving a part of a clause to the beginning in order to give it special emphasis. Example: ***Jack** I like, but **his wife** I can't stand.*

full verb a verb that is not an auxiliary verb. Examples: *work, remove, explain*.

future a verb tense made with the auxiliary *will* (or sometimes *shall*) + infinitive without *to*. Example: ***I will arrive** on Tuesday evening.*

future perfect a verb tense made with *shall/will* + *have* + past participle. Example: ***I will have finished** by lunchtime.*

future progressive (or **future continuous**) a verb tense made with *shall/will* + *be* + . . .*ing*. Example: ***I will be needing** the car this evening.*

gender the use of different grammatical forms to show the difference between masculine, feminine and neuter, or between human and nonhuman. Examples: *he*; *she*; *it*; *who*; *which*.

gerund the form of a verb ending in *-ing*, used like a noun (for example, as the subject or object of a sentence). Examples: ***Smoking** is bad for you; I hate **getting** up early*. See also **present participle**.

gradable *Pretty, hard* or *cold* are gradable adjectives: things can be more or less *pretty, hard* or *cold*. Adverbs of degree (like *rather, very*) can be used with gradable words. *Perfect* or *dead* are not gradable words: we do not usually say that something is *more* or *less perfect*, or *very dead*.

grammar the rules that show how words are combined, arranged or changed to show certain kinds of meaning.

hypothetical Some words and structures (e.g. modal verbs, *if*-clauses) are used for hypothetical situations – that is to say, situations which may not happen, or are imaginary. Example: *What would you do if you had six months free?*

identifying (or **defining**) **relative clause** a relative clause which identifies a noun – which tells us which person or thing is being talked about. Example: *There's the woman **who tried to steal your cat**.* (The relative clause *who tried to steal your cat* identifies the woman – it tells us which woman is meant.) See also **non-identifying relative clause**.

imperative the form of a verb used to give orders, make suggestions, etc. Examples: ***Bring** me a pen*; ***Have** a good holiday*.

indefinite article *a/an*.

indirect object see **object**.

indirect speech a structure in which we report what somebody said by making it part of our own sentence (so that the tenses, word order, pronouns and other words may be different from those used by the original speaker). Compare: *He said 'I'm tired'* (the original speaker's words are reported in direct speech) and *He said **that he was tired*** (the original speaker's words are reported in indirect speech).

infinitive the base form of a word (usually with *to*), used after another verb, after an adjective or noun, or as the subject or complement of a sentence. Examples: *I want **to go** home*; *It's easy **to sing***; *I've got a plan **to start** a business*; ***To err** is human, **to forgive** divine*.

informal the style used in ordinary conversation, personal letters, etc, when there is no special reason to speak politely or carefully. *I'll* is more informal than *I will*; *get* is used mostly in an informal style; *start* is a more informal word than *commence*.

-ing form the form of a verb ending in *-ing*. Examples: *finding*; *keeping*; *running*. See also **gerund**, **present participle**.

initial at the beginning. *Sometimes* is an adverb that can go in initial position in a sentence. Example: ***Sometimes** I wish I had a different job*.

intensifying making stronger, more emphatic. *Very* and *terribly* are intensifying adverbs.

interrogative Interrogative structures and words are used for asking questions. In an interrogative sentence, there is an auxiliary verb (or non-auxiliary *be*) before the subject (e.g. *Can you swim?*; *Are you ready?*). *What*, *who* and *where* are interrogative words.

intonation the 'melody' of spoken language: the way the musical pitch of the voice rises and falls to show meaning, sentence structure or mood.

intransitive An intransitive verb is one that cannot have an object or be used in the passive. Examples: *smile*; *fall*; *come*; *go*.

inversion a structure in which an auxiliary or other verb comes before its subject. Examples: *Never **had she** seen such a mess*; *Here **comes John***.

irregular not following the normal rules, or not having the usual form. An irregular verb has a past tense and/or past participle that does not end in *-ed* (e.g. *swam*, *taken*); *children* is an irregular plural.

linking verb (or **copular verb**) *be, seem, feel* and other verbs which link a subject to a complement that describes it. Examples: *My mother **is** in Jersey; He **seems** unhappy; This **feels** soft.*

main clause, subordinate clause Some sentences consist of a main clause and one or more subordinate clauses. A subordinate clause acts like a part of the main clause (e.g. like a subject, or an object, or an adverbial). Examples: ***Where she is** doesn't matter* (the subordinate clause *Where she is* is the subject of the main clause); *I told you **that I didn't care*** (the subordinate clause *that I didn't care* is the direct object in the main clause); *You'll find friends **wherever you go*** (the subordinate clause *wherever you go* acts like an adverb in the main clause: compare *You'll find friends **anywhere***).

main verb A verb phrase often contains one or more auxiliary verbs together with a main verb. The main verb is the verb which expresses the central meaning; auxiliary verbs mostly add grammatical information (for instance, they may show that a verb is progressive, future, perfect or passive). Examples: *is **going**; will **explain**; has **arrived**; would have been **forgotten**.*

manner an adverbial of manner describes how something happens. Examples: *well; suddenly; fast; without any delay.*

mid-position If an adverbial is in mid-position in a sentence, it is with the verb. Example: *I have **never** been to Africa.*

misrelated participle (also called **hanging** or **dangling participle**) a participle which appears to have a subject which is not its own. Example: ***Looking** out of the window, the mountains appeared very close.* (This seems to say that the mountains were looking out of the window.) The structure is usually avoided in careful writing because of the danger of misunderstanding.

modal auxiliary verb one of the verbs *can, could, may, might, must, will, shall, would, should, ought.*

modify An adjective is said to 'modify' the noun it is with: it adds to or defines its meaning. Examples: *a **fine** day; my **new** job.* An adverb can modify a verb (e.g. *run **fast***), an adjective (e.g. ***completely** ready*) or other words or expressions. In ***sports** car,* the first noun modifies the second.

negative a negative sentence is one in which the word *not* is used with the verb. Example: *I did**n't** know.*

nominal relative clause a relative clause (usually introduced by *what*) which acts as the subject, object or complement of a sentence. Example: *I gave him **what he needed**.*

non-affirmative (also called **non-assertive**) The words *some, somebody, somewhere,* etc are used most often in affirmative sentences. In other kinds of sentence they are often replaced by *any, anybody, anywhere,* etc. Words like *any, anybody,* etc are called 'non-affirmative' or non-assertive' forms. Other non-affirmative forms are *yet* and *ever.*

non-identifying (or **non-defining**) **relative clause** a relative clause which does not identify the noun it refers to (because we already know which person or thing is meant). Example: *There's Hannah Smith, **who tried to steal my cat.*** (The relative clause, *who tried to steal my cat,* does not identify the person – she is already identified by the name *Hannah Smith.*) See also **identifying relative clause**.

noun a word like *oil*, *memory*, *arm*, which can be used with an article. Nouns are most often the names of people or things. Personal names (e.g. *George*) and place names (e.g. *Birmingham*) are called 'proper nouns'; they are mostly used without articles.

noun phrase a group of words (e.g. article + adjective + noun) which acts as the subject, object or complement in a clause. Example: *the last bus*.

number the way in which differences between singular and plural are shown grammatically. The differences between *house* and *houses*, *mouse* and *mice*, *this* and *these* are differences of number.

object a noun phrase or pronoun that normally comes after the verb in an active clause. The direct object most often refers to a person or thing (or people or things) affected by the action of the verb. In the sentence *Take **the dog** for a walk, **the dog*** is the direct object. The indirect object usually refers to a person (or people) who receive(s) the direct object. In the sentence *Anna gave **me** **a watch***, the indirect object is *me*, and the direct object is *a watch*. See also **subject**.

participle see **present participle** and **past participle**.

participle clause a clause-like structure which contains a participle, not a verb tense. Examples: ***Discouraged by his failure**, he resigned from his job*; ***Having a couple of hours to spare**, I went to see a film*.

passive A passive verb form is made with *be* + past participle. Examples: *is broken*; *was told*; *will be helped* (but not *breaks*, *told*, *will help*, which are active verb forms). The subject of a passive verb form is usually the person or thing that is affected by the action of the verb. Compare: *They sent Lucas to prison for five years* (active) and *Lucas was sent to prison for five years* (passive). See also **active**.

past participle a verb form like *broken*, *gone*, *stopped*, which can be used to form perfect tenses and passives, or as an adjective. (The meaning is not necessarily past, in spite of the name.)

past perfect a verb tense made with *had* + past participle. Examples: *I **had forgotten***; *The children **had arrived***; *She **had been working***; *It **had been raining***. The first two examples are simple past perfect; the last two (with *had been* + . . .*ing*) are past perfect progressive (or continuous).

past progressive (or **continuous**) a verb tense made with *was/were* + . . .*ing*. Examples: *I **was going***; *They **were stopping***.

past simple see **simple past**.

perfect a verb form made with the auxiliary *have* + past participle. Examples: *I **have forgotten***; *She **had failed***; ***having arrived***; ***to have finished***.

perfect conditional *should/would have* + past participle. Examples: *I **should/would have agreed***; *He **would have known***.

perfect infinitive *(to) have* + past participle. Example: *to have arrived*.

perfect participle a structure like *having lost*, *having arrived*.

person the way in which, in grammar, we show the difference between the person(s) speaking (*first person*), the person(s) spoken to (*second person*), and the person, people or thing(s) spoken about (*third person*). The differences between *I*, *you*, and *he/she*, or between *am*, *are* and *is*, are differences of person.

personal pronouns the words *I*, *me*, *you*, *he*, *him*, etc.

phrase two or more words that function together as a group. Examples: *dead tired*; *the silly old woman*; *would have been repaired*; *in the country*.

phrasal verb a verb form that is made up of two parts: verb + adverb particle. Examples: *fill up*; *run over*; *take in*.

plural a grammatical form used to refer to more than one person or thing. Examples: *we*; *buses*; *children*; *are*; *many*; *these*. See also **singular**.

possessive a form used to show possession and similar ideas. Examples: *John's*; *our*; *mine*.

possessive pronoun *My*, *your*, *his*, *her*, etc are possessive pronouns (they stand for 'the speaker's', 'the hearer's', 'that person's', etc). *Mine*, *yours*, *his*, *hers*, etc are also possessive pronouns, for the same reason. *My*, *your*, etc are used before nouns, so they are not only pronouns, but also determiners. (They are often called 'possessive adjectives', but this is not correct.) *Mine*, *yours*, etc are used without following nouns.

postmodifier a word that comes after the word which it modifies, e.g. *invited* in *The people **invited** all came late*. See also **premodifier**.

predicative Adjectives placed after a verb like *be*, *seem*, *look* are in predicative position. Examples: *The house is **enormous***; *She looks **happy***. See also **attributive**.

prefix a form like *ex-*, *anti-* or *un-*, which can be added to the front of a word to give an additional or different meaning. Examples: ***ex**-wife*, ***anti**-British*, ***un**happy*. See also **suffix**.

premodifier a word that comes before the word which it modifies, e.g. *invited* in *an **invited** audience*. See also **postmodifier**.

preparatory subject, preparatory object When the subject of a sentence is an infinitive or a clause, we usually put it towards the end of the sentence and use the pronoun *it* as a preparatory subject. Example: ***It** is important to get enough sleep*. *It* can also be used as a preparatory object in certain structures. Example: *He made **it** clear **that he disagreed***. *There* is used as a kind of preparatory subject in *there is . . .* and similar structures. Example: ***There** is somebody at the door*.

preposition a word like *on*, *off*, *of*, *into*, normally followed by a noun or pronoun.

prepositional verb a verb form that is made up of two parts: verb form + preposition. Examples: *insist on; care for; listen to*.

present participle the form of a verb ending in *-ing*, used as an adjective, a verb or part of a verb. Examples: *a **crying** baby*; ***Opening** his newspaper, he started to read*; *She was **running***. (The meaning is not necessarily present, in spite of the name.) See also **gerund**.

present perfect a verb tense made with *have/has* + past participle. Examples: *I **have forgotten***; *The children **have arrived***; *I've **been working** all day*; *It has **been raining***. The first two examples are simple present perfect; the last two (with *have been* + *. . .ing*) are present perfect progressive (or present perfect continuous).

present progressive (or **continuous**) a verb tense made with *am/are/is* + *. . .ing*. Examples: *I **am going***; *She **is staying** for two weeks*.

present simple see **simple present**.

progressive (or **continuous**) A verb form made with the auxiliary *be* + *. . .ing*. Examples: *to **be going***; *We **were wondering***; *I'll **be seeing** you*.

progressive (or **continuous**) **infinitive** a form like *to be going*; *to be waiting*.

pronoun a word like *it, yourself, their*, which is used instead of a more precise noun or noun phrase (like *the cat, Tom's self, the family's*). The word *pronoun* can also be used for a determiner when this includes the meaning of a following noun which has been left out. Example: *I'll take* ***these***.

proper noun or **proper name** a noun (most often with no article) which is the name of a particular person, place, organisation, etc. Examples: *Alex, Brazil; the European Union*.

quantifier a determiner like *many, few, little, several*, which is used in a noun phrase to show how much or how many we are talking about.

question tag an expression like *do you?* or *isn't it?*, consisting of an auxiliary verb (or non-auxiliary *be* or *have*) + pronoun subject, put on to the end of a sentence. Examples: *You don't eat meat,* ***do you?***; *It's a nice day,* ***isn't it?***

reflexive pronoun *myself, yourself, himself*, etc. Example: *I cut* ***myself*** *shaving this morning*. See also **emphatic pronoun**.

regular following the normal rules or having the usual form. *Hoped* is a regular past tense; *cats* is a regular plural. See also **irregular**.

relative clause a clause which modifies a noun, usually introduced by a relative pronoun like *who* or *which*. Example: *I like people* ***who like me***. See also **identifying relative clause**, **non-identifying relative clause**.

relative pronoun a pronoun used to connect a relative clause to its noun. *Who, whom, whose, which* and *that* can be used as relative pronouns, and sometimes also *when, where* and *why*. Examples: *There's the man* ***who*** *wants to buy my car*; *This is the room* ***which*** *needs painting*; *Do you remember the day* ***when*** *we met?*

reply question a question (similar in structure to a question tag) used to reply to a statement, for instance, to express interest. Example: '*I've been invited to spend the weekend in London.*' '***Have you, dear?***'

second person see **person**.

sentence a group of words that typically expresses a statement, command, question or exclamation. A sentence consists of one or more clauses, and usually has at least one subject and verb. In writing, it begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark.

short answer an answer consisting of a subject and an auxiliary verb (or non-auxiliary *be* or *have*). Examples: '*Has anybody phoned the police?*' '***Jack has.***'; '*Who's ready for more?*' '***I am.***'

simple past (or **past simple**) a past verb tense that has no auxiliary verb in the affirmative. Examples: *I* ***stopped***; *You* ***heard***; *We* ***knew***.

simple present (or **present simple**) a present verb form that has no auxiliary verb in the affirmative. Examples: *He* ***goes*** *there often*; ***I know***; *I* ***like*** *chocolate*.

simple a verb form that is not progressive.

singular a grammatical form used to talk about one person, thing, etc, or about an uncountable quantity or mass. Examples: *me*; *bus*; *water*; *is*; *much*; *this*. See also **plural**.

slang a word, expression or special use of language found mainly in very informal speech, often in the usage of particular groups of people. Examples: *thick* (= stupid); *lose one's cool* (= get upset); *sparks* (= electrician).

split infinitive a structure in which an adverb comes between *to* and the rest of the infinitive. Example: *to easily understand*. Some people consider split infinitives 'incorrect', but they are common in standard usage.

standard A standard form of a language is the one that is most generally accepted for use in government, the law, business, education and literature. *I'm not* is standard English; *I ain't* is non-standard.

statement a sentence which gives information; not a question. Examples: *I'm cold*; *Daniel didn't come home last night*.

stress the way in which one or more parts of a word, phrase or sentence are made to sound more important than the rest, by using a louder voice and/or higher pitch. In the word *particular*, the main stress is on the second syllable (*parTIcular*); in the sentence *Where's the new secretary?* there are three stresses (*WHERE'S the NEW SEcretary?*).

strong form, weak form Certain words can be pronounced in two ways: slowly and carefully with the vowel that is written (strong form), or with a quicker pronunciation with the vowel /ə/ or /ɪ/ (weak form). Examples: *can* (/kæn/, /kən/), *was* (/wɒz/, /wəz/), *for* (/fɔ:(r)/, /fə(r)/).

subject a noun phrase or pronoun that normally comes before the verb in an affirmative clause. It often says (in an active clause) who or what does the action that the verb refers to. Examples: ***Ellie** gave me a wonderful smile*; ***Oil** floats on water*. See also **object**.

subjunctive a verb form (not very common in British English) used in certain structures. Examples: *If I **were** you . . .*; *It's important that he **be** informed immediately*; *We prefer that he **pay** in cash*.

subordinate clause a clause which functions as part of another clause, for example as subject, object or adverbial in the main clause of a sentence. Examples: *I thought **that you understood**; **What I need** is a drink*; *I'll follow you **wherever you go***. See also **clause**, **main clause**.

subordinating conjunction a conjunction that joins a subordinate clause to the rest of its sentence. Examples: *when, if, because*.

suffix a form like *-ology*, *-able* or *-ese*, which can be added to the end of a word to give an additional or different meaning. Examples: *climat**ology***; *understand**able***; *Chin**ese***. See also **prefix**.

superlative the form of an adjective or adverb made with the suffix *-est* (e.g. *oldest*, *fastest*); also the structure *most* + adjective/adverb, used in the same way (e.g. *most intelligent*, *most politely*).

syllable The word *cat* has one syllable, *cattle* has two, *cataract* has three and *category* has four. A syllable normally has a vowel, and usually one or more consonants before and/or after the vowel. Sometimes the consonant sounds *l*, *m* and *n* can act as syllables (for instance in the words *bottle* /ˈbɒtl/, *capitalism* /ˈkæpɪtəlɪz(ə)m/, *button* /ˈbʌtn/).

tag a short phrase (e.g. pronoun subject + auxiliary verb) added on to the end of a sentence, especially in speech. Examples: *He likes to talk, **Josh does***; *You can't swim, **can you?***; *Very noisy, **those kids***. See also **question tag**.

tense a verb form that shows the time of an action, event or state, by a change in its form and/or the use of an auxiliary. Examples: *worked, saw, will go*; *is sitting*.

third person see **person**.

transitive a transitive verb is one that can have an object. Examples: *eat (a meal)*; *drive (a car)*; *give (a present)*. See also **intransitive**.

uncountable noun a noun which has no plural form and cannot normally be used with the article *a/an*. Examples: *mud*; *rudeness*; *furniture*.

verb a word like *ask*, *wake*, *play*, *be*, *can*. Most verbs refer to actions, events or states. See also **auxiliary verb**, **modal auxiliary verb**, **verb phrase**.

verb phrase a verbal structure that has more than one part. Example: *would have been forgotten*.

vowel the letters *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u* and their combinations, and their usual sounds (see **Phonetic alphabet**, page xxx). See also **consonant**.

weak form see **strong form**.

Phonetic alphabet

It is necessary to use a special alphabet to show the pronunciation of English words, because the ordinary English alphabet does not have enough letters to represent all the sounds of the language. The following list contains all the letters of the phonetic alphabet used in this book, with examples of the words in which the sounds they refer to are found.

Vowels and diphthongs (double vowels)

iː **sea**t /siːt/, **fee**l /fiːl/
ɪ **si**t /sɪt/, **i**n /ɪn/
e **se**t /set/, **a**ny /'eni/
æ **sa**t /sæt/, m**a**tch /mætʃ/
ɑː m**a**rch /mɑːtʃ/, **a**fter /'ɑːftə(r)/
ɒ p**o**t /pɒt/, g**o**ne /gɒn/
ɔː p**or**t /pɔːt/, l**aw** /lɔː/
ʊ g**oo**d /gʊd/, c**ou**ld /kʊd/
uː f**oo**d /fuːd/, gr**ou**p /gruːp/
ʌ m**u**ch /mʌtʃ/, fr**o**nt /frʌnt/
ɜː t**ur**n /tɜːn/, w**or**d /wɜːd/
ə **a**way /ə'weɪ/, c**o**llect /kə'lekt/, **u**ntil /ən'tɪl/

eɪ t**a**ke /teɪk/, w**ai**t /weɪt/
aɪ m**i**ne /maɪn/, l**i**ght /laɪt/
ɔɪ **oi**l /ɔɪl/, b**oy** /bɔɪ/
əʊ n**o** /nəʊ/, **o**pen /'əʊpən/
aʊ h**ou**se /haʊs/, n**ow** /naʊ/
ɪə h**ear** /hɪə(r)/, d**eer** /dɪə(r)/
eə **air** /eə(r)/, wh**ere** /weə(r)/
ʊə t**our** /tʊə(r)/, end**ure** /ɪn'djʊə(r)/

Consonants

p **p**ull /pʊl/, c**up** /kʌp/
b **b**ull /bʊl/, ro**b** /rɒb/
f **f**erry /'feri/, li**f**e /laɪf/
v **v**ery /'veri/, li**v**e /lɪv/
θ **th**ink /θɪŋk/, ba**th** /bɑːθ/
ð **th**en /ðen/, wi**th** /wɪð/
t **t**ake /teɪk/, se**t** /set/
d **d**ay /deɪ/, re**d** /red/
s **s**ing /sɪŋ/, ri**c**e /raɪs/
z **z**oo /zuː/, day**s** /deɪz/
ʃ **sh**ow /ʃəʊ/, wi**sh** /wɪʃ/
ʒ pleasure /'pleʒə(r)/, occa**s**ion /ə'keɪʒn/

tʃ **ch**eap /tʃiːp/, ca**tch** /kætʃ/
dʒ **j**ail /dʒeɪl/, bri**dg**e /brɪdʒ/
k **c**ase /keɪs/, ta**k**e /teɪk/
g **g**o /gəʊ/, ru**g** /rʌg/
m **m**y /maɪ/, co**m**e /kʌm/
n **n**o /nəʊ/, o**n** /ɒn/
ŋ si**ng** /sɪŋ/, fi**ng**er /'fɪŋgə(r)/
l **l**ove /lʌv/, ho**l**e /həʊl/
r **r**ound /raʊnd/, ca**rr**y /'kæri/
w **w**ell /wel/
j **y**oung /jʌŋ/
h **h**ouse /haʊs/

The sign (') shows stress (► 313).

Practical English Usage

Grammar	Sections 1–28: entries 1–320
Vocabulary	Sections 29–31: entries 321–635

Section 1 **Verbs**

INTRODUCTION

forms

Verbs are the central element in sentences. Most of the things we say are built around them. English verbs have up to five one-word forms (except *be*, which has eight). These are:

- the **base form**: the one found in dictionaries, for example *go, write, play*. This is used for **present tense** forms after *I, we, you* (singular and plural) and *they*, in **infinitives**, and in **imperatives**.
  *We **go** skating on Saturdays.* *I must **write** to Laura.*
  *Please **play** something.*
- the **third person singular present**, for example *goes, writes, plays*
- the **past tense**, for example *went, wrote, played*
- the **past participle**, for example *gone, written, played*. Note that in **regular** verbs the past participle is the same as the past tense.
- the ***-ing*** form, for example *going, writing, playing*. Depending on how it is used, the *-ing* form may be called a '**present participle**' or a '**gerund**' (► 93.1).

Verb forms which show time (e.g. *goes, went*) are often called **finite** in grammars; other forms (e.g. *written, playing*) are **non-finite**.

tenses

Tenses are verb forms that show the time of actions and situations, either as single words or including auxiliary verbs (see below).

*We **went** home.* (simple past tense)
*Have you **written** to Jamie?* (present perfect tense)

For a list of **active** tenses, ► 2.3. For **passive** tenses, and an explanation of active and passive structures, ► 57.

auxiliary verbs

Auxiliary ('helping') verbs are used with other verbs to add various kinds of meaning. *Be, have* and *do* help to make progressive (or 'continuous') and perfect structures, questions and negatives (see below and ► Section 2).
Modal auxiliary verbs (*must, can, could, will, would, may, might, shall, should* and *ought*) are used with other verbs to add ideas such as futurity, certainty, probability, obligation and permission. For details, ► Section 7.

What can follow a verb?

Different non-auxiliary verbs can be followed by different kinds of words and structures. This is partly a matter of meaning: after a verb like *eat* or *break*, for instance, it is normal to expect a noun; after *try* or *stop*, it is natural to expect a verb. It is also partly a matter of grammatical rules that have nothing to do with meaning. Before an object, *wait* is followed by *for*; *expect* has no preposition. One can *tell somebody something*, but one cannot ~~*explain somebody something*~~. One *hopes to see somebody*, but one *looks forward to seeing somebody*. One *advises somebody to see the doctor*, but one does not ~~*suggest somebody to see the doctor*~~. One *thinks that something will happen*, but one does not ~~*want that it will happen*~~.

Unfortunately, there are no simple rules in this area; it is necessary to learn, for each verb, what kind of structures can follow it. A good dictionary will normally give this information.

For more about nouns and verbs with objects, ► 7.
For two-part verbs with adverb particles and prepositions (e.g. *pick up, look at*), ► 12–13.
For more about verbs followed by verbal structures, ► 15–16.

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- ✗ I laid down and went to sleep. ► 1.2
- ✗ She switched off it. ► 12.4
- ✗ What are you thinking of the government? ► 4.3
- ✗ I'm seeing what you mean. ► 4.3
- ✗ Is raining again. ► 7.1
- ✗ Give back me my watch. ► 12.4
- ✗ Is that the light off which you switched? ► 12.4
- ✗ You never listen me. ► 13.1
- ✗ Listen to! ► 13.1
- ✗ About what are you thinking? ► 13.3
- ✗ He gave you it. ► 8.3
- ✗ Who did you buy it? ► 8.4
- ✗ I'd like him to explain us his decision. ► 8.6
- ✗ Can you suggest me a good dentist? ► 8.6
- ✗ Please describe us your wife. ► 8.6
- ✗ Sing us. ► 8.7
- ✗ He painted red the wall. ► 10.1
- ✗ She made that she disagreed clear. ► 10.5
- ✗ You surprised! ► 7.2
- ✗ Do sit that chair. ► 7.2
- ✗ The problem appears impossibly. ► 11.3
- ✗ Isabel sudden appeared in the doorway. ► 11.3
- ✗ He fell unconsciously on the floor. ► 11.5
- ✗ He pulled his belt tightly and started off. ► 11.5
- ✗ She crossed the garden dancing. ► 14

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1 irregular verbs
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5 progressive with *always*, etc
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10 verb + object + complement: *You make me nervous.*
11 linking verbs: *be, seem, look*, etc
12 two-part verbs: phrasal verbs
13 two-part verbs: prepositional verbs
14 verbs of movement: *she ran in*, etc
15 verb + verb: auxiliary verbs
16 verb + verb: other structures

1 irregular verbs

1 common irregular verbs

This is a list of the more common irregular verbs. Students should check that they know all of them. For a complete list, see a good dictionary.

Infinitive	Simple past	Past participle
arise	arose	arisen
awake	awoke	awoken
be	was, were	been
bear	bore	born(e)
beat	beat	beaten
become	became	become
begin	began	begun
bend	bent	bent
bet	bet, betted	bet, betted
bind	bound	bound
bite	bit	bitten
bleed	bled	bled
blow	blew	blown
break	broke	broken
bring	brought	brought
broadcast	broadcast	broadcast
build	built	built
burn	burnt, burned	burnt, burned
burst	burst	burst
buy	bought	bought
catch	caught	caught
choose	chose	chosen
come	came	come
cost	cost	cost
cut	cut	cut
deal	dealt /delt/	dealt /delt/
dig	dug	dug
do	did	done
draw	drew	drawn
dream	dreamt /dremt/, dreamed /dri:md/	dreamt /dremt/, dreamed /dri:md/
drink	drank	drunk
drive	drove	driven
eat	ate /et, eɪt/	eaten /'i:tn/
fall	fell	fallen
feed	fed	fed
feel	felt	felt
fight	fought	fought
find	found	found
fly	flew	flown

Infinitive	Simple past	Past participle
forbid	forbade /fə'bæd, fə'beɪd/	forbidden
forget	forgot	forgotten
forgive	forgave	forgiven
freeze	froze	frozen
get	got	got
give	gave	given
go	went	gone, been
grow	grew	grown
hang	hung	hung
have	had	had
hear /hɪə(r)/	heard /hɜːd/	heard /hɜːd/
hide	hid	hidden
hit	hit	hit
hold	held	held
hurt	hurt	hurt
keep	kept	kept
kneel	knelt	knelt
know	knew	known
lay	laid	laid
lead	led	led
lean	leant /lent/, leaned /liːnd/	leant /lent/, leaned /liːnd/
leap	leapt /lept/, leaped	leapt /lept/, leaped
learn	learnt, learned	learnt, learned
leave	left	left
lend	lent	lent
let	let	let
lie	lay	lain
light	lit, lighted	lit, lighted
lose	lost	lost
make	made	made
mean /miːn/	meant /ment/	meant /ment/
meet	met	met
pay	paid	paid
put	put	put
quit	quit, quitted	quit, quitted
read /riːd/	read /red/	read /red/
ride	rode	ridden
ring	rang	rung
rise	rose	risen
run	ran	run
say	said /sed/	said /sed/
see	saw	seen
sell	sold	sold

Infinitive	Simple past	Past participle
send	sent	sent
set	set	set
shake	shook	shaken
shine	shone /ʃɒn/	shone /ʃɒn/
shoot	shot	shot
show	showed	shown
shrink	shrank, shrunk	shrunk
shut	shut	shut
sing	sang	sung
sink	sank	sunk
sit	sat	sat
sleep	slept	slept
slide	slid	slid
smell	smelt, smelled	smelt, smelled
speak	spoke	spoken
speed	sped	sped
spell	spelt, spelled	spelt, spelled
spend	spent	spent
spill	spilt, spilled	spilt, spilled
spin	span, spun	spun
spit	spat	spat
split	split	split
spoil	spoilt, spoiled	spoilt, spoiled
spread	spread	spread
stand	stood	stood
steal	stole	stolen
stick	stuck	stuck
sting	stung	stung
strike	struck	struck
swear	swore	sworn
sweep	swept	swept
swing	swung	swung
swim	swam	swum
take	took	taken
teach	taught	taught
tear	tore	torn
tell	told	told
think	thought	thought
throw	threw	thrown
understand	understood	understood
wake	woke	woken
wear	wore	worn
win	won	won
wind /waɪnd/	wound /waʊnd/	wound /waʊnd/
write	wrote	written

2 verbs that are easily confused

Infinitive	Simple past	Past participle
fall	fell	fallen
feel	felt	felt
fill	filled	filled
find (= get back something lost)	found	found
found (= start up an organisation or institution)	founded	founded
flow (of a liquid = move)	flowed	flowed
fly (= move in the air)	flew	flown
flee (= run away)	fled	fled
lay (= put down flat)	laid	laid
lie (= be down)	lay	lain
lie (= say things that are not true)	lied	lied
leave	left	left
live	lived	lived
raise (= put up)	raised	raised
rise (= go/get up)	rose	risen
strike (= hit)	struck	struck
stroke (= pass the hand gently over)	stroked	stroked
wind /waɪnd/ (= turn, tighten a spring, etc)	wound /waʊnd/	wound /waʊnd/
wound /wuːnd/ (= injure in a battle)	wounded	wounded

For more details of these three verbs, ▸ 507.

3 notes

- Note the standard AmE pronunciations of *ate* (/eɪt/) and *shone* (/ʃoʊn/). /et/ for *ate* is substandard in AmE (but a standard variant in BrE).
- *Burn, dream, kneel, lean, learn, smell, spell, spill* and *spoil* are all generally regular in American English. In British English, irregular past tenses and participles with *-t* are also quite common.
- *Dive* is regular in British English, but can be irregular in American: *dive – dived/dove* (/doʊv/) *– dived*
- The old past participle *drunken* is used as an adjective in some expressions (e.g. *a drunken argument, drunken driving*), but these are not very common. →

- *Fit* and *quit* are usually irregular in American English.
  fit – fit – fit, quit – quit – quit
- The American past participle of *get* is either *got* or *gotten* (► 472.6).
- *Hang* is regular when used to mean 'execute by hanging'.
- *Prove* (regular) has an irregular past participle *proven* which is sometimes used instead of *proved*, especially as an adjective (e.g. *a proven liar*).
- *Says* is pronounced /sez/.
- *Speed* can also have regular forms, especially in the expression *speeded up*.
- *Spit* has both *spit* and *spat* as past tense and participle in American English.
- *Sung* and *sunk* are sometimes used instead of *sang* and *sank*.

2 active verb tenses

1 present, future and past; simple, progressive and perfect

English verbs can refer to present, future or past time.

present: *I'm **watching** you.*
future: *She **will see** you tomorrow.*
past: *Who **said** that?*

For each kind of time, there are three possibilities with most verbs: **simple**; **progressive** or **continuous** (*be* + *-ing* ► 3); and **perfect** (*have* + past participle ► 6).

simple present: *I **start***
present progressive: *I **am starting***
present perfect: *I **have started***

Some grammarians use the word 'tense' only for simple forms like *goes* or *went*; for forms like *is going* or *has gone* they prefer to talk about progressive or perfect 'aspect', and they say that English has 'no future tense'. These are principally questions of terminology, not grammatical fact, and have no practical importance. In *Practical English Usage* the term 'tense' is used for all verb forms and structures that indicate time.

2 tenses and time

There is not a direct relationship between verb forms and time. For example, a past verb like *went* is not only used to talk about past events (e.g. *We **went** to Morocco last January*), but also about unreal or uncertain present or future events (e.g. *It would be better if we **went** home now*). And present verbs can be used to talk about the future (e.g. *I'm **seeing** Daniel tomorrow*). Also, progressive and perfect forms express ideas that are not simply concerned with time – for example continuation, completion, present importance.

3 table of active verb tenses

This is a list of all the active affirmative forms of an ordinary English verb, with their names, examples, and very brief descriptions of typical uses. For more information about the forms and their uses, see the entries for each tense in ► Sections 3–5.

NAME	CONSTRUCTION	EXAMPLE	TYPICAL USE
simple present	same as base form/infinitive, but *-s* on third person singular (e.g. *I/you/we/they work; he/she works*)	*It always **rains** in November.*	'general' time; permanent situations (► 31)
present progressive	***am/are/is . . .ing***	*I can't talk to you now; **I'm working**.*	actions continuing at the moment of speaking (► 32)
present perfect	***have/has*** + **past participle**	*I **have worked** with children before, so I know what to expect.*	past action with some present connection (► 47)
present perfect progressive	***have/has been . . .ing***	*It **has been raining** all day.*	continuation up to the present (► 50)
(simple) future	***will*** + **infinitive** (*I/we shall* also possible)	*It **will rain** tomorrow.*	information about the future (► 38)
future progressive	***will be . . .ing*** (*I/we shall* also possible)	*This time tomorrow I'll **be lying** on the beach.*	continuing situation at a particular future time (► 41)
future perfect	***will have*** + **past participle** (*I/we shall* also possible)	*I **will have finished** the repairs by this evening.*	completion by a particular future time (► 40)
future perfect progressive	***will have been . . .ing*** (*I/we shall* also possible)	*In June I **will have been working** here for ten years.*	continuity up to a particular future time (► 40)
simple past	regular verbs: **base form/infinitive** + ***-(e)d*** irregular verbs: various forms	*I **worked** all last weekend.* *I **saw** Jack yesterday.*	past events (► 44)

→

NAME	CONSTRUCTION	EXAMPLE	TYPICAL USE
past progressive	***was/were . . .ing***	*I saw Jack when I* ***was coming*** *out of the supermarket.*	action continuing at a particular past time (► 45)
past perfect	***had*** + **past participle**	*I couldn't get in because I* ***had lost*** *my keys.*	action before a particular past time (► 53)
past perfect progressive	***had been . . .ing***	*I was tired because I* ***had been working*** *all day.*	continuation up to a particular past time (► 55)

For irregular past tenses and past participles, ► 1. For question forms, ► 216. For negatives, ► 217.
For the use of present forms to talk about the future, ► 35–37.
For past verbs with present or future meanings, ► 46. For subjunctives (e.g. . . . *that she go*), ► 232.
For passive verb forms, ► 57. For infinitives, ► 89. For imperatives, ► 224. For *-ing* forms, ► 93.
For auxiliary verbs, ► 15. For verb forms constructed with modal auxiliary verbs, ► 68.1.

3 progressive structures

1 construction

Progressive verb structures (also called 'continuous') are made with ***be*** + ***-ing***.

I ***am waiting*** *for the shops to open.* (present progressive)
Your suit ***is being cleaned.*** (present progressive passive)
She phoned while I ***was cooking.*** (past progressive)
Will you be going *out this evening?* (future progressive)
I'd like ***to be lying*** *on the beach now.* (progressive infinitive)

Progressive and perfect forms can be combined.

I didn't know how long she ***had been sitting*** *there.* (past perfect progressive)

2 terminology and use

A progressive does not simply show the time of an event. It also shows how the speaker sees the event – generally as ongoing and temporary, not completed or permanent. (Because of this, grammars often talk about 'progressive aspect' rather than 'progressive tenses'.) Compare:

– *I've* ***read*** *your email.* (completed action)
I've ***been reading*** *a lot of thrillers recently.* (not necessarily completed)
– *The Rhine* ***runs*** *into the North Sea.* (permanent)
We'll have to phone the plumber – water's ***running*** *down the kitchen wall.* (temporary)

When a progressive is used to refer to a short momentary action, it often suggests repetition.

Why ***are*** *you* ***jumping*** *up and down?*
The door ***was banging*** *in the wind.*

3 distancing: *I was wondering . . .*

Progressives can make requests, questions and statements less direct. (They sound less definite than simple forms, because they suggest something temporary and incomplete.)

*I'm **hoping** you can lend me £10.* (less definite than *I hope . . .*)
*What time **are** you **planning** to arrive?*
*I'm **looking** forward to seeing you again.*
*I'm afraid we must **be going**.*
*I **was wondering** if you had two single rooms.*
*Will you **be going** away at the weekend?*

For more about this kind of distancing, ► 311.

For more details of the use of progressives, see the individual entries on the present progressive, past progressive, etc.

4 non-progressive verbs

1 verbs not often used in progressive ('continuous') forms

Some verbs are not often used in progressive forms.

*I **like** this music.* (NOT ~~*I'm liking this music.*~~)
*I called her because I **needed** to talk.* (NOT . . . ~~*because I was needing to talk.*~~)

Some other verbs are not used in progressive forms when they have certain meanings (see below). Compare:

I'm seeing the doctor at ten o'clock.
I see what you mean. (NOT ~~*I'm seeing what you mean.*~~)

Many of these non-progressive verbs refer to states rather than actions. Some refer to mental states (e.g. *know, think, believe*); some others refer to the use of the senses (e.g. *smell, taste*).

Modal verbs (e.g. *can, must*) have no progressive forms, ► 68.1.

2 common non-progressive verbs

Here is a list of some common verbs which are not often used in progressive forms (or which are not used in progressive forms with certain meanings).

mental and emotional states

believe	*(dis)like*	*see* (= understand)
doubt	*love*	*suppose*
feel (= have an opinion)	*prefer*	*think* (= have an opinion)
hate	*realise*	*understand*
imagine	*recognise*	*want*
know	*remember*	*wish*

use of the senses

feel	*see*	*sound*
hear	*smell*	*taste*

→

communicating and causing reactions

agree	*impress*	*promise*
appear	*look* (= seem)	*satisfy*
astonish	*mean*	*seem*
deny	*please*	*surprise*
disagree		

other

be	*deserve*	*measure* (= have length, etc)
belong	*fit*	*need*
concern	*include*	*owe*
consist	*involve*	*own*
contain	*lack*	*possess*
depend	*matter*	*weigh* (= have weight)

More details on usage are given in entries for some of these verbs.

3 progressive and non-progressive uses

Compare the progressive and non-progressive uses of some of the verbs listed above.

– *I'm **feeling** fine.* (OR *I **feel** fine.* ▶ 463.1)
*I **feel** we shouldn't do it.* (NOT ~~*I'm feeling we shouldn't do it.*~~ – *feel* here = have an opinion.)

– *What **are** you **thinking** about?*
*What **do** you **think** of the government?* (NOT ~~*What are you thinking of the government?*~~ – *think* here = have an opinion.)

– *I'm **seeing** Leslie tomorrow.*
*I **see** what you mean.* (NOT ~~*I'm seeing what you mean.*~~ – *see* here = understand.)

– *Why **are** you **smelling** the meat? Is it bad?*
***Does** the meat **smell** bad?* (NOT ~~*Is the meat smelling bad?*~~ ▶ 581.)

– *I'm just **tasting** the cake to see if it's OK.*
*The cake **tastes** wonderful.* (NOT ~~*The cake's tasting wonderful.*~~ ▶ 603.)

– *The scales broke when I **was weighing** myself this morning.*
*I **weighed** 68 kilos three months ago – and look at me now!* (NOT ~~*I was weighing 68 kilos*~~ . . . – *weigh* here = have weight.)

Occasionally 'non-progressive' verbs are used in progressive forms in order to emphasise the idea of change or development.

*These days, more and more people **prefer** / **are preferring** to retire early.*
*The water **tastes** / **is tasting** better today.*
*As I get older, I **remember** / **I'm remembering** less and less.*
*I'm **liking** it here more and more as time goes by.*

Need, want and *mean* can have future or present perfect progressive uses.

***Will** you **be needing** the car this afternoon?*
*I've **been wanting** to go to Australia for years.*
*I've **been meaning** to tell you about Andrew. He . . .*

4 *can see*, etc

Can is often used with *see, hear, feel, taste, smell, understand* and *remember* to give a kind of progressive meaning, especially in British English (► 84).

*I **can see** Emma coming down the road.*
*Can you **smell** something burning?*

5 *-ing* forms

Even verbs which are never used in progressive tenses have *-ing* forms which can be used in other kinds of structure.

***Knowing** her tastes, I bought her a large box of chocolates.*
*You can respect people's views without **agreeing** with them.*

5 progressive with *always*, etc

We can use *always, continually* and similar words with a progressive form to mean 'very often'.

*I'm **always losing** my keys.* *Granny's **always giving** people little presents.*
*I'm **continually running** into Oliver these days.*
*That cat's **forever getting** shut in the bathroom.*

This structure is used to talk about things which happen very often (perhaps more often than expected), and which are unexpected or unplanned. Compare:

– *When Alice comes to see me, I **always meet** her at the station.* (a regular, planned arrangement)
*I'm **always meeting** Mrs Bailiff in the supermarket.* (accidental, unplanned meetings)
– *When I was a child, we **always had** picnics on Saturdays in the summer.* (regular, planned)
*Her mother **was always arranging** little surprise picnics and outings.* (unexpected, not regular)

The structure is often used in critical remarks.

*He's **always scratching** himself in public.*

6 perfect structures

1 construction

Perfect verb forms are made with ***have*** + **past participle**.

*She **has lost** her memory.* (present perfect)
*I told him that I **had** never **heard** of the place.* (past perfect)
*When I went back to the village the house **had been pulled** down.* (past perfect passive)
*We **will have finished** by tomorrow afternoon.* (future perfect tense)
*I'm sorry **to have disturbed** you.* (perfect infinitive)
***Having seen** the film, I don't want to read the book.* (perfect *-ing* form)

Perfect and progressive forms can be combined.

*They **have been living** in Portugal for the last year.* (present perfect progressive) →

2 terminology and use

A perfect verb form generally shows the time of an event as being earlier than some other time (past, present or future). But a perfect does not only show the time of an event. It also shows how the speaker sees the event – perhaps as being connected to a later event, or as being completed by a certain time. Because of this, academic grammars often talk about 'perfect aspect' rather than 'perfect tenses'.

For details of the use of the various perfect verb forms, see the Index.

7 subjects, objects and complements

1 subjects

The **subject** of a verb is a noun phrase, noun or pronoun that comes before it in a statement. Often the subject indicates the **agent** – the person or thing that causes the action of the verb.

__My brother__ gave me this. *__Rain__ stopped play.* *__You__ woke me up.*

But the subject can also, for example, indicate the receiver or experiencer of an action – it depends on the verb.

All the soldiers __got__ medals. *__I saw__ the accident.*

Subjects cannot normally be dropped.

NOT ~~*He has changed his plans; will arrive tomorrow.*~~

NOT ~~*Is raining.*~~

For special structures in which it is possible to drop subjects, ► 224, 275.

2 transitive and intransitive verbs

Some verbs are usually followed by nouns, noun phrases or pronouns that act as **direct objects**. These typically show who or what is affected by the action of the verb. In grammars they are called '**transitive**'. Examples are *invite*, *surprise*.

Let's __invite Sophie and Bruce__. (BUT NOT ~~*Let's invite.*~~)

You __surprised me__. (BUT NOT ~~*You surprised.*~~)

Some verbs are not normally followed by direct objects. These are called '**intransitive**'. Examples are *sit*, *sleep*.

Do __sit down__. (BUT NOT ~~*Do sit that chair.*~~)

I usually __sleep__ well. (BUT NOT ~~*She slept the baby.*~~)

Many verbs can be both transitive and intransitive. Compare:

– *England __lost the match__.* – *I __can't eat this__.*
England __lost__. *Let's __eat__.*

Some transitive verbs can be followed by two objects (indirect and direct). For details, ► 8.

I'll __send you the form__ tomorrow. *I'm going to __buy Sarah some flowers__.*

Some verbs are used transitively and intransitively with different kinds of subject; the intransitive use has a meaning rather like a passive (► 9) or reflexive (► 178) verb. Compare:

– *She __opened the door__.* – *The wind's __moving the curtain__.*
The door __opened__. *The curtain's __moving__.*

Some transitive verbs can be followed by an object together with an object complement (an expression that gives more information about the object). For details, ► 10.

*You **make me nervous**.* *Let's **paint it blue**.*

3 complements of place

Usually, a preposition is necessary before an expression of place.

*She **arrived at the station** last night.* (NOT ~~*She arrived the station*~~ . . .)

*Don't **walk on the grass**.* (NOT ~~*Don't walk the grass.*~~)

A few verbs can be used with direct objects referring to place.

*I like **climbing mountains**.* (NOT ~~*I like climbing on mountains.*~~)

Some verbs are incomplete without an expression of place.

*He **lives in York**.* (BUT NOT ~~*He lives.*~~)

4 linking verbs

Some verbs are followed not by an object, but by a subject complement – an expression which describes the subject. These are called '**linking verbs**'. For details, ► 11.

*Your room **is a mess**.* *The bathroom **is upstairs**.*

*That **looks nice**.* *I **felt a complete idiot**.*

8 verbs with two objects

1 indirect and direct objects: *I gave Jack the keys.*

Many verbs can have two objects – usually a person and a thing. This often happens with verbs that are used to talk about transferring or communicating things from one person to another, or doing things for somebody. A few other verbs are also used in this way. Common examples:

bet	*get*	*offer*	*post*	*send*	*tell*
bring	*give*	*owe*	*promise*	*show*	*throw*
build	*leave*	*pass*	*read*	*sing*	*wish*
buy	*lend*	*pay*	*refuse*	*take*	*write*
cost	*make*	*play*	*sell*	*teach*	

The thing that is given, sent, bought, etc is called the '**direct object**'; the person who gets it is the '**indirect object**'. Most often, the indirect object comes first.

*I bet **you ten dollars** you can't beat me at chess.*

*He built **the children a tree house**.*

*Shall I buy **you some chocolate** while I'm out?*

*Could you bring **me the paper**?*

*The repair cost **me a lot**.* *I gave **Jack the keys**.*

*If you're going upstairs, could you get **me my coat**?*

*He left **his children nothing** when he died.* *Lend **me your bike**, can you?*

*I'll make **you a cake** tomorrow.* *I owe **my sister a lot of money**.*

*Can I play **you some relaxing music**?* *I'll send **her the report** tomorrow.*

*They promised **me all sorts of things**.* *Daddy, read **me a story**.*

*He sent **his mother a postcard**.* *Let's take **her some flowers**.*

*Will you teach **me poker**?* *We bought **the children pizzas**.* →

Throw me ***the ball****.* *We wish* ***you a Merry Christmas****.*
Not all verbs with this kind of meaning can be used like this, ► 8.6.

2 indirect object last: *I gave the keys to Jack.*

We can also put the indirect object after the direct object. In this case it normally has a preposition (usually *to* or *for*).

I gave the keys ***to Jack****.* *I handed my licence* ***to the police officer****.*
Mrs Norman sent some flowers ***to the nurse****.*
Mother bought the ice cream ***for you, not for me****.*

(Not all grammars call these prepositional phrases 'indirect objects'.)

3 two pronouns: *Lend them to her.*

When both objects are pronouns, it is common to put the indirect object last. *To* is occasionally dropped after *it* in informal British English.

Lend them ***to her****.* *Send some* ***to him****.* *Give it* ***(to) me****.*

It is also possible to put the indirect object first.

Give ***her*** *one.* *Send* ***him*** *some.*

However, this structure is avoided in some cases: phrases ending with *it* or *them* (e.g. *He gave you it* or *Send them them*) are often felt to be unnatural.

4 *wh*-questions: *Who did you buy it for?*

Prepositions are used in *wh*-questions referring to the indirect object.

Who did you buy it ***for****?* (NOT ~~*Who did you buy it?*~~)
Who was it sent ***to****?* (NOT ~~*Who was it sent?*~~)

5 passives: *I've been given a picture.*

When these verbs are used in passive structures, the subject is usually the person who receives something, not the thing which is sent, given, etc.

I*'ve just been given a lovely picture.*
We *were all bought little presents.*

However, the thing which is given, sent, etc can be the subject if necessary.

'What happened to the stuff he left behind?' 'Well, ***the picture*** *was given to Mr Ferguson.'*

For details of these passive structures, ► 61.

6 structures with *donate, push, carry, explain, suggest, describe* and *take*

Not all verbs that refer to transferring or communicating can be followed by **indirect object + direct object**. The structure is not possible, for example, with *donate, push, carry, explain, suggest* or *describe*.

They donated ***money to the museum****.* (BUT NOT ~~*They donated the museum money.*~~ ~~*They donated the museum*~~)
I pushed ***the plate to Anna****.* (BUT NOT ~~*I pushed Anna the plate.*~~)
He carried ***the baby to the doctor****.* (BUT NOT ~~*He carried the doctor the baby.*~~)
I'd like him to explain ***his decision to us****.* (BUT NOT . . . ~~*to explain us his decision.*~~)
Can you suggest ***a good dentist to me?*** (BUT NOT ~~*Can you suggest me a good dentist?*~~)
Please ***describe your wife to us****.* (BUT NOT ~~*Please describe us your wife.*~~)

Take can be used with **indirect object** + **direct object** when it means 'take to' but not 'take from'.

*I **took her some money**.* (= I took some money to her – NOT . . . from her.)

7 one object or two

Some verbs can be followed by either a direct object, or an indirect object, or both.

*I asked **Jack**.* *I asked **a question**.* *I asked **Jack a question**.*

Other verbs like this include *teach, tell, pay, show, sing, play* and *write*. Note that when *sing, play* and *write* have no direct object, we put *to* before the indirect object. Compare:

*Sing **her** a song.* *Sing **to her**.* (NOT ~~*Sing her.*~~)

*Write **me** a letter.* *Write **to me when you get home**.*
(More common than *Write me* . . . in standard British English.)

For structures with object complements (e.g. *They made him captain*), ► 10.

9 verbs with both active and passive meanings

1 *She opened the door. / The door opened.*

Some verbs are used transitively and intransitively with different kinds of subject. The intransitive use has a meaning rather like a passive (► 57) or reflexive (► 178) verb. Compare:

- *She **opened** the door.*
  *The door **opened**.*
- *The wind's **moving** the curtain.*
  *The curtain's **moving**.*
- *Marriage has really **changed** her.*
  *She's **changed** a lot since she got married.*
- *We're **selling** a lot of copies of your book.*
  *Your book's **selling** well.*
- *Something **woke** her.*
  *Suddenly she **woke**.*
- *I can't **start** the car.*
  *The car won't **start**.*

2 *It scratches easily.*

The intransitive structure is used with many verbs referring to things we can do to materials: e.g. *bend, break, crack, melt, polish, scratch, stain, tear, unscrew.*

*Be careful what you put on the table – it **scratches** easily.* (= You can easily scratch it.)

*These glasses are so fragile: they **break** if you look at them.*

*The carpet's made of a special material that doesn't **stain**.*

*The handle won't **unscrew** – can you help me?*

10 verb + object + complement: *You make me nervous.*

1 adjective and noun complements

Some transitive verbs can be followed by an object together with an object complement (an expression that gives more information about the object). This is often an adjective or noun phrase.

You make ***me nervous.*** *She's driving* ***us crazy.*** *Let's paint* ***it blue.***
I find ***her attitude strange.*** *Don't call* ***me a liar.***
I don't know why they elected ***him President.***
'Would you like to join the committee?' 'I would consider ***it an honour.'***

A complement may come before a long and heavy object. Compare:

He painted ***the wall red.*** (NOT ~~*He painted red the wall.*~~)
He painted ***red the walls, the window frames and the ceiling.***

2 *I see you as . . .*

After some verbs, an object complement is introduced by *as*. This is common when we say how we see or describe somebody/something.

I ***see*** *you* ***as*** *a basically kind person.*
She ***described*** *her attacker* ***as*** *a tall dark man with a beard.*
His mother ***regards*** *him* ***as*** *a genius.*
After tests, they ***identified*** *the metal* ***as*** *gold.*

The structure is also possible with *as being*.

The police do not regard him ***as (being)*** *dangerous.*

3 *I considered him to be . . .*

Some verbs that refer to thoughts, feelings and opinions (e.g. *believe, consider, feel, know, find, understand*) can be followed by **object + infinitive** (usually *to be*) in a formal style. In an informal style, *that*-clauses are more common.

I ***considered him to be*** *an excellent choice.*
(Less formal: *I considered that he was an excellent choice.*)
We ***supposed them to be*** *married.*
(Less formal: *We supposed that they were married.*)
They ***believed her to be*** *reliable.*
(Less formal: *They believed that she was reliable.*)

This structure is very unusual with *think*.

I ***thought that*** *she was mistaken.*
(More natural than *I thought her to be mistaken.*)

To be can be dropped after *consider*.

I ***considered him (to be)*** *an excellent choice.*

Passive forms of these structures may be less formal than active forms (► 10.6).

For more details of structures with *feel*, ► 463; for *know*, ► 504; for *think*, ► 606.

4 *They found her (to be) . . .*

After ***find*** + **object**, *to be* suggests the result of a test or investigation. Compare:

– *Everybody* ***found her very pleasant.***
The doctors ***found her to be perfectly fit.***

– *I **found the bicycle very comfortable** to ride.*
*The testers **found this bicycle to be the best** value for money.*

5 introductory *it*: *She made it clear that . . .*

When the object of a verb is a clause, infinitive structure or *-ing* structure, and there is an object complement, it is common to use *it* as a preparatory object. Compare:

*She made **her views clear**.*
*She made **it clear that** she disagreed.* (NOT ~~*She made that she disagreed clear.*~~)

For details of this structure, ▶ 269.

6 passive structures

Passive versions of these structures are common (▶ 65).

*It **was painted** blue.* *He **was elected** President.*
*Her attacker **was described** as a tall man with a beard.*
*The metal **was identified** as gold.*
*He **is not regarded** as being dangerous.*
*For a long time he **was thought** to be a spy.*
*She **was believed** to belong to a revolutionary organisation.*
*Seven people **are understood** to have been injured in the explosion.*
*It **was considered** impossible to change the date.*

For the structures that are possible after a particular verb, see a good dictionary.

11 linking verbs: *be, seem, look,* etc

1 common linking verbs

Some verbs are used to join an adjective or noun complement to a subject. These verbs can be called '**linking verbs**', '**copulas**' or '**copular verbs**'. Common examples: *be, seem, appear, look, sound, smell, taste, feel, become, get.*

*The weather **is** horrible.* *She **became** a racehorse trainer.*
*I do **feel** a fool.* *The stew **smells** good.*
*That car **looks** fast.* *It's **getting** late.*

2 adjectives after linking verbs

After linking verbs we use adjectives, not adverbs. Compare:

*He **spoke intelligently**.* (*Intelligently* is an adverb. It tells you about how the person spoke.)
*He **seems intelligent**.* (*Intelligent* is an adjective. It tells you about the person himself – rather like saying *He is intelligent. Seem* is a linking verb.)

3 other uses

Some of these verbs are also used with other meanings as ordinary non-linking verbs. They are then used with adverbs, not adjectives. Compare:

*The problem **appeared impossible**.* (NOT . . . ~~*impossibly.*~~)
*Isabel **suddenly appeared** in the doorway.* (NOT . . . ~~*sudden*~~ . . .)

Other verbs used in two ways like this are *look* (▶ 518), *taste* (▶ 603) and *feel* (▶ 463). →

4 change: *become, get, grow,* etc

Some linking verbs are used to talk about change, or the absence of change. The most common are: *become, get, grow, go, turn, stay, remain, keep.*

*It's **becoming** colder.*
*It's **growing** late.*
*How does she **stay** so young?*
Keep calm.
*I'm **getting** sleepy.*
*The leaves **are going** brown.*
*I hope you will always **remain** so happy.*
*His hair **is turning** grey.*

For the differences between these verbs, ► 394.

5 other verbs followed by adjectives

Sometimes other verbs, too, can be followed by adjectives. This happens when we are really describing the subject of the sentence, and not the action of the verb. It is common in descriptions with *sit, stand, lie, fall.*

*The valley **lay quiet** and **peaceful** in the sun.*
*She **sat motionless**, waiting for their decision.*
*He **fell unconscious** on the floor.* (NOT . . . ~~*unconsciously*~~ . . .)

Adjectives can also be used in the structure **verb + object + adjective**, to describe the object of the verb.

*New SUPER GUB **washes** clothes SUPER **WHITE**.* (NOT . . . ~~*WHITELY*~~ . . .)
*He pulled his belt **tight** and started off.* (NOT . . . ~~*tightly*~~ . . .)

For the difference between adjectives and adverbs, ► 193.
For cases like *drive slow, think positive*, ► 194.2, 194.4. For more about structures after verbs, ► 16.
See also the entries for particular linking verbs.

12 two-part verbs: phrasal verbs

1 verb + adverb particle: *get back, walk out*

Many English verbs can be followed by small adverbs ('**adverb particles**'). These two-part verbs are often called '**phrasal verbs**'.

Get back! ***She walked out.*** ***I switched** the light **off**.*

Common adverb particles: *about, across, ahead, along, (a)round, aside, away, back, by, down, forward, in, home, off, on, out, over, past, through, up.*

Some of these words can also be used as prepositions. Compare:

*I switched the light **off**.* (adverb particle)
*I jumped **off** the wall.* (preposition)

For a detailed comparison, ► 195.

2 idiomatic meanings: *break out; turn up*

The meaning of a phrasal verb is often very different from the meanings of the two parts taken separately.

*War **broke out** in 1939.* (*Broke out* is not the same as *broke* + *out*.)
*Joe **turned up** last night.* (= 'appeared' – not the same as *turned* + *up*.)
*I **looked** the word **up** in the dictionary.* (*Look up* is not the same as *look* + *up*.)
*We **put off** the meeting till Tuesday.* (*Put off* is not the same as *put* + *off*.)

3 phrasal verbs with and without objects

Some phrasal verbs are intransitive (they do not have objects).

*I **got up** at 7.00 today.* *That colour really **stands out**.*

Others are transitive.

*Could you **switch the light off**?* *I helped Anna to **clean up the room**.*

4 word order with objects

Adverb particles can go either before or after noun objects (unlike most adverbs). ► 196.1

*She switched **off the light**.* OR *She switched **the light off**.*

But they can only go after pronoun objects.

*She switched **it off**.* (NOT ~~*She switched off it.*~~)

*Is that the light **which** you switched **off**?* (NOT ~~. . . the light off which you switched?~~)

*Give **me back** my watch.* OR *Give **me** my watch **back**.* (NOT ~~*Give back me my watch.*~~)

For details of particular phrasal verbs, see a good dictionary.

13 two-part verbs: prepositional verbs

1 verb + preposition: *listen to; look at*

Many English verbs are regularly followed by prepositions before objects.

*You never **listen to** me.* (NOT ~~*You never listen me.*~~)

*Luke walked down the road without **looking at** anybody.*

Prepositions are not used when there is no object.

Listen! (NOT ~~*Listen to!*~~)

2 idiomatic meanings: *look after, get over*

The meaning of a prepositional verb can be very different from the meanings of the two parts taken separately.

*Could you **look after** the kids while I'm out?* (*Look after* is not the same as *look + after.*)

*He took ages to **get over** his illness.* (*Get over* is not the same as *get + over.*)

3 word order: *What are you thinking about?*

When an object comes at the beginning of a clause (e.g. in a question or relative clause), a prepositional verb usually stays together, so that a preposition can be separated from its object and go at the end of the clause. For details of this and other preposition-final structures, ► 209.

***What** are you thinking **about**?* (NOT ~~*About what are you thinking?*~~)

*I've found the book **which** I was looking **for**.* (More natural in an informal style than . . . *the book for which I was looking.*)

4 verbs with prepositions and particles together

A few verbs can be used with both an adverb particle (► 12) and a preposition (making them three-part verbs).

*I **get along with** her quite well.* *Stop talking and **get on with** your work.* →

It's hard to ***put up with*** *people who won't stop talking.*
If you're on the road on Saturday night, ***look out for*** *drunk drivers.*
I'll think about it and ***get back to*** *you.*
She ***went up to*** *the officer and explained her problem.*
I'm ***looking forward to*** *the party.*

For the difference between prepositions and adverb particles, ▸ 195.
For prepositional verbs in the passive, ▸ 62.
For details of particular prepositional verbs, see a good dictionary.

14 verbs of movement: *she ran in*, etc

When we want to talk about a movement, its direction and its nature, there are several possibilities.

We can use three separate words for the three ideas:

She ***came in running****.*

We can use a verb which includes the idea of direction, and describe the nature of the movement separately:

She ***entered running****.*

Or we can use a verb which makes clear the nature of the movement, and describe the direction separately:

She ***ran in****.*

In English, the third of these solutions is the most common.

I ***walked back****.* (More natural than *I went back walking.*)
She ***danced across*** *the garden.*
(More natural than *She crossed the garden dancing.*)
I ***jumped down*** *the stairs.*
(More natural than *I came down the stairs jumping.*)
They ***crawled out*** *of the cellar.* *The eagle* ***flew away****.*

15 verb + verb: auxiliary verbs

1 the need for auxiliary verbs

In English sentences, a lot of important meanings are expressed by the verb phrase – for example questioning, negation, time, completion, continuation, repetition, willingness, possibility, obligation. But English verbs do not have many different one-word forms: the maximum (except for *be*) is five (e.g. *see, sees, seeing, saw, seen*). So to express all these meanings, 'auxiliary' (or 'helping') verbs are added to other verbs. There are two groups.

2 *be, do* and *have*

Be is added to other verbs to make progressive and passive forms.

Is *it raining?* *She* ***was*** *imprisoned by a military court.*

Do is used to make questions, negatives and emphatic forms of non-auxiliary verbs.

Do *you smoke?* *It* ***didn't*** *matter.* ***Do*** *come in.*

Have is used to make perfect forms.

What ***have*** *you done?* *I realised that I* ***hadn't*** *turned the lights off.*

For details, ▸ Section 2.

3 modal auxiliary verbs

The verbs *will, shall, would, should, can, could, may, might, must* and *ought* are usually called '**modal auxiliary verbs**'. They are used with other verbs to add various meanings, mostly to do with certainty or obligation.

*She **may** be in Mexico.* *You **must** call Uncle Arthur.*

For details, ► Section 7.

4 other verb + verb structures

Other verbs (e.g. *seem*) which are used in **verb + verb** structures are not usually called 'auxiliary verbs'. One important difference is grammatical. In auxiliary verb structures, questions and negatives are made without *do*; in other **verb + verb** structures the auxiliary *do* has to be added to the first verb. Compare:

– *She should understand.*
Should she understand?
– *He is swimming.*
He is not swimming

– *She seems to understand.*
Does she seem to understand?
– *He likes swimming.*
He doesn't like swimming.

For more about these structures, ► 16.

16 verb + verb: other structures

1 infinitives, *-ing* forms and clauses

Many verbs besides auxiliaries can be followed by forms of other verbs (or by structures including other verbs). This can happen, for example, if we talk about our attitude to an action: the first verb describes the attitude and the second refers to the action. The second verb structure is often rather like the direct object of the first verb.

*I **hope to see** you soon.* *I **enjoy playing** cards.* *I **saw that she was crying**.*

Different structures are possible, depending on the particular verb. Some verbs can be followed by infinitives with or without *to* (► 97–98), some verbs can be followed by *-ing* forms with or without a preposition (► 100), and some by clauses. Many verbs can be followed by more than one of these structures, often with a difference of meaning or use. For each verb, it is necessary to know which structures are possible.

*We **seem to have** a problem.* (NOT ~~*We seem having a problem.*~~)
*Can I **help wash** the dishes?*
*It's not very easy to **stop smoking**.* (NOT . . . ~~*to stop to smoke.*~~)
*We're **thinking of moving**.* (NOT ~~*We're thinking to move.*~~)
*I **suggest that you see** a solicitor.* OR *I **suggest seeing** a solicitor.* (NOT ~~*I suggest you to see a solicitor.*~~)

Sometimes the first verb does not give information about the subject – it says more about the action which the second verb refers to.

*I **happened to see** Alice the other day.*
*We're **starting to get invited** to some of the neighbours' parties.*
*My keys **seem to have disappeared**.*

It is possible to have 'chains' of verbs following each other.

*I **keep forgetting to go** shopping.* *Don't **let me stop** you **working**.*
*He **seems to be trying to sit up**.*
*I don't **want to have to get her to start telling** lies.* →

2 verb + object + verb

Many verbs can be followed by an object as well as a verb structure.

I'd like ***you to meet*** *Sophie.*
We all want ***you to be*** *happy.* (NOT ~~*We all want that you are happy.*~~)
We've got to ***stop him making*** *a fool of himself.*
When are you going to ***get the clock repaired?***
Nobody ***told me that you were here.***

For more about verbs followed by infinitives and *-ing* forms, ► Section 9.
For causative structures like *get the clock repaired*, ► 107–109.
For *that*-clauses after verbs, ► 258–259, 264.

Section 2 *Be, have* and *do*

INTRODUCTION

These three verbs live a double life. They can be **auxiliary verbs** used to form questions, negatives, emphatic forms, perfect and progressive tenses, and passives. *Be* can also be a **linking verb**, and *have* and *do* can be ordinary full verbs. For this reason, each of them can appear twice in a single phrase.

I am being served. *Have you had an invitation?* *What do you do?*

There are some grammatical complications, particularly as regards *have*. For details, see the following entries.

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- ✗ I was being depressed when you phoned. ▸ 18
- ✗ I don't often be sick. ▸ 19
- ✗ A hole is in my sleeve. ▸ 20.1
- ✗ It is a lot of noise in the street. ▸ 20.1
- ✗ I don't know how many people there is in the waiting room. ▸ 20.1
- ✗ There was swimming a girl in the lake. ▸ 20.4
- ✗ There seems to be some problems. ▸ 20.5
- ✗ There was the door open. ▸ 20.7
- ✗ Do you have heard the news? ▸ 22.2
- ✗ I'm not having seen her anywhere. ▸ 22.3
- ✗ Had you a good trip? ▸ 23.2
- ✗ I've lunch at 12.30 most days. ▸ 23.2
- ✗ She is having three brothers. ▸ 24.2
- ✗ Do you have got a headache? ▸ 24.6
- ✗ 'Have you got a pen?' 'Sorry, I haven't got.' ▸ 24.6
- ✗ I had got a cold last week. ▸ 24.6
- ✗ You have right. ▸ 25.1
- ✗ She has nearly thirty. ▸ 25.2
- ✗ It's 37 kilos heavy. ▸ 25.2
- ✗ Like you football? ▸ 27.1
- ✗ Do you can play football? ▸ 27.1
- ✗ I like not football. ▸ 27.2
- ✗ I haven't got time to get the tickets. Who's going to do so? ▸ 29.2
- ✗ I like the saxophone, and I have always done it. ▸ 29.3

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17 *be*: general

Be can be an **auxiliary verb**, used to form progressive and passive structures (► 3, 57).

*What **are** you doing?*
*We **weren't** told about the meeting.*

As an auxiliary verb, *be* can have progressive forms in passive structures (► 57.2).

*The hospital **is being** rebuilt.*
*I knew we **were being** watched.*

Be can also be a **linking verb**, used to join a subject to a complement.

*This **is** difficult.*
*Andy **was** very tired.*

Progressive forms of the linking verb *be* are not usual.

It's cold today. (NOT ~~*It's being cold today.*~~)

But they are possible in some cases (► 18).

You're being stupid.

Questions and negatives are formed without *do*, but *do* is used in negative and emphatic imperatives (► 19).

***Don't be** afraid.*
***Do be** careful.* (stronger than *Be careful.*)

For the structure *there is*, used to introduce indefinite subjects, ► 20.
For ***be* + infinitive** (e.g. *She is to arrive tomorrow*), ► 42. For contractions (e.g. *I'm, isn't*), ► 337.

18 *be*: progressive forms

I am being / you are being, etc + adjective/noun

We can use this structure to talk about temporary situations to do with actions and behaviour, but not usually to talk about feelings. Compare:

– *You're being stupid.* (= You're doing stupid things.)
I was being very careful. (= I was doing something carefully.)
Who's being a silly baby, then?
– *I'm happy at the moment.* (NOT ~~*I'm being happy at the moment.*~~)
I was depressed when you phoned. (NOT ~~*I was being depressed*~~ . . .)

Note the difference between *He's being sick* (BrE = *He's vomiting* – bringing food up from the stomach) and *He's sick* (= He's ill).

For the use of *am being*, etc in passive verb forms, ► 57.2.

19 *be* with auxiliary *do*

Normally, *be* is used without the auxiliary *do*.

***I'm not** often sick.* (NOT ~~*I don't often be sick.*~~)

But *do* is used to make negative imperative sentences with *be* (when we tell somebody not to do something).

***Don't be** silly!* ***Don't be** such a nuisance!*

And *do be* can begin emphatic imperatives.

***Do be** careful!* ***Do be** quiet!*

In an informal style, people sometimes use *do* with *be* in one or two other structures which have a similar meaning to imperative sentences.

*Why **don't you be** a good boy and sit down?*

*If you **don't be** quiet you'll go straight to bed.*

For other auxiliary uses of *do*, ► 27.

20 *there is*

1 use

In sentences which say that something exists (or does not exist) somewhere, we usually use *there* as a kind of preparatory subject, and put the real subject after the verb. Note the pronunciation of *there*: usually /ðə(r)/, not /ðeə(r)/.

***There's** a hole in my sleeve.* (More natural than *A hole is in my sleeve.*)

***There's** ice on the lake.* (More natural than *Ice is on the lake.*)

It cannot be used in this way.

***There** is a lot of noise in the street.* (NOT ~~*It is a lot of noise in the street.*~~)

There are is used with plural subjects.

*I don't know how many people **there are** in the waiting room.*

(NOT . . . ~~*how many people there is*~~. . .)

However, *there's* can begin sentences with plural subjects in informal speech.

***There's two men** at the door, Dad.*

***There's some grapes** in the fridge, if you're still hungry.*

2 indefinite subjects

We use *there* in this way particularly with subjects that have indefinite articles, no article, or indefinite determiners like *some, any, no*; and with indefinite pronouns like *somebody, nothing.*

*There are **some people** outside.*

*There were **no footsteps** to be seen.*

*Is there **anybody** at home?*

*There was **dancing** in the streets.*

*There's **something** worrying me.*

Note the use of *wrong* and *the matter* (► 524).

*There's something **wrong**.* *Is there anything **the matter**?*

Note also the structures with *sense, point, use* (► 373) and *need.*

*There's **no sense** in making him angry.*

*Is there **any point** in talking about it again?*

*Do you think there's **any use** trying to explain?*

*There's **no need** to hurry – we've got plenty of time.* →

3 all tenses

There can be used in this way with all tenses of *be*.

Once upon a time ***there were*** *three wicked brothers.*
There has *never* ***been*** *anybody like you.*
There will be *snow later in the week.*

And *there* can be used in question tags (► 306.4).

There'll be enough for everybody, ***won't there?***

4 structures with auxiliary *be*

There can also be used in structures where *be* is a progressive or passive auxiliary. Note the word order.

There was *a girl* ***swimming*** *in the lake.* (= A girl was swimming . . .)
(NOT ~~*There was swimming a girl*~~ . . .)

There have been *more Americans* ***killed*** *in road accidents than in all the wars since 1900.* (= More Americans have been killed . . .)
(NOT ~~*There have been killed more Americans*~~. . .)

There'll be *somebody* ***meeting*** *you at the airport.*

5 more complex structures

There can be used with **modal verb** + ***be***, and with some other verbs (e.g. *seem, appear, happen, tend*) before *to be*.

There might be *drinks if you wait for a bit.*
There must be *something we can do.*
If the police hadn't closed the road, ***there could have been*** *a bad accident.*
There seem to be *some problems.* (NOT ~~*There seems to be*~~ . . .)
Could you be quiet? ***There happens to be*** *a lecture going on.*
There tends to be *jealousy when a new little brother or sister comes along.*

Note also the structure *there is/are certain/sure/likely/bound to be.*

There is sure to be *trouble when she gets his message.*
Do you think ***there are likely to be*** *delays?*

Infinitives (*there to be*) and *-ing* forms (*there being*) are also used.

I don't want ***there to be*** *any more trouble.*
What's the chance of ***there being*** *an election this year?*

6 other verbs: *there lived . . .*

In a formal or literary style, some other verbs can be used with *there* besides *be*. These are mostly verbs which refer to states or arrivals.

In a small town in Germany ***there*** *once* ***lived*** *a poor shoemaker.*
There remains *nothing more to be done.*
Suddenly ***there entered*** *a strange figure dressed all in black.*
There followed *an uncomfortable silence.*

7 definite subjects

There is not normally used in a sentence with a definite subject (e.g. a noun with a definite article, or a proper name).

The door was open. (NOT ~~*There was the door open.*~~)
James was at the party. (NOT ~~*There was James at the party.*~~)

One exception to this is when we simply name people or things, in order to draw attention to a possible solution to a problem.

'Who could we ask?' 'Well, ***there's James****, or Miranda, or Anna, or Emma, . . .'*
'Where can he sleep?' 'Well, ***there's*** *always* ***the attic****.'*

Another apparent exception is in oral stories that begin *There was this . . .*, when *this* has an indefinite sense.

There was this *man, see, and he couldn't get up in the mornings. So he . . .*

21 *have*: introduction

Have is used in several different ways:

a as an auxiliary verb, to make perfect verb forms (▶ 22)

Have *you* ***heard*** *about Daniel and Corinne?*
I remembered his face, but I ***had forgotten*** *his name.*

b to talk about actions and experiences (▶ 23)

I'm going to ***have*** *a bath.* *What time do you usually* ***have*** *breakfast?*

c to talk about possession, relationships and other states (▶ 24)

They ***have*** *three cars.* ***Have*** *you* ***(got)*** *any brothers or sisters?*
Do *you often* ***have*** *headaches?*

d with an infinitive, to talk about obligation, like *must* (▶ 74)

I had to work *last Saturday.*

e with **object + verb form**, to talk about causing or experiencing actions and events (▶ 109)

He soon ***had everybody laughing****.* *I must* ***have my shoes repaired****.*
We ***had our car stolen*** *last week.*

For contractions (*I've, haven't*, etc), ▶ 337. For weak forms, ▶ 315. For ***had better*** + **infinitive**, ▶ 77.

22 *have*: auxiliary verb

have + past participle

1 perfect verb forms

We use *have* as an auxiliary verb with past participles, to make **perfect** verb forms.

You've ***heard*** *about Daniel and Corinne?* (present perfect: ▶ 47, 52)
I realised that I ***had met*** *him before.* (past perfect: ▶ 53–55)
We'll ***have been living*** *here for two years next Sunday.* (future perfect progressive: ▶ 40)
I'd like ***to have lived*** *in the eighteenth century.* (perfect infinitive: ▶ 89)
Having been *there before, he knew what to expect.* (perfect participle) →

2 questions and negatives

Like all auxiliary verbs, *have* makes questions and negatives without *do*.

***Have you heard** the news?* (NOT ~~*Do you have heard . . . ?*~~)

***I haven't seen** them.* (NOT ~~*I don't have seen them.*~~)

3 progressive forms

There are no progressive forms of the auxiliary verb *have*.

***I haven't seen** her anywhere.* (NOT ~~*I'm not having seen her anywhere.*~~)

For contractions, ► 337. For weak forms, ► 315.

23 *have*: actions

1 meaning and typical expressions

We often use ***have*** + **object** to talk about actions and experiences, especially in an informal style.

*Let's **have a drink**.* *I'm going to **have a bath**.* (BrE)

*I'll **have a think** (BrE) and let you know what I decide.*

***Have a good time**.*

In expressions like these, *have* can be the equivalent of 'eat', 'drink', 'enjoy', 'experience' or many other things – the exact meaning depends on the following noun. Common expressions:

have breakfast / lunch / supper / dinner / tea / coffee / a drink / a meal
have a bath (BrE) */ a wash / a shave / a shower* (BrE)
have a rest / a lie-down (BrE) */ a sleep / a dream*
have a good time / a bad day / a nice evening / a day off / a holiday (BrE)
have a good journey / flight / trip, etc
have a talk / a chat / a word with somebody / a conversation / a disagreement / a row (BrE) */ a quarrel / a fight*
have a swim / a walk / a ride / a dance / a game of tennis, etc
have a try / a go (BrE) *have a look* *have a baby* (= give birth)
have difficulty / trouble (in) . . .ing (something)
have an accident / an operation / a nervous breakdown

Note American English ***take** a bath/shower/rest/swim/walk.*

Have can also be used to mean 'receive' (e.g. *I've **had** a phone call from Emma*).

For other common structures in which nouns are used to talk about actions, ► 132.

2 grammar

In this structure, we make questions and negatives with *do*. Progressive forms are possible. Contractions and weak forms of *have* are not used.

***Did** you **have** a good time* (NOT ~~*Had you a good time?*~~)

*I'm **having** a bad day.*

*I **have** lunch at 12.30 most days.* (NOT ~~*I've lunch . . .*~~)

24 *have (got)*: possession, relationships and other states

1 meanings

We often use *have* to talk about states: possession, relationships, illnesses, the characteristics of people and things, and similar ideas.

Her father ***has*** *an office in Westminster.*
They hardly ***have*** *enough money to live on.*
Do *you* ***have*** *any brothers or sisters?*
The Prime Minister ***had*** *a bad cold.*
My grandmother ***didn't have*** *a very nice personality.*

Sometimes *have* simply expresses the fact of being in a particular situation.

She ***has*** *a houseful of children this weekend.*
I think we ***have*** *mice.*

2 progressive forms not used

Progressive forms of *have* are not used for these meanings.

She ***has*** *three brothers.* (NOT ~~*She is having three brothers.*~~)
Do *you* ***have*** *a headache?* (NOT ~~*Are you having a headache?*~~)

3 questions and negatives with *do*

In American English and modern British English, questions and negatives are commonly formed with *do* for these meanings.

~~***Does***~~ *the house* ***have*** *a garden?*
Her parents ***did*** *not* ***have*** *very much money.*

4 shorter question and negative forms: *have you . . . ?; she has not*

Short question and negative forms (e.g. *have you . . . ?, she has not*) were common in older English. In modern English they are rather formal and uncommon (except in a few fixed expressions like *I haven't the faintest idea*). They are not normally used in American English.

– ***Have you*** *an appointment?* (formal BrE only)
Do *you* ***have*** *an appointment?* (AmE/BrE)
– *Angela* ***has not*** *the charm of her older sisters.* (formal BrE only)
Angela ***does not have*** *the charm . . .* (AmE/BrE)

5 *have got*

In conversation and informal writing, we often use the double form *have got*.

I've ***got*** *a new boyfriend.* (More natural in speech than *I have a new boyfriend.*)
Has *your sister* ***got*** *a car?* *I* ***haven't got*** *your keys.*

Note that *have got* means exactly the same as *have* in this case – it is a present tense of *have*, not the present perfect of *get*.

6 *have got*: details

Do is not used in questions and negatives with *got*.

Have *you* ***got*** *a headache?* (NOT ~~***Do you have got***~~ . . .)
The house ***hasn't got*** *a cellar.* (NOT ~~*The house doesn't have got*~~ . . .) →

Got-forms of *have* are not used in short answers or tags.

'Have you got a light?' 'No, I ***haven't.***' (NOT ~~*No, I haven't got.*~~)

Anne's got a bike, ***hasn't*** *she?*

Got-forms of *have* are less common in the past tense.

I ***had*** *some problems last week.* (NOT ~~*I had got some problems. . .*~~)

Did *you* ***have*** *good teachers when you were at school?*

Got is not generally used with infinitives, participles or *-ing* forms of *have*: you cannot usually say *to have got a headache* or *having got a brother*. The infinitive of *have got* is occasionally used after modal verbs (e.g. *She must have got a new boyfriend*).

Have got is rather less common in American English, especially in questions and negatives.

In very informal American speech, people may drop *'ve* (but not *'s*) before *got*.

I('ve) ***got*** *a problem.*

Got- and *do*-forms may be mixed in American English, especially when short answers, reply questions and tags follow *got*-forms.

'I've ***got*** *a new apartment.' 'You* ***do****?'*

7 repeated states: *got* not used

When we are talking about repeated or habitual states, *got*-forms of *have* are less often used. Compare:

- *I* ***have*** */ I've* ***got*** *a headache.*
  I often ***have*** *headaches.*
- ***Do*** *you* ***have*** */* ***Have*** *you* ***got*** *time to go to London this weekend?*
  Do *you ever* ***have*** *time to go to London?*
- *Sorry, I* ***don't have*** */* ***haven't got*** *any beer.*
  We ***don't*** *usually* ***have*** *beer in the house.*

8 repetition: a change in British English

Traditionally in British English, *do* was used with *have* mostly in references to habit or repetition. Compare:

Do *you often* ***have*** *meetings?*

Have *you* ***(got)*** *a meeting today?*

In modern British English (which is heavily influenced by American English), *do*-forms are common even when there is no idea of repetition.

Do *you* ***have*** *time to go to the beach this weekend?* (AmE / modern BrE)

25 *be* and *have*

1 physical conditions: hunger, thirst, etc

To talk about experiencing hunger, thirst, heat, cold and certain other common physical conditions, we normally use ***be*** (OR ***feel***) + **adjective**, not ***have*** + **noun**. Note the following expressions:

be hungry (NOT ~~*have hunger*~~), *be thirsty, be warm, be hot, be cold, be sleepy, be afraid*

Note also:

be right, be wrong, be lucky

2 age, height, weight, size and colour

Be is also used to talk about age, height, length, weight, size, shape and colour.

*I'**m** nearly thirty.* (NOT ~~*I have nearly thirty.*~~)
*She **is** nearly my age.* *He **is** six feet tall.*
*I wish I **was** ten kilos lighter.* *What size **are** your shoes?*
*The room **is** ten metres long.* *What colour **are** his eyes?*
*She **is** the same height as her father.*

Be heavy is not usually used in measuring expressions.

*It **weighs** 37 kilos.* (NOT ~~*It's 37 kilos heavy.*~~)

For *have* in expressions like *have a bath, have a drink, have a walk*, ► 23.

26 *do*: introduction

Do has three main uses.

1 auxiliary verb

The auxiliary *do* is used to form the questions and negatives of other verbs, as well as emphatic and shortened forms. For details, ► 27.

***Did** you remember to buy milk?* *This **doesn't** taste very nice.*
*I **do** like your earrings.* *'Jack eats too much.' 'He certainly **does**.'*

2 general-purpose verb

Do is also an ordinary (non-auxiliary) verb. It can refer to almost any kind of activity, and is used when it is not necessary or not possible to be more precise. For details, and the difference between *do* and *make*, ► 435.

*What are you **doing**?* *Don't just stand there. **Do** something.*
*I've finished the phone calls, and I'll **do** the letters tomorrow.*

3 substitute verb

In British English, *do* can be used alone as a substitute for a main verb after an auxiliary. For details, ► 28.

*'Do you think Jake will come?' 'He might **do**.'* (AmE *He might.*)

Do so/it/that can be used as a substitute expression when we want to avoid repeating another verb and what follows. For details, ► 29.

*I need to take a rest, and I shall **do so** as soon as I can find time.*
*He told me to open the door. I **did it** as quietly as I could.*

4 combined forms

Auxiliary *do* and non-auxiliary *do* can occur together.

***Do** you **do** much gardening?* *How **do** you **do**?*
*The company **didn't do** very well last year.*

27 *do*: auxiliary verb

The auxiliary verb *do* is followed by infinitives without *to*. It has several uses.

1 questions

We use *do* to make questions with ordinary verbs, but not with other auxiliary verbs (► 216). Compare:

Do you like football? (NOT ~~*Like you football?*~~)
Can you play football? (NOT ~~*Do you can play football?*~~)

The auxiliary *do* can make questions with the ordinary verb *do*.

*What **do** you **do** in the evenings?*

2 negatives

We use *do* to make negative clauses with ordinary verbs (including the ordinary verb *do*), but not with other auxiliary verbs (► 217).

*I **don't** like football.* (NOT ~~*I like not football.*~~) *__Don't__ go.*
*I **don't do** much in the evenings.*
BUT *I can't play football.* (NOT ~~*I don't can play football.*~~)

3 emphasis

We can use *do* in an affirmative clause for emphasis.

__Do__ sit down. *You __do__ look nice today!*
She thinks I don't love her, but I __do__ love her.
I don't do much sport now, but I __did__ play football when I was younger.

4 inversion

Do is used in some structures with inversion (verb before subject) (► 270).

At no time __did__ he lose his self-control.

5 ellipsis

In cases where an auxiliary is used instead of a whole verb phrase (► 279), *do* is common in affirmative clauses as well as questions and negatives.

She doesn't like dancing, but I __do__. (= . . . but I like dancing.)
'That meat smells funny.' 'Yes, it __does__, __doesn't__ it?'
Anna thinks there's something wrong with James, and so __do__ I.

For *do* with *be*, ► 19. For weak pronunciations of *do* and *does*, ► 315. For *do* in short answers, ► 308.

28 *do*: substitute verb (*I may do.*)

auxiliary verb + *do*

In British English (but not American), *do* can be used alone as a substitute verb after an auxiliary verb.

*'Come and stay with us.' 'I may (**do**), if I have the time.'* (AmE *I may, if . . .* OR *I may come, if . . .*)

*'He's supposed to have locked the safe.' 'He has (**done**).'* (AmE *He has.* OR *He has locked it.*)

*He didn't pass his exam, but he could have (**done**) if he'd tried harder.*

*He smokes more than he used to (**do**).*

Progressive forms are possible, but not very common.

*'You should be getting dressed.' 'I **am (doing)**.'*

Note that the auxiliary verb is stressed in this structure.

'Close the door.' 'I HAVE done.' (NOT . . . ~~*I have DONE.*~~)

For auxiliary verbs used instead of complete verb phrases, ▸ 279.

29 *do so/it/that*

1 *do so*

The expression *do so* can be used to avoid repeating a verb and its object or complement. It is usually rather formal.

*'Put the car away, please.' 'I've already **done so**.'*

*Eventually she divorced Joshua. It was a pity she had not **done so** earlier.*

*He told me to get out, and I **did so** as quietly as possible.*

2 *do so* and *do it/that*

Do it and *do that* can be used instead of *do so*.

*I promised to get the tickets, and I will **do so**/it as soon as possible.*

*She rode a camel: she had never **done so/that** before.*

We use *do so* mainly to refer to the same action, with the same subject, that was mentioned before. In other cases we prefer *do it/that* or *do* alone.

*I haven't got time to get the tickets. Who's going to **do it?*** (NOT . . . ~~*Who's going to do so?*~~)

*'I rode a camel in Morocco.' 'I'd love to **do that**.* (NOT . . . ~~*to do so.*~~)'

*I always eat peas with honey. My wife never **does**.*

(NOT . . . ~~*My wife never does so.*~~) →

3 *do so/it/that*: deliberate actions

Do so/it/that are mainly used to refer to deliberate dynamic actions. We do not usually use these expressions to replace verbs like *fall, lose, like, remember, think, own,* which refer to involuntary actions or states.

I like the saxophone, and I always ***have (done)****.* (AmE *. . . and I always* ***have****.*)
(NOT *. . .* ~~*and I have always done so/it/that.*~~)

She lost her money. I wasn't surprised that she ***did****.*
(NOT *. . .* ~~*that she did so/it/that.*~~)

I think Jake's wrong. I ***did*** *when he first spoke to me.*
(NOT *. . .* ~~*I did so/it/that when . . .*~~)

4 other verbs

Note that *so, it* and *that* are not normally used in this way after auxiliary verbs. It is not possible in standard English to say *I can so, She was it* or *I have that.*

For *so I am, so it is,* etc, ► 309.3. For *so do I, so am I,* etc, ► 309.1. For *so* with *say* and *tell,* ► 586.
For *so* with *think, believe, hope* and similar verbs, ► 585.
For auxiliary *do* as substitute for a whole verb phrase, ► 279. For differences between *it* and *that,* ► 145.

Section 3 **Present Tenses**

INTRODUCTION

the two present tenses

Most English verbs have two present tenses. Forms like *I wait, she thinks* are called '**simple present**' or '**present simple**'; forms like *I am waiting* or *she's thinking* are called '**present progressive**' or '**present continuous**'.

general time: simple present

When we talk about timeless truths, permanent situations or things that happen repeatedly, we usually use the simple present (▶ 30–31 for details).

*Water **freezes** at 0° Celsius. My parents **live** near Dover. I often **go** swimming.*

around now: present progressive

When we talk about temporary continuing actions and events, which are just going on now or around now, we usually use a present progressive tense (▶ 32).

*'What **are you doing?** 'I'm **reading.**' I'm **travelling** a lot these days.*

future

Both present tenses can be used to talk about the future (▶ 31.4, 36–37).

*I'll meet you when you **arrive.***
*Call me if you're **passing** through London.*

terminology: tense and aspect

In academic grammars, the term 'aspect' is often used for progressive forms. We use 'tense' for all verb forms which show time.

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- ✗ That baby crys all the time. ▶ 30.2
- ✗ What are frogs eating? ▶ 31.1
- ✗ The kettle boils – shall I make tea? ▶ 31.2
- ✗ I'm liking this wine very much. ▶ 4.1
- ✗ I promise I don't smoke any more. ▶ 31.4
- ✗ 'There's the doorbell.' ' I get it.' ▶ 31.4
- ✗ I'll phone you when I'll get home. ▶ 31.4
- ✗ I know her since 1990. ▶ 32.8
- ✗ I'm going to the mountains twice a year. ▶ 34.1
- ✗ I'm swearing that I will tell the truth. ▶ 34.4
- ✗ Here is coming your husband. ▶ 34.5

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33 stories, commentaries and instructions
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30 simple present: forms

1 forms

Affirmative	Question	Negative
I work	do I work?	I do not work
you work	do you work?	you do not work
he/she/it works	does he/she/it work?	he/she/it does not work
we work	do we work?	we do not work
they work	do they work?	they do not work

– Contracted negatives (► 337): *I don't work, he doesn't work,* etc
– Negative questions (► 218): *do I not work?* or *don't I work?* etc

For passives (e.g. *The work **is done***), ► 57.

2 spelling of third person singular forms

Most verbs: add *-s* to infinitive	*work* → *works* *sit* → *sits* *stay* → *stays*
Verbs ending in consonant + *y*: change *y* to *i* and add *-es*	*cry* → *cries* *hurry* → *hurries* *reply* → *replies*
But (vowel + *y*):	*enjoy* → *enjoys*
Verbs ending in *-s*, *-z*, *-ch*, *-sh* or *-x*: add *-es* to infinitive	*miss* → *misses* *buzz* → *buzzes* *watch* → *watches* *push* → *pushes* *fix* → *fixes*
Exceptions:	*have* → *has* *go* → *goes* *do* → *does*

3 pronunciation of third person singular forms

The pronunciation of the *-(e)s* ending depends on the sound that comes before it. The rules are the same as for the plural *-(e)s* ending, ► 118.
Irregular pronunciations: *says* (/sez/, NOT /seɪz/); *does* (/dʌz/, NOT /duːz/).

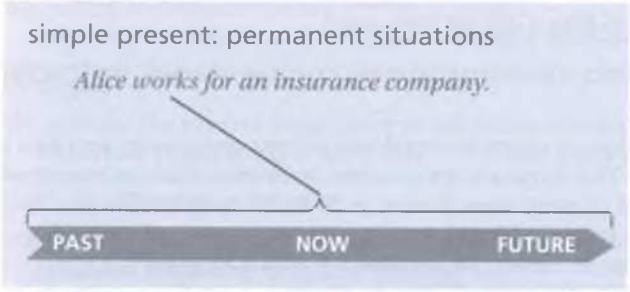
31 simple present: use

1 general time: *It always rains in November.*

We often use the simple present to talk about timeless truths, permanent situations, or things that happen regularly, repeatedly or all the time.

*What **do** frogs **eat**?* (NOT ~~*What are frogs eating?*~~)

*Alice **works** for an insurance company.*
*It always **rains** here in November.* *I ~~**play**~~ tennis every Wednesday.*





2 not used for things happening just around the present

We do not usually use the simple present to talk about temporary situations or actions that are only going on around the present. Compare:

- *Water **boils** at 100° Celsius.*
  *The kettle's **boiling** – shall I make tea?* (NOT ~~*The kettle boils . . .*~~)
- *It usually **snows** in January.*
  *Look – it's **snowing**!* (NOT ~~*Look – it snows!*~~)
- *I **play** tennis every Wednesday.*
  *'Where's Bernard?' 'He's **playing** tennis.'* (NOT . . . ~~*He plays tennis.*~~)

3 non-progressive verbs

However, the simple present is used for this 'around the present' meaning with verbs that do not usually have progressive forms (► 4).

*I **like** this wine.* (NOT ~~*I'm liking . . .*~~) *I **believe** you.* (NOT ~~*I'm believing you.*~~)

4 talking about the future

We do not normally use the simple present to talk about the future.

*I promise I **won't smoke** any more.* (NOT ~~*I promise I don't smoke . . .*~~) (► 79.3)
*We're **going** to the theatre this evening.* (NOT ~~*We go to the theatre this evening.*~~)
*'There's the doorbell.' 'I'll **get** it.'* (NOT ~~*I get it.*~~) (► 79.1)

However, the simple present is used for 'timetabled' future events (► 37.1).

*His train **arrives** at 11.46.* *I **start** my new job tomorrow.*

And the simple present is often used instead of *will . . .* in subordinate clauses that refer to the future. (For details, ► 231). →

I'll kill anybody who ***touches*** *my things.* (NOT . . . ~~*who will touch*~~ . . .)
I'll phone you when I ***get*** *home.* (NOT . . . ~~*when I'll get home.*~~)

The simple present is also used in suggestions with *Why don't you . . . ?*
Why ***don't*** *you* ***take*** *a day off tomorrow?*

5 series of events: demonstrations, commentaries, instructions, stories

When we talk about a series of completed actions and events, we often use the simple present. This happens, for example, in demonstrations, commentaries, instructions and present-tense stories (► 33 for more details).

First I ***take*** *a bowl and* ***break*** *two eggs into it.* (NOT ~~*First I am taking*~~ . . .)
Lydiard ***passes*** *to Taylor, Taylor* ***shoots*** *– and it's a goal!*
'How ***do*** *I* ***get*** *to the station?' 'You* ***go*** *straight on until you* ***come*** *to the traffic lights, then you* ***turn*** *left, . . .'*
So I ***go*** *into the office, and I* ***see*** *this man, and he* ***says*** *to me . . .*

6 *how long?* present tenses not used

We use a perfect tense, not a present tense, to say how long a present action or situation has been going on. (► 52 for details.)

I've ***known*** *her since 1990.* (NOT ~~*I know her since 1990.*~~)

32 present progressive

1 present progressive: forms

am/are/is + -ing

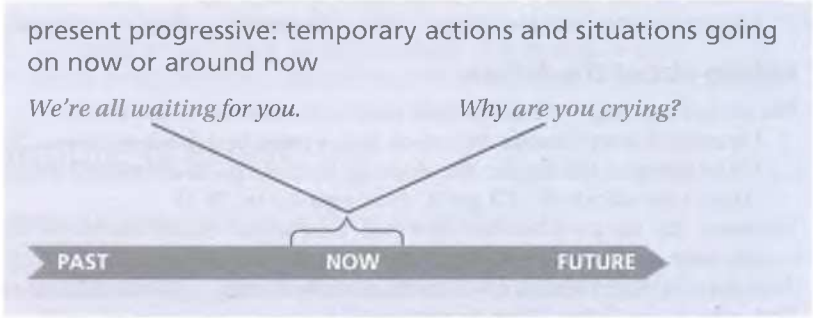
I am waiting. *Are you listening?* *She isn't working today.*

For spelling of *-ing* forms, ► 346–347. For passive forms (e.g. *The work* ***is being done***), ► 57.

2 use: 'around now'

We use the present progressive to talk about temporary situations that are going on now or 'around now': before, during and after the moment of speaking.

Hurry up! We're all ***waiting*** *for you!* (NOT ~~*We all wait*~~ . . .)
'What ***are*** *you* ***doing?'*** *'I'm* ***writing*** *emails.* (NOT . . . ~~*I write emails.*~~)'
He's ***working*** *in Saudi Arabia at the moment.*



3 repeated actions

The present progressive can refer to repeated actions and events, if these are just happening around the present (for more details, ► 34.1).

*Why **is** he **hitting** the dog?* *I'm **travelling** a lot these days.*

4 changes

We also use the present progressive to talk about developments and changes.

*That child's **getting** bigger every day.* *House prices **are going** up again.*

5 talking about the future

We often use the present progressive to talk about the future (► 36).

*What **are** you **doing** tomorrow evening?*
*Come and see us next week if you're **passing** through London.*

6 things that happen all the time: present progressive not used

We do not normally use the present progressive to talk about permanent situations, or about things that happen regularly, repeatedly or all the time. Compare:

- *Look – the cat's **eating** your breakfast!*
  *'What **do** bears **eat**?' 'Everything.'* (NOT ~~*'What are bears eating?*~~ . . .')
- *Why **is** that girl **standing** on the table?*
  *Chetford Castle **stands** on a hill outside the town.* (NOT . . . ~~*is standing*~~ . . .)
- *My sister's **living** at home for the moment.*
  *Your parents **live** in North London, don't they?*

7 verbs not generally used in progressive forms

Some verbs are not generally used in progressive forms (► 4), even if the meaning is 'just around now'.

*I **like** this wine.* (NOT ~~*I'm liking this wine.*~~)
*Do you **believe** what he says?* (NOT ~~*Are you believing . . . ?*~~)
*The tank **contains** about 7,000 litres at the moment.*

8 *how long?* present tenses not used

We use a perfect tense, not a present tense, to say how long something has been going on. (► 52 for details.)

*I've **been learning** English for years.* (NOT ~~*I'm learning English for years.*~~)

33 stories, commentaries and instructions

1 stories

Present tenses are often used informally to tell stories. The simple present is used for the events – the things that happen one after another. The present progressive is used for 'background' – things that are already happening when the story starts, or that continue through the story. (This is like the difference between the simple past and past progressive. ► 45.3)

*So I **open** the door, and I **look** out into the garden, and I **see** this man.*
*He's **wearing** pyjamas and a policeman's helmet. 'Hello,' he **says** . . .* →

There's this Scotsman, and he's ***walking*** *through the jungle when he* ***meets*** *a gorilla. And the gorilla's* ***eating*** *a snake sandwich. So the Scotsman* ***asks*** *. . .*

The simple present is common in summaries of plays, stories, etc.

In Act I, Hamlet ***sees*** *the ghost of his father. The ghost* ***tells*** *him . . .*

Chapter 2: Henry ***goes*** *to Scotland and* ***meets*** *the Loch Ness Monster.*

2 commentaries

In commentaries, the use of tenses is similar. The simple present is used for the quicker actions and events (which are finished before the sentences that describe them); the present progressive is used for longer actions and situations. There are more simple and fewer progressive tenses in a football commentary, for instance, than in a commentary on a boat race.

Smith ***passes*** *to Devaney, Devaney to Barnes – and Harris* ***intercepts*** *. . .*
Harris ***passes*** *back to Simms, nice ball – and Simms* ***shoots****!*

Oxford ***are pulling*** *slightly ahead of Cambridge now; they're* ***rowing*** *with a beautiful rhythm; Cambridge* ***are looking*** *a little disorganised . . .*

3 instructions and demonstrations

We often use the two present tenses in a similar way to give instructions, demonstrations and directions.

OK, let's go over it again. You ***wait*** *outside the bank until the manager* ***arrives****. Then you* ***radio*** *Louie, who's* ***waiting*** *round the corner, and he* ***drives*** *round to the front entrance. You and Louie* ***grab*** *the manager . . .*

First I ***put*** *a lump of butter into a frying pan and* ***light*** *the gas; then while the butter's* ***melting*** *I* ***break*** *three eggs into a bowl, like this . . .*

34 present tenses: advanced points

1 repeated actions: simple or progressive?

The present progressive can refer to repeated actions and events, if these are happening around the moment of speaking.

Why ***is*** *he* ***hitting*** *the dog?* *Jake's* ***seeing*** *a lot of Felicity these days.*

We normally use the simple present for repeated actions and events which are not closely connected to the moment of speaking.

Water ***boils*** *at 100° Celsius.* (NOT ~~*Water is boiling at 100° Celsius.*~~)

I ***go*** *to the mountains about twice a year.*

But we can use the present progressive for things that are going on around these actions and events.

At seven, when the mail ***comes****, I'm usually* ***having*** *breakfast.*

You ***look*** *lovely when you're* ***smiling****.*

2 long-lasting changes

We use the present progressive for changes and developments, even if these are very long-lasting.

The climate ***is getting*** *warmer.* (NOT ~~*The climate gets warmer.*~~)

The universe ***is expanding****, and has been since its beginning.*

3 *I promise . . .*, etc

Sometimes we do things by saying special words (e.g. promising, agreeing). We usually use the simple present in these cases.

*I **promise** never to smoke again.* (NOT ~~*I'm promising . . .*~~)
*I **swear** that I will tell the truth . . .* *I **agree**.* (NOT ~~*I am agreeing.*~~)
*He **denies** the accusation.* (NOT ~~*He is denying . . .*~~)

4 *I hear*, etc

The simple present is used with a perfect kind of meaning (= 'I have learnt') in introductory expressions like *I hear, I see, I gather, I understand* (► 482).

*I **hear** you're getting married.* (= 'I have heard . . .')
*I **see** there's been trouble down at the factory.*
*I **gather** Daniel's looking for a job.*

Other people's statements, opinons, etc are often introduced with *says*.

*It **says** in the paper that petrol's going up again.*
*No doubt you all remember what Hamlet **says** about suicide.*

5 *Here comes . . .*, etc

Note the structures *here comes . . .* and *there goes . . .*

***Here comes** your husband.* (NOT ~~*Here is coming . . .*~~)
***There goes** our bus.*

6 *I feel / I'm feeling*

Verbs that refer to physical feelings (e.g. *feel, hurt, ache*) can often be used in simple or progressive tenses without much difference of meaning.

*How **do you feel?*** OR *How **are you feeling?***
*My head **aches.*** OR *My head **is aching.***

7 formal correspondence

Some fixed phrases that are used in letters, emails, etc can be expressed either in the simple present (more formal) or in the present progressive (less formal).

*We **write** to advise you . . .* (Less formal: *We **are writing** to let you know . . .*)
*I **enclose** a recent photograph.* (Less formal: *I **am enclosing** . . .*)
*I **look forward** to hearing from you.* (Less formal: *I'**m looking forward** to hearing . . .*)

For progressive forms with *always* and similar words (e.g. *She's always losing her keys*), ► 5.
For progressive forms in general, ► 3. For the 'distancing' use of progressive forms, ► 311.
For simple and progressive forms in older English, ► 318.10.

Section 4 Talking about the Future

INTRODUCTION

There are several ways to use verbs to talk about the future in English. This is a complicated area of grammar: the differences between the meanings and uses of the different structures are not easy to analyse and describe clearly. In many, but not all situations, two or more structures are possible with similar meanings.

present-tense forms: *I'm leaving; I'm going to leave*

When we talk about future events which have some present reality – which have already been planned or decided, or which we can see are on the way – we often use present-tense forms. The present progressive is common. For details, ► 36.

I'm seeing Jack tomorrow. *What are you doing this evening?*

The present progressive of *go* (*be going to . . .*) is often used as an auxiliary verb to talk about the future. For details, ► 35.

Sandra is going to have a baby. *When are you going to get a job?*

These present forms are especially common in speech (because conversation is often about future events which are already planned, or which we can see are on the way).

will/shall

When we are simply giving information about the future, or talking about possible future events which are not already decided or obviously on the way, we usually use ***will*** (or sometimes ***shall***) + **infinitive**. This is the most common way of talking about the future. For details, ► 38.

Nobody will ever know the truth. *I think Liverpool will win.*

Will (and sometimes *shall*) are also used to express our intentions and attitudes towards other people: they are common in offers, requests, threats, promises and announcements of decisions. For details, ► 79–80.

Shall I carry your bag? *I'll hit you if you do that again.*

simple present: *the train leaves . . .*

The simple present can also be used to talk about the future, but only in certain situations. For details, ► 37.

The train leaves at half past six tomorrow morning.

other ways of talking about the future

We can use the future perfect to say that something will be completed, finished or achieved by a certain time. For details, ► 40.

By next Christmas we'll have been here for eight years.

The future progressive can be used to say that something will be in progress at a particular time. For details, and other uses of this tense, ► 41.

This time tomorrow I'll be lying on the beach.

***Be about to* + infinitive** (► 353) suggests that a future event is very close.

*The plane's **about to take off**.*

***Be to* + infinitive** is used to talk about plans, arrangements and schedules, and to give instructions. For details, ► 42.

*The President **is to visit** Beijing.* *You're **not to tell** anybody.*

'future in the past'

To say that something was still in the future at a certain past time, we can use a past form of one of the future structures. For details, ► 43.

*Something **was going to** happen that **was to** change the world.*

*I knew she **would** arrive before long.*

subordinate clauses

In many subordinate clauses we refer to the future with present tenses instead of ***will* + infinitive**. For details, ► 231.

*Phone me when you **have** time.* (NOT . . . ~~*when you'll have time.*~~)

*I'll follow him wherever he **goes**.* (NOT . . . ~~*wherever he'll go.*~~)

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- ✗ What do you do this evening? ► 36.1
- ✗ I'm seeing him this evening and I'm really telling him what I think. ► 36.2
- ✗ It's snowing before long. ► 36.2
- ✗ Lucy comes for a drink this evening. ► 37.4
- ✗ I promise I phone you soon. ► 37.4
- ✗ 'There's the doorbell.' 'I go.' ► 37.4
- ✗ See those clouds? It will rain. ► 35.3
- ✗ I'll phone you when I will arrive. ► 37.2
- ✗ I'll tell you what I'll find out. ► 37.2

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36 present progressive for future
37 simple present for future
38 *will*
39 *will, going to* and present progressive: advanced points
40 future perfect
41 future progressive
42 *be to* + infinitive: *I am to . . ., you are to . . .*, etc
43 future in the past

35 *going to*

1 a present tense

This structure is really a present tense (the present progressive of *go*). We use it to talk about future actions and events that have some **present reality**. If we say that something in the future *is going to happen*, it is usually already planned or decided, or it is starting to happen, or we can see it coming now. The structure is very common in an informal style, especially in speech (because conversation is often about future actions and events of this kind).

2 plans: *We're going to get a new car.*

We use ***be going to*** + **infinitive** to talk about plans, especially in an informal style. This structure often emphasises the idea of intention, or a decision that has already been made.

*We're **going to get** a new car soon.*
*Jack says he's **going to phone** this evening.*
*When **are you going to get** your hair cut?*
*I'm **going to keep** asking her out until she says 'Yes'.*
*I'm **going to stop** him reading my emails if it's the last thing I do.*

3 things that are on the way: *She's going to have a baby.*

Another use of the *going-to* structure is to predict the future on the basis of present evidence – to say that a future action or event is on the way, or starting to happen.

*Sandra's **going to have** another baby in June.*
*Look at the sky. It's **going to rain**.* *Look out! We're **going to crash**!*

4 commands and refusals

Going to . . . can be used to insist that people do things or do not do things.

*You're **going to finish** that soup if you sit there all afternoon!*
*She's **going to take** that medicine whether she likes it or not!*
*You're **not going to play** football in my garden.*

It is also used in emphatic refusals.

*I'm **not going to sit up** all night listening to your problems!*

5 *gonna*

In informal speech, *going to* is often pronounced /gənə/. This is sometimes shown in writing as *gonna*, especially in American English.

*Nobody's **gonna** talk to me like that.*

For *was going to, has been going to*, etc, ► 43.
For *going to* . . . compared with the present progressive, ► 36.2. For a comparison with *will*, ► 39.

36 present progressive for future

1 present reality: *I'm washing my hair this evening.*

We use the present progressive for future actions and events that have some present reality. It is most common in discussions of personal arrangements and fixed plans, when the time and place have been decided.

*'What **are** you **doing** this evening?' 'I'm **washing** my hair.'*
*I'm **seeing** Larry on Saturday.*
*Did you know I'm **getting** a new job?*
*We're **touring** Mexico next summer.*
*What **are** we **having** for dinner?*
*My car's **going in** for repairs next week.*

We often use the present progressive with verbs of movement, to talk about actions which are just starting.

*Are you **coming** to the pub?*
*I'm just **going** next door. Back in a minute.*
*Get your coat on! I'm **taking** you down to the doctor!*

Note that the simple present is not often used to talk about the future (but ► 37).

*What **are** you **doing** this evening?* (NOT ~~*What do you do this evening?*~~)

2 present progressive and *going to . . .*: differences

In many cases, both structures can be used to express the same idea.

*I'm **washing** / **going to wash** my hair this evening.*

But there are some differences. For example, we prefer *going to . . .* when we are talking not about fixed arrangements, but about intentions and decisions. Compare:

– *I'm **seeing** Jake tonight.* (emphasis on arrangement)
*I'm really **going to tell** him what I think of him.* (emphasis on intention: NOT ~~*I'm really telling him . . .*~~)
– *Who's **cooking** lunch?* (asking what has been arranged)
*Who's **going to cook** lunch?* (asking for a decision)

Because the present progressive is used especially for personal arrangements, it is not generally used to make predictions about events that are outside people's control.

*It's **going to snow** before long.* (NOT ~~*It's snowing before long.*~~)
*I can see that things **are going to get** better soon.* (NOT . . . ~~*things are getting better soon.*~~)

And the present progressive is used for actions and events, but not usually for permanent states. Compare:

*Our house **is getting** / **is going to get** new windows this winter.*
*Their new house **is going to look** over the river.* (NOT ~~*Their new house is looking over the river.*~~) →

3 commands and refusals

The present progressive can be used to insist that people do things or do not do things.

*She's **taking** that medicine whether she likes it or not!*
*You're **not wearing** that skirt to school.*

The present progressive is common in emphatic refusals.

*I'm sorry – you're **not taking** my car.*
*I'm **not washing** your socks – forget it!*

For a comparison with *will*, ► 39.

37 simple present for future

1 timetables, etc: *The summer term starts . . .*

We can sometimes use the simple present to talk about the future. This is common when we are talking about events which are part of a timetable, a regular schedule or something similar.

*The summer term **starts** on April 10th.*
*What time **does** the bus **arrive** in Seattle?*
*My plane **leaves** at three o'clock.*
*The sun **rises** at 6.13 tomorrow.*

Will is also usually possible in these cases.

*The summer term **will start** on April 10th.*

2 subordinate clauses: *when she gets a job*

The simple present is often used with a future meaning in subordinate clauses – for example after *what, where, when, until, if, than*. For details, ► 231.

*I'll tell you **what I find out**.* (NOT . . . ~~*what I'll find out.*~~)
*She'll pay us back **when** she **gets** a job.* (NOT . . . ~~*when she'll get a job.*~~)
*Alex will see us tomorrow **if** he **has** time.* (NOT . . . ~~*if he will have time.*~~)

3 instructions: *Where do I pay?*

Occasionally the simple present is used with a future meaning when asking for and giving instructions.

*Where **do** I **pay?*** *Well, what **do** we **do** now?*
*So when you get to London you **go** straight to Victoria Station, you **meet** up with the others, Ramona **gives** you your ticket, and you **catch** the 17.15 train to Dover. OK?*

4 other cases

In other cases, we do not usually use the simple present to talk about the future.

*Lucy's **coming** for a drink this evening.* (NOT ~~*Lucy comes*~~ . . .)
*I promise I'll **call** you this evening.* (NOT ~~*I promise I call you this evening.*~~)
*'There's the doorbell.' 'I'll **go**.'* (NOT . . . ~~*I go.*~~)

38 *will*

1 forms

will + infinitive without *to*

*It **will be** cold tomorrow.* *Where **will** you **spend** the night?*

Some British people use *I shall* and *we shall* instead of *I/we will*, with no difference of meaning in most situations. However, *shall* is now rare, and it is almost non-existent in American English. For situations where it is still used, ► 80.2.

Contractions: *I'll, you'll,* etc; *won't* /wəʊnt/

2 use: giving information about the future; predicting

***Will* + infinitive** is used to give (or ask for) information about the future.

*It'll **be** spring soon.*
***Will** all the family **be** at the wedding?*
*Karen **will start** work some time next week.*
*In another thirteen minutes the alarm **will go** off. This **will close** an electrical contact, causing the explosive to detonate.*

We often use *will* in predictions of future events – to talk about what we think, guess or calculate will happen.

*Tomorrow **will be** warm, with some cloud in the afternoon.*
*Who do you think **will win** on Saturday?* *You'll never **finish** that book.*

3 conditional use: *You'll fall if you're not careful.*

Will is often used to express conditional ideas, when we say what *will happen if* something else happens.

*He'll **have** an accident **if** he goes on driving like that.*
***If** the weather's fine, we'll **have** the party in the garden.*
*Look out – you'll **fall**!* (If you're not more careful.)
*'Come out for a drink.' 'No, I'll **miss** the film on TV **if** I do.'*
*Don't leave me. **I'll cry**!*

4 future events already decided: *will* not used

When future events are already decided, or when we can 'see them coming', we often prefer a present form (usually present progressive or *going to . . .*).

I'm seeing the headmaster on Monday. *My sister's **going to have** a baby.*

For details, ► 35–36.

5 not used in subordinate clauses: *when I arrive*

In subordinate clauses, we usually use present tenses instead of *will* (► 231.2).

*I'll phone you when I **arrive**.* (NOT . . . ~~*when I will arrive.*~~)

For exceptions, ► 231.4, 243.

For other uses of *will*, ► 69.5, 73, 79–80.

39 *will, going to* and present progressive: advanced points

Will is the basic structure for talking about the future. We use *will* if there is not a good reason for using present forms.

1 present reality

We prefer present forms (present progressive or *going to* . . .) when we are talking about future events that have some present reality (► 35–36). In other cases we use *will*. Compare:

– *I'm seeing Jessica on Tuesday.* (The arrangement exists now.)
I wonder if she'll recognise me. (not talking about the present)
– *We're going to get a new car.* (The decision already exists.)
I hope it will be better than the last one. (not talking about the present)

2 predictions: thinking and guessing about the future

In predictions, we use *going to* when we have outside evidence for what we say – for example black clouds in the sky, a person who is obviously about to fall.

See those clouds? It's going to rain. (NOT ~~*See those clouds? It will rain.*~~)
Look – that kid's going to fall off his bike. (NOT ~~*Look! That kid'll fall off his bike.*~~)

We prefer *will* for predictions when there is not such obvious outside evidence – when we are talking more about what is inside our heads: what we know, or believe, or have calculated. (When we use *will*, we are not showing the listener something; we are asking him or her to believe something.) Compare:

– *Look out – we're going to crash!* (There is outside evidence.)
Don't lend him your car. He's a terrible driver – he'll crash it. (the speaker's knowledge)
– *I've just heard from the builder. That roof repair's going to cost £7,000.* (outside evidence – the builder's letter)
I reckon it'll cost about £3,000 to put in new lights. (the speaker's opinion)
– *Alice is going to have a baby.* (outside evidence – she is pregnant now)
The baby will certainly have blue eyes, because both parents have. (speaker's knowledge about genetics)

3 *will* and present forms: both possible

The differences between the structures used to talk about the future are not always very clear-cut. *Will* and present forms (especially *going to . . .*) are often both possible in the same situation, if 'present' ideas like intention or fixed arrangement are a part of the meaning, but not very important. The choice can depend on which aspect we wish to emphasise.

– *What **will** you **do** next year?* (open question about the future; perhaps no clear plans have been made)
*What **are** you **doing** next year?* (emphasis on fixed arrangements)
*What are you **going to do** next year?* (emphasis on intentions)
– *All the family **will be** there.*
*All the family **are going to be** there.*
– *If your mother comes, you'**ll have** to help with the cooking.*
*If your mother comes, you'**re going to have** to help with the cooking.*
– *You **won't believe** this.*
*You'**re not going to believe** this.*
– *Next year **will be** different.*
*Next year **is going to be** different.*
– *Jack **will explain** everything to you.*
*Jack's **going to explain** everything to you.*

Both *going to . . .* (► 35) and stressed *will* (► 79.1) can express a strong intention or determination.

*I'm really **going to stop** smoking!* *I really **will stop** smoking!*

In cases like these, the different forms are all correct, and it is unimportant which one is chosen.

4 official arrangements: *The Princess will meet the President at 14.30.*

Will is often used, rather than present forms, in giving information about impersonal, fixed arrangements – for example official itineraries. Compare:

*We're **meeting** Sandra at 6.00.*
*The Princess **will arrive** at the airport at 14.00. She **will meet** the President at 14.30, and **will then** attend a performance of traditional dances.*

5 predictions as orders: *The regiment will attack at dawn.*

Predictions can be used as a way of giving orders – instead of telling somebody to do something, the speaker just says firmly that it will happen. This is common in military-style orders.

*The regiment **will attack** at dawn.*
*You **will start** work at six o'clock sharp.* →

6 different meanings of *will you . . .?*

With a verb referring to a state, *will you . . .?* asks for information.

*How soon **will you know** your travel dates?*

__Will you be__ here next week?

With a verb referring to an action, *will you . . .?* usually introduces an order or request (► 80.1).

__Will you turn off__ that music!

__Will you do__ the shopping this afternoon, please?

To ask for information about planned actions, we use a present form (► 35–36) or the future progressive (► 41).

*When **are you going to see** Andy?*

__Are__ you __doing__ the shopping this afternoon?

__Will__ you __be doing__ the shopping . . .?

7 expressing certainty about the present or past

We can use *will* to talk about the present – to say what we think is very probably or certainly the case.

'There's somebody at the door.' 'That'll __be__ the electrician.'

Don't phone them now – they'll __be having__ dinner.

Will have . . . can express similar ideas about the past.

As you __will have noticed__, there is a new secretary in the front office.

It's no use expecting Barry to turn up. He'll __have forgotten__.

For more about this and other uses of *will*, ► 69.5, 73, 79–80.

8 obligation: *shall*

In contracts and other legal documents, *shall* is often used with third-person subjects to refer to obligations and duties, in both British and American English.

The hirer __shall be__ responsible for maintenance of the vehicle.

In normal usage, we prefer *will*, *must* or *should* to express ideas of this kind.

40 future perfect

will have + past participle

We can use the **future perfect** to say that something will be finished or complete by a certain time in the future.

The builders say they __will have finished__ the roof by Tuesday.

__I'll have spent__ all my savings by the end of the year.

A progressive form can be used to talk about a continuous activity.

__I'll have been teaching__ for twenty years this summer.

For *will have . . .* used to express certainty about the past (e.g. *It's no use phoning – he'll have left by now*), ► 39.7.

41 future progressive

shall/will + be + . . .ing

1 events in progress in the future

We can use the **future progressive** to say that something will be in progress (happening) at a particular moment in the future.

This time tomorrow I'll be lying on the beach.
Good luck with the exam. We'll be thinking of you.

2 events that are fixed or expected to happen

The future progressive is often used to refer to future events which are fixed or decided, or which are expected to happen in the normal course of events.

Professor Baxter will be giving another lecture on Roman glass-making at the same time next week.
I'll be seeing you one of these days, I expect.

This is useful if we want to show that we are not talking about making decisions, but about things that will happen 'anyway'.

'Shall I pick up the laundry for you?' 'Oh, no, don't make a special journey.'
'It's OK. I'll be going to the shops anyway.'

The tense can be used to make polite enquiries about people's plans. (By using the future progressive to ask 'What have you already decided?', the speaker shows that he/she does not want to influence the listener's intentions.) Compare:

Will you be staying in this evening? (very polite enquiry, suggesting 'I simply want to know your plans')
Are you going to stay in this evening? (pressing for a decision)

This usage is possible with verbs that do not normally have progressive forms (► 4).

Will you be wanting lunch tomorrow?

3 progressive form with *going to*

A progressive form of the *going to* structure is also possible.

I'm going to be working all day tomorrow, so I won't have time to shop.

For *will be . . .ing* used to express certainty about the present (e.g. *Don't phone now – they'll be having lunch*), ► 39.7.

42 *be to* + infinitive: *I am to . . ., you are to . . .*, etc

1 plans and arrangements: *He is to visit Nigeria.*

We use this structure in a formal style to talk about official and other plans and arrangements.

The President ***is to visit*** *Nigeria next month.*
We ***are to get*** *a 10 per cent wage rise in June.*
I felt nervous because I ***was soon to leave*** *home for the first time.*

A perfect infinitive can be used to show that a planned event did not happen.

I ***was to have started*** *work last week, but I changed my mind.*

2 'fate': *We were to meet again.*

Another use is to talk about things which are/were 'hidden in the future', fated to happen.

I thought we were saying goodbye for ever. But we ***were to meet*** *again, many years later, under very strange circumstances.*

3 pre-conditions: *If we are to get there in time . . .*

This structure is common in *if*-clauses, when the main clause expresses a pre-condition – something that must happen first if something else is to happen.

If we are to get *there by lunchtime, we had better hurry.*
He knew he would have to work hard ***if he was to pass*** *his exam.*

4 orders: *You are to do your homework.*

The structure is used to give orders, for example by parents speaking to children.

You ***are to do*** *your homework before you watch TV.*
She can go to the party, but she's ***not to be*** *back late.*

5 *be* + passive infinitive: *It is not to be removed.*

Be **+ passive infinitive** is often used in notices and instructions.

am/are/is (*not*) *to be* + past participle

This cover ***is not to be removed.***

Sometimes only the passive infinitive is used.

To be taken *three times a day after meals.* (on a medicine bottle)

Some other common expressions with ***be*** **+ passive infinitive:**

There's ***nothing to be done.*** *She* ***was nowhere to be found.***
I looked out of the window, but there ***was nothing to be seen.***

43 future in the past

Sometimes when we are talking about the past, we want to talk about something which was in the future at that time – which had not yet happened. To express this idea, we use the structures that are normally used to talk about the future (► 35–42), but we make the verb forms past. For example, instead of *is going to* we use *was going to*; instead of the present progressive we use the past progressive; instead of *will* we use *would*; instead of *is to* we use *was to*.

Last time I saw you, you ***were going to start*** *a new job.*
I had no time to shop because I ***was leaving*** *for Germany in two hours.*
In 1988 I arrived in the town where I ***would spend*** *ten years of my life.*
I went to have a look at the room where I ***was to talk*** *that afternoon.*

Perfect forms of *be going to* are also possible.

I've ***been going to write*** *to you for ages, but I've only just found time.*

For ***was to have*** + **past participle** (e.g. *She was to have taken over my job, but she fell ill*), ► 42.1.

Section 5 Past and Perfect Tenses

INTRODUCTION

English has six different verb forms to refer to past events and situations. They are:

NAME	EXAMPLE
simple past	*I worked*
past progressive (or 'continuous')	*I was working*
(simple) present perfect	*I have worked*
present perfect progressive (or 'continuous')	*I have been working*
(simple) past perfect	*I had worked*
past perfect progressive (or 'continuous')	*I had been working*

In academic grammars, a distinction is often made between '**tense**' (present or past) and '**aspect**' (perfective and progressive). Tense shows time; aspect shows, for example, whether an event is seen as ongoing or completed at a particular time. In more practical books like this one, it is convenient to use 'tense' for all verb forms which show time.

The various uses of these six verb forms are covered in the following entries. Note in particular that the English **present perfect** (e.g. *I have seen*) is **constructed** in the same way as a tense in some other Western European languages (e.g. *j'ai vu, ich habe gesehen, ho visto, jeg har set*), but that it is **not used** in exactly the same ways (► 48.2).

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- ✗ gallopped regreted ▸ 44.3
- ✗ 'What did you do at eight o'clock yesterday evening?' 'I watched TV.' ▸ 45.2
- ✗ When I got up this morning the sun shone and the birds sang. ▸ 45.2
- ✗ When I was a child we were walking to school every day. ▸ 45.4
- ✗ She said she wasn't believing me. ▸ 45.5, 4
- ✗ Some people think that Shakespeare has travelled in Germany. ▸ 47.3
- ✗ Once upon a time a beautiful princess has fallen in love with a poor farmer. ▸ 48.1–48.2
- ✗ When has the accident happened? ▸ 48.2
- ✗ I know her for years. ▸ 52.1
- ✗ How long are you studying English? ▸ 52.1
- ✗ 'Why are you crying?' 'Granny has hit me.' ▸ 49.1
- ✗ The Chinese have invented paper. ▸ 49.1
- ✗ It's not as big as I have expected. ▸ 49.2
- ✗ I've only been knowing her for two days. ▸ 51.1
- ✗ Look at all the rose bushes I've been planting! ▸ 51.3
- ✗ This is the first time I hear her sing. ▸ 52.2
- ✗ During our conversation, I realised that we met before. ▸ 53.2
- ✗ I told her that I have finished. ▸ 53.2
- ✗ Alex Cary, who had worked for my father a few years ago, is now living in Greece. ▸ 53.2
- ✗ I had left a jacket to be cleaned. Is it ready yet? ▸ 53.3
- ✗ She told me that her father was ill since Christmas. ▸ 53.5
- ✗ When I opened the windows, I sat down. ▸ 54.1
- ✗ We were walking since sunrise, and we were very hungry. ▸ 55.3

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45 past progressive
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52 present perfect or present?
53 past perfect: basic information
54 past perfect: advanced points
55 past perfect progressive
56 *This is the first/last . . .*, etc

44 simple past

This form is also called 'past simple'.

1 forms (regular verbs)

Affirmative	Question	Negative
I worked	did I work?	I did not work
you worked	did you work?	you did not work
he/she/it worked	did he/she/it work?	he/she/it did not work
etc	etc	etc

- Contracted negatives (► 337): *I didn't work, you didn't work,* etc
- Negative questions (► 218): *did I not work?* or *didn't I work?,* etc
- For the affirmative past forms of common irregular verbs, ► 1.
- Questions and negatives of irregular verbs are made in the same way as those of regular verbs (with ***did*** + **infinitive**).

For details of question structures, ► 216. For negatives, ► 217–221.
For passive forms (e.g. *Work was done*), ► 57.

2 pronunciation of *-ed*

The regular past ending *-ed* is pronounced as follows:

- /d/ after vowels and voiced consonants (except /d/):
  /ð/, /b/, /v/, /z/, /ʒ/, /dʒ/, /g/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /l/
  tried /traɪd/ *lived* /lɪvd/ *seemed* /si:md/ *failed* /feɪld/
- /t/ after unvoiced consonants (except /t/):
  /θ/, /p/, /f/, /s/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/, /k/
  stopped /stɒpt/ *passed* /pɑ:st/ *laughed* /lɑ:ft/ *watched* /wɒtʃt/
  worked /wɜ:kt/
- /ɪd/ after /d/ and /t/
  ended /'endɪd/ *started* /'stɑ:tɪd/

For adjectives like *aged, naked,* ► 191.

3 spelling of regular affirmative past tense forms

Most regular verbs: add *-ed*	*work* → *worked* *stay* → *stayed* *show* → *showed* *wonder* → *wondered* *visit* → *visited* *gallop* → *galloped*
Verbs ending in *-e*: add *-d*	*hope* → *hoped* *decide* → *decided*

Verbs ending in one stressed vowel + one consonant (except *w* or *y*): double the consonant and add *-ed*	*shop* → *shopped* *plan* → *planned* *re'fer* → *referred* *re'gret* → *regretted*
But (last syllable not stressed):	*'offer* → *offered* *'visit* → *visited*
Verbs ending in consonant + *-y*: change *y* to *i* and add *-ed*	*hurry* → *hurried* *cry* → *cried* *study* → *studied*
But (vowel + *-y*):	*play* → *played*

Verbs ending in *-c* have *ck* in the past (e.g. *picnic* → *picnicked*).
In British English, *-l* is doubled in the past after one short vowel even if the vowel is not stressed: *'travel* → *travelled*.

4 use

We use the simple past for many kinds of past events: short, quickly finished actions and happenings, longer situations, and repeated events.

Daniel ***broke*** *a window last night.*
I ***spent*** *all my childhood in Scotland.*
Regularly every summer, Jessica ***fell*** *in love.*

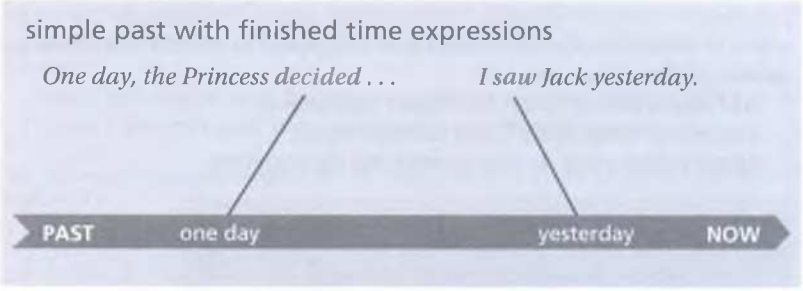
The simple past is common in stories and descriptions of past events.

One day the Princess ***decided*** *that she* ***didn't like*** *staying at home all day, so she* ***told*** *her father that she* ***wanted*** *to get a job . . .*

The simple past is often used with words referring to finished times.

I ***saw*** *Jack* ***yesterday morning****. He* ***told*** *me . . .*

In general, the simple past tense is the normal one for talking about the past; we use it if we do not have a special reason for using one of the other tenses.



For the simple past with a present or future meaning (e.g. *It's time you went*), ► 46.
For special uses in subordinate clauses, ► 231.

45 past progressive

1 forms

was/were + -ing

I was working. *Were you listening to me?* *She was not trying.*

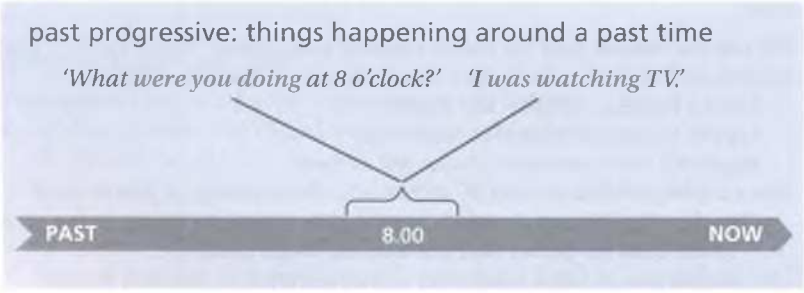
For details of question structures, ▸ 216. For negatives, ▸ 217–221.
For passive forms (e.g. *Work was being done*), ▸ 57.
For double letters in words like *sitting, stopping*, ▸ 347.

2 use: *What were you doing at eight o'clock?*

We use the past progressive to say that something was in progress (going on) around a particular past time.

*'What **were you doing** at eight o'clock yesterday evening?' 'I **was watching** TV.'*
(NOT ~~*What did you do . . . ? I watched TV.*~~)

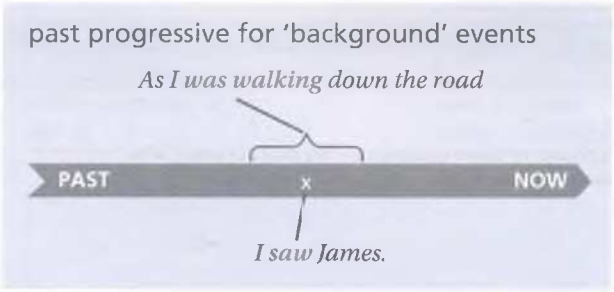
*When I got up this morning the sun **was shining**, the birds **were singing**, . . .*
(NOT . . . ~~*the sun shone, the birds sang . . .*~~)



3 past progressive and simple past: 'background' events

We often use the past progressive together with a simple past tense. The past progressive refers to a longer 'background' action or situation; the simple past refers to a shorter action or event that happened in the middle of the longer action, or that interrupted it.

*As I **was walking** down the road, I **saw** James.*
*The phone **rang** while I **was having** dinner.*
*Mozart **died** while he **was composing** the Requiem.*



4 not used for repeated actions

The past progressive is not the normal tense for talking about repeated or habitual past actions. The simple past is usually used with this meaning.

*I **rang** the bell six times.* (NOT ~~*I was ringing the bell six times.*~~)

*When I was a child we **walked** to school.* (NOT . . . ~~*we were walking to school.*~~)

However, the past progressive is possible if the repeated actions form a 'background' for the main action.

*At the time when it happened, I **was travelling** to New York a lot.*

5 non-progressive verbs: *She said she believed*

Some verbs are not often used in progressive forms (► 4).

*She said she **believed** Joe was dying.* (NOT ~~*She said she was believing*~~ . . .)

6 used for shorter, temporary actions and situations

The past progressive, like other progressive forms (► 3), is used for temporary actions and situations. When we talk about longer, more permanent situations we use the simple past. Compare:

– *It happened while I **was living** in Eastbourne last year.*
*I **lived** in London for ten years while I was a child.*
– *When I got home, water **was running** down the kitchen walls.*
*When they first discovered the river, they thought it **ran** into the Atlantic.*

7 special uses

Because we often use the past progressive to talk about something that is a 'background', not the main 'news', we can make something seem less important by using this tense. Compare:

*I **had lunch** with the President yesterday.* (important piece of news)

*I **was having lunch** with the President yesterday, and she said . . .* (as if there was nothing special for the speaker about lunching with the President)

The past progressive is quite often used with verbs of saying: this gives more relative importance to the following verb – to what is said.

*Jack **was saying** that he still can't find a job.*

With *always*, *continually* and similar words, the past progressive can be used for things that happened repeatedly and unexpectedly or in an unplanned way (► 5).

*Aunt Lucy **was always turning up** without warning and bringing us presents.*
*I didn't like him – he **was continually borrowing** money.*

For the 'distancing' use of past progressives (e.g. *I was wondering whether you'd like to come out with me this evening*), ► 311.

46 past verb form with present or future meaning

A past tense does not always have a past meaning. In some kinds of sentence we can use verbs like *I had, you went* or *I was wondering* to talk about the present or future.

1 after conjunctions, instead of *would*: *If I paid now . . .*

In most subordinate clauses (e.g. after *if, supposing, wherever, what*), we use past tenses (and not *would . . .*) to express 'unreal' or conditional ideas (► 231.6).

*If I **had** the money now I'd buy a car.*
*If you **caught** the ten o'clock train tomorrow, you would be in Edinburgh by supper-time, unless the train **was** delayed, of course.*
*Supposing we **didn't go** abroad next year?*
*Would you follow me wherever I **went**?*
*In a perfect world, you would be able to say exactly what you **thought**.*
*Ten o'clock – it's time (that) you **went** home.* (► 502)
*Don't come and see me today – I'd rather (that) you **came** tomorrow.* (► 566.3)
*I wish (that) I **had** a better memory.* (► 632.4)

2 distancing in questions, requests, etc: *I wondered if . . .*

We can make questions, requests and offers less direct (and so more polite) by using past tenses. (For more about 'distancing' of this kind, ► 311.) Common formulae are *I wondered, I thought, I hoped, did you want.* (► 311.1.)

*I **wondered** if you were free this evening.*
*I **thought** you might like some flowers.*
*Did you **want** cream with your coffee, sir?*

Past progressive forms (*I was thinking/wondering/hoping*, etc) make sentences even less direct. (► 311.2)

*I **was thinking** about that idea of yours.*
*I **was hoping** we could have dinner together.*

3 'past' modals: *could, might, would, should*

The 'past' modal forms *could, might, would* and *should* usually have present or future reference; they are used as less direct, 'distanced' forms of *can, may, will* and *shall.* (► 311.4)

Could you help me for a moment?
*I think it **might** rain soon.*
Would you come this way, please?
*Alice **should** be here soon.*

4 past focus on continuing situations: *It was such a nice place*

If we are talking about the past, we often use past tenses even for things which are still true and situations which still exist.

*Are you deaf? I asked how old you **were**.*
*I'm sorry we left Liverpool. It **was** such a nice place.*
*Do you remember that nice couple we met in Greece? They **were** German, **weren't** they?*

*I got this job because I **was** a good driver.*
*James applied to join the police last week, but he **wasn't** tall enough.*

For more indirect speech examples, ► 259, 263.

47 present perfect: basic information

This entry deals with the simple present perfect. For the present perfect progressive, ► 50–51.

1 forms

have/has + past participle

I have broken my glasses. *Have you finished?* *She hasn't phoned.*

In older English, some present perfect forms were made with *be*, not *have* (e.g. *Winter **is** come*). This does not normally happen in modern English (for exceptions, ► 66, 466).

For details of question structures, ► 216. For negatives, ► 217–221.
For passive forms (e.g. *The work has been done*), ► 57.

2 other languages

In some other languages there are verb forms which are constructed like the English present perfect (compare English *I have worked*, French *j'ai travaillé*, German *ich habe gearbeitet*, Italian *ho lavorato*, Spanish *he trabajado*). Note that the English present perfect is used rather differently from most of these.

3 finished events connected with the present

We use the present perfect especially to say that a finished action or event is connected with the present in some way. If we say that something has happened, we are thinking about the past and the present at the same time, for example if we are giving news.

*I **can't go** skiing because I **have broken** my leg.*

A present-perfect sentence often corresponds to a present-tense sentence expressing the same facts.

*I've **broken** my leg. → My leg **is broken** now.*
*Some fool **has let** the cat in. → The cat **is in**.*
*Utopia **has invaded** Fantasia. → Utopia **is** at war with Fantasia.*
*Emily **has had** a baby. → Emily now **has** a baby.*
*Our dog **has died**. → Our dog **is dead**.*
***Have** you **read** the Bible? → **Do** you **know** the Bible?*
*All the wars in history **have taught** us nothing. → We **know** nothing.*

The present perfect is often used to express the idea of completion or achievement.

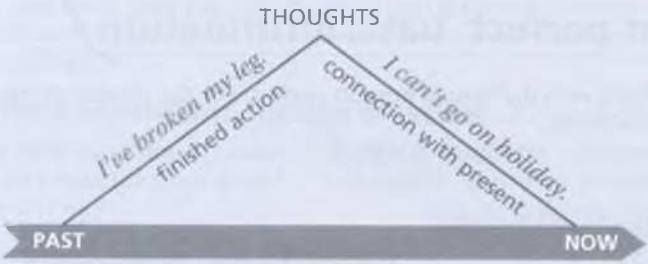
*At last! **I've finished!*** ***Have** you **done** all the housework?*

We do not use the present perfect if we are not thinking about the present (► 48.1). Compare:

*I've **travelled** in Africa a lot.* (= I know Africa.)
*Some people think that Shakespeare **travelled** a lot in Germany.*
(NOT ~~*Some people think that Shakespeare has travelled*~~ . . .) →

present perfect: thinking about the past and present at the same time

I can't go on holiday because I've broken my leg.



4 time words: *ever, before, recently,* etc

When we talk about finished events with words that mean 'at some/any time up to now' (like *ever, before, never, yet, recently, lately, already*), we normally use the present perfect in British English. (For a note on American usage, ► 49.7.)

***Have** you **ever seen** a ghost?* *She's **never said** 'sorry' in her life.*
*I'm sure we've **met before**.* ***Has** Dan **phoned yet?***
*We **haven't seen** Beth **recently**.*
*'Could you clean the car?' '**I've already done** it.'*

5 repetition up to now: *I've written six emails . . .*

We can use the present perfect to say that something has happened several times up to the present.

*I've **written** six emails since lunchtime.*

Adverbs of frequency like *often, sometimes, occasionally* are common with the present perfect.

*How **often have** you **been** in love in your life?*
*I've **sometimes thought** of moving to Australia.*

6 continuation up to now: *I've known her for years*

To talk about actions and situations that have continued up to the present, both the simple present perfect and the present perfect progressive are possible (depending on the kind of verb and the exact meaning. For details, ► 51.

*I've **known** her for years.* (NOT ~~*I know her for years.*~~ ► 52.1)
*I've **been thinking** about you all day.*

For present perfect tenses in clauses referring to the future (e.g. *I'll take a rest when I've **finished** cleaning the kitchen*), ► 231.3.

48 present perfect or past?

1 not thinking about the present

We use the present perfect if we are thinking about the past and present together. We do not use the present perfect if we are not thinking about the present. Compare:

~~*Shakespeare has probably learnt*~~

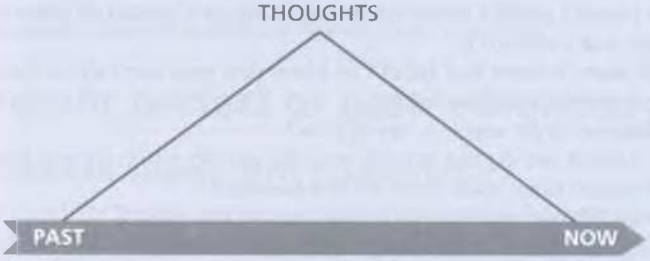
- *My sister* ***has learnt*** *French.* (She can speak French now.)
  Shakespeare probably ***learnt*** *Italian.* (NOT ~~*Shakespeare has probably learnt Italian.*~~)
- *We've* ***studied*** *enough to pass the exam.* (The exam is still to come.)
  We ***studied*** *enough to pass the exam.* (The exam is over.)
- *Anna and Daniel* ***have got*** *married!* (news)
  My parents ***got*** *married in Canada.*

We do not use the present perfect in story-telling.

Once upon a time a beautiful princess ***fell*** *in love with a poor farmer.*
(NOT . . . ~~*has fallen in love*~~ . . .)

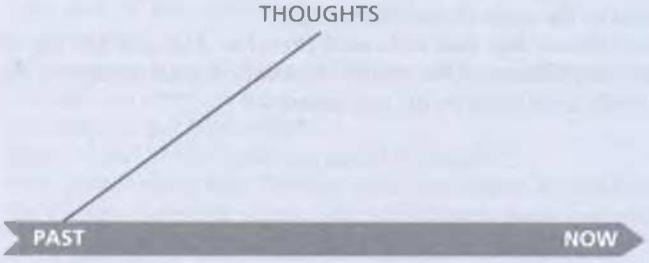
thinking about the past and present together: present perfect

My sister has learnt French. (= She can speak French now.)



only thinking about the past: simple past

Shakespeare probably learnt Italian.



→

2 finished-time words: present perfect not used

We do not often use the present perfect with words that refer to a completely finished period of time, like *yesterday, last week, then, when, three years ago, in 1970.* This is because the present perfect focuses on the present, and words like these focus on the past, so they contradict each other. Compare:

- ***Have** you **seen** Lucy anywhere?*
  *I **saw** Lucy **yesterday**.* (NOT ~~*I have seen Lucy yesterday.*~~)
- *Tom **has hurt** his leg; he can't walk.*
  *Tom **hurt** his leg **last week**.* (NOT ~~*Tom has hurt his leg last week.*~~)
- *What **have** you **done** with the car keys? I can't find them.*
  *What **did** you **do then**?* (NOT ~~*What have you done then?*~~)
- *My brother **has had** an accident. He's in hospital.*
  ***When did** the accident **happen**?* (NOT ~~*When has the accident happened?*~~)
- *All my friends **have moved** to London.*
  *Sam **moved three years ago**.* (NOT ~~*Sam has moved three years ago.*~~)

But with words that mean 'at some/any time up to now' (like *ever, before, never, yet, recently, already*), we normally use the present perfect (► 47.4).

***Have** you **ever been** to Chicago?*
*I've **seen** this film **before**.*

For tenses with *just* and *just now*, ► 503.

3 time not mentioned

We use the present perfect when we are thinking of a period of 'time up to now', even if we do not mention it.

***Have** you **seen** 'Romeo and Juliet'?* (= Have you ever seen it? OR Have you seen the present production?)
*You've **done** a lot for me.* (. . . up to now)

On the other hand, we do not use the present perfect when we are thinking of a particular finished time, even if we do not mention it.

***Did** you see 'Romeo and Juliet'?* (It was on TV last night.)
*My grandfather **did** a lot for me.* (. . . when he was alive)

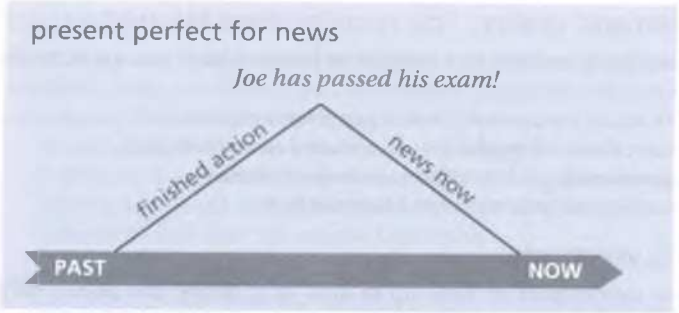
4 news and details

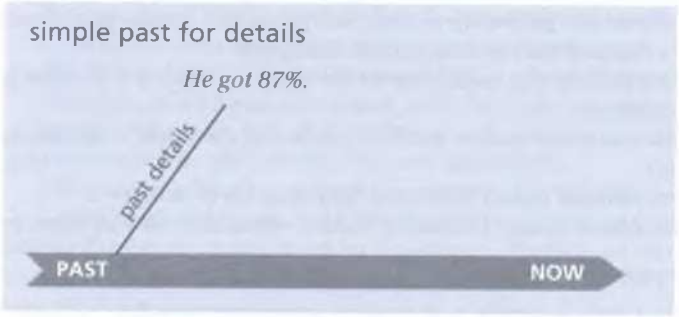
We normally use the present perfect to announce news.

***Have** you **heard**? Andy **has won** a big prize!*

But when we give more details, we usually change to a past tense.

*Joe **has passed** his exam! He **got** 87%.*
*There **has been** a plane crash near Bristol. Witnesses say that there **was** an explosion as the aircraft **was taking off**, . . .*
*The Prime Minister **has had** talks with President Kumani. During a three-hour meeting, they **discussed** the economic situation, and **agreed** on the need for closer trade links between the two countries.*





For more details, exceptions and notes on American usage, ► 49.6–49.7.

49 present perfect or past: advanced points

1 causes and origins: *Who gave you that?*

We normally use the present perfect when we are thinking about past events together with their present results (► 47.3).

*I **can't come** to your party because I've **broken** my leg.*

However, we usually prefer a past tense when we identify the person, thing or circumstances responsible for a present situation (because we are thinking about the past cause, not the present result). Compare:

– *Look what Jack's **given** me!* (thinking about the gift)
  *Who **gave** you that?* (thinking about the past action of giving)
– *Somebody **has spilt** coffee on the carpet.*
  *Who **spilt** all that coffee on the carpet?*

Other examples:

*'Why are you crying?' 'Granny **hit** me.* (NOT . . . ~~*Granny has hit me.*~~)'
*I'm glad you **were** born.*
*How **did** you **get** that bruise?*
*That's a nice picture. **Did** you **paint** it yourself?*
*Some people think that 'Pericles' **was not written** by Shakespeare.*
*The Chinese **invented** paper.* (NOT ~~*The Chinese have invented paper.*~~) →

2 expectation and reality: *You're older than I thought.*

We use a past tense to refer to a belief that has just been shown to be true or false.

It's not as big as I ***expected.*** (NOT . . . ~~*as I have expected.*~~)
You're older than I ***thought.*** (NOT . . . ~~*than I have thought.*~~)
But you ***promised*** *. . . !* (NOT ~~*But you have promised*~~ . . .)
I ***knew*** *you would help me!* (NOT ~~*I have known*~~ . . .)

3 *today, this week,* etc

With definite expressions of 'time up to now' (e.g. *today, this week*), perfect and past tenses are often both possible. We prefer the present perfect if we are thinking of the whole period up to now. We prefer the simple past if we are thinking of a finished part of that period. Compare:

– *I* ***haven't seen*** *Jack this week.* (the whole week up to now – present perfect more natural)
I ***saw*** *Jack this week, and he said . . .* (earlier in the week – simple past more natural)
– ***Has*** *Anna* ***phoned*** *today?* (meaning 'any time up to now')
Did *Anna* ***phone*** *today?* (meaning 'earlier, when the call was expected')

4 *always, ever* and *never*

In an informal style, a simple past tense is sometimes possible with *always, ever* and *never* when they refer to 'time up to now'.

I ***always knew*** *I could trust you.* (OR *I've always known . . .*)
Did *you* ***ever see*** *anything like that before?* (OR *Have you ever seen . . . ?*)

5 present perfect with past time expressions

Grammars usually say that the present perfect cannot be used together with expressions of finished time – we can say *I have seen him* or *I saw him yesterday,* but not ~~*I have seen him yesterday*~~. In fact, such structures are unusual but not impossible (though learners should avoid them). They often occur in brief news items, where space is limited and there is pressure to announce the news and give the details in the same clause.

Here are some real examples taken from news broadcasts, newspaper articles, advertisements, letters and conversations.

Police ***have arrested*** *more than 900 suspected drugs traffickers in raids throughout the country* ***on Friday and Saturday.***
A 24-year-old soldier ***has been killed*** *in a road accident* ***last night.***
The horse's trainer ***has had*** *a winner here* ***yesterday.***
. . . indicating that the geological activity ***has taken place a very long time ago.***
Perhaps what ***has helped*** *us to win eight major awards* ***last year*** *alone . . .*
I ***have stocked*** *the infirmary cupboard* ***only yesterday.***
I am pleased to confirm that Lloyds Bank . . . ***has opened*** *a Home Loan account for you* ***on 19th May.***

6 simple past for news

Recently, some British newspapers and online news channels have started regularly using the simple past for smaller news announcements – probably to save space. Some authentic examples:

*An unnamed businessman **was shot** dead by terrorists . . .*
*A woman **was jailed** for six months after taking a baby boy from his mother.*
*Driving wind and rain **forced** 600 out of 2,500 teenagers to abandon the annual 'Ten Tor' trek across Dartmoor.*

7 American English

In American English the simple past is often used to give news.

***Did** you **hear**? Switzerland **declared** / **has declared** war on Mongolia!* (BrE *Have you heard? Switzerland has declared war . . .*)
*Uh, honey, I **lost** / **I've lost** the keys* (BrE *. . . I've lost the keys.*)
*Lucy just **called** / **has just called.*** (BrE *Lucy has just called.*)

In American English, it is also possible to use the simple past with indefinite past-time adverbs like *already, yet, ever* and *before.*

***Did** you **eat already**?* OR ***Have** you **eaten** . . . ?* (BrE *Have you eaten already?*)
*I **didn't call** Bobby **yet*** OR ***I haven't called** . . .* (BrE *I haven't called . . .*)

British English is changing under American influence, so some of these uses are becoming common in Britain as well.

For more about tenses with *just*, ► 503. For more about British-American differences, ► 319.

8 bad rules (1): 'definite time'

Grammars sometimes say that the simple past, not the present perfect, is used with expressions referring to 'definite time'. This is confusing – the present perfect is not often used with **finished** time expressions, but it actually is very common with **definite** time expressions. Compare:

*I've lived here for **exactly three years, seven months and two days.*** (present perfect with very definite time-reference)
***Once upon a time** a little girl **lived** with her mother in a lonely house in a dark forest.* (simple past with very indefinite time-reference)

9 bad rules (2): 'finished actions'

Note also that the choice between simple present perfect and simple past does not depend on whether we are talking about finished **actions**, as learners' grammars sometimes suggest (though it can depend on whether we are talking about finished **time periods**). Compare:

*That cat **has eaten** your supper.* (finished action – present perfect)
*I **ate** the last of the eggs this morning.* (finished action – simple past)

10 bad rules (3): 'recent actions'

The choice also does not depend directly on whether actions and events are recent. Recent events are more likely to be 'news', and we are more likely to be concerned about their present results, so many present perfect sentences are in fact about recent events. But it is possible to use the present perfect to talk about things that happened a long time ago. Compare:

*The French revolution **has influenced** every popular radical movement in Europe since 1800.* (200-year-old event – present perfect)
*Anna **phoned** five minutes ago.* (very recent event – simple past) →

11 both possible

The difference between the present perfect and the simple past is not always very clear-cut. It often depends on our 'focus': are we thinking mostly about the present relevance of a past event, or about the past details? In some cases both present perfect and past are possible with little difference of meaning.

We ***(have) heard*** *that you have rooms to let.*
Has *Mark* ***phoned?*** OR ***Did*** *Mark* ***phone?***
I've given */* ***I gave*** *your old radio to Philip.*

50 present perfect progressive

1 forms

have/has been + -ing

I have been thinking about you. *Have you been waiting long?*
I haven't been studying very well recently.

For double letters in words like *sitting, stopping,* ► 347.

2 continuing actions and situations

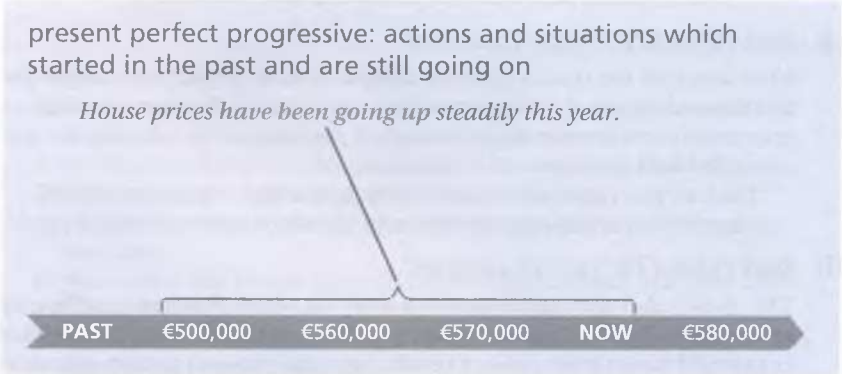
We use the present perfect progressive to look back over actions and situations which started in the past and are still going on.

I've been working *very hard recently.*
It's been raining *all day. I'm tired of it.*
Food prices ***have been going*** *up steadily all this year.*

We often use the present perfect progressive to talk about people's use of their time up to the present.

'Hi! What ***have*** *you* ***been doing*** *with yourself?' 'I've* ***been trying*** *to write a novel.'*
That kid ***has been watching*** *TV non-stop since breakfast.*

present perfect progressive: actions and situations which started in the past and are still going on



3 actions and situations that have just stopped

We also use the present perfect progressive for actions and situations which have just stopped, but which have present results.

*'You look hot.' 'Yes, I've **been running**.'*
*Sorry I'm late. **Have** you **been waiting** long?*
*I must just go and wash. **I've been gardening**.*

4 repeated actions

We can use the present perfect progressive not only for continuous activity, but also for repeated activity.

*People **have been phoning** me all day.*
*I've **been waking** up in the night a lot. I think I'll see the doctor.*

5 time expressions: *recently, lately, this week, since . . ., for . . .,* etc

We often use the present perfect progressive with words that refer to a period of time continuing up to now, like *recently, lately, this week, since January, for the last three days.*

*The company **has been losing** money **recently**.*
*Jack's **been walking** in Scotland **all this week**.*
*I've **been doing** a new job **since January**.*
*It's **been raining for the last three days**.*

For the difference between *since* and *for*, ► 469.

6 not used with finished time expressions

We cannot use the present perfect progressive with expressions that refer to a finished period of time.

*'You look tired.' 'Yes. I was cycling **from ten this morning until five o'clock**.'*
(NOT . . . ~~*I've been cycling from ten this morning until five o'clock.*~~)

7 *how long?*

We use the present perfect progressive, not the present progressive, to talk about how long something has been happening.

*How long **have** you **been studying** English?* (NOT ~~*How long are you studying . . . ?*~~)
*I've **been working** here for two months.* (NOT ~~*I'm working here for two months.*~~)

For details, ► 52.

8 present perfect progressive and (simple) present perfect

In some cases, we can also use the simple present perfect to talk about actions and situations continuing up to the present. Compare:

– *How long **have** you **been working** with her?*
*How long **have** you **known** her?*
– *That man **has been standing** on the corner all day.*
*For 900 years the castle **has stood** on the hill above the village.*

For the differences, ► 51. →

9 a bad rule

Grammars sometimes simply say that the present perfect progressive is used 'for actions or situations that started in the past and are still going on'. This is true, but incomplete and unhelpful. To talk about actions and situations that started in the past and are still going on, we normally use **present** tenses (everything that is going on now started in the past!). The difference is that we use the present perfect progressive when we are **looking back** over something that is still going on – for example when we say how long it has lasted. Compare:

– *It's **raining**.*
  *It's **been raining** all day.*
– *I'm **working** very hard at the moment.*
  *I've **been working** very hard recently.*

51 present perfect simple or progressive?

1 non-progressive verbs

Some verbs are not used in progressive forms (▸ 4), even if the meaning is one for which a progressive form is more suitable. Common examples are *be*, *have* and *know*.

*Jack's **been** ill all week.* (NOT ~~*Jack's been being ill*~~ . . .)
*She's **had** a cold since Monday.* (NOT ~~*She's been having a cold*~~ . . .)
*I've only **known** her for two days.* (NOT ~~*I've only been knowing her*~~ . . .)

2 temporary or permanent

We use progressive forms mostly for shorter, temporary actions and situations. When we talk about longer-lasting or permanent situations we often prefer the simple present perfect. Compare:

– *I've **been playing** the piano all afternoon, and I'm really tired.*
  *My grandmother **has played** the piano since she was a little girl.*
– *I **haven't been working** very well recently.*
  *He **hasn't worked** for years.*
– *I've **been living** at Emma's place for the last month.*
  *My parents **have lived** in Bristol all their lives.*

Progressive and simple tenses are sometimes both possible, with a slight difference of emphasis.

*It's **been raining** / It's **rained** steadily since last Saturday.*
*Harry **has been working** / **has worked** in the same job for thirty years.*

We generally use the progressive to talk about continuous change or development, even if this is permanent.

*Scientists believe that the universe **has been expanding** steadily since the beginning of time.*

3 *how much? how often?* simple present perfect

We use the simple present perfect to say how much we have done, or how often we have done something. Compare:

– *I've **been planting** rose bushes all afternoon.*
  *Look at all the rose bushes I've **planted**!* (NOT . . . ~~*I've been planting.*~~)

– *We've **been painting** the house.*
*We've **painted** two rooms since lunchtime.* (NOT ~~*We've been painting two rooms since lunchtime.*~~)
– *I've **been playing** a lot of tennis recently.*
*I've **played** tennis three times this week.*

52 present perfect or present?

1 *how long?* present perfect

We use a present perfect to say how long a situation or action has continued up to now. Compare:

– *It's **raining** again.*
*It's **been raining** since Christmas.* (NOT ~~*It's raining since Christmas.*~~)
– *Are you **learning** English?*
*How long **have** you **been learning**?* (NOT ~~*How long are you learning?*~~)
– *'I hear you're **working** at Smiths.' 'Yes, I've **been working** there for a month.'* (NOT ~~*I'm working there for . . .*~~)
– *I **know** her well.*
*I've **known** her for years.* (NOT ~~*I know her for years.*~~)
– *My brother's a doctor.*
*How long **has** he **been** a doctor?* (NOT ~~*How long is he a doctor?*~~)

Compare also:

*How long **are** you here for?* (= until when; when are you leaving?)
*How long **have** you **been** here for?* (= since when; when did you arrive?)

For the difference between simple and progressive forms, ▶ 51.
For the difference between *since* and *for*, ▶ 469. For tenses with *since*, ▶ 579.

2 *This is the first time*, etc

We use a simple present perfect after *this is the first time that . . . , it's the second . . . that . . .* , and similar structures (▶ 56).

*This is **the first time** that I've **heard** her sing.* (NOT ~~*This is the first time that I hear her sing.*~~)
*It's **the fifth time** you've **asked** me the same question.*
*This is only **the second** opera I've **ever** seen.*

For present perfect and simple present passives with similar meanings (e.g. *The shop has been / is closed*), ▶ 66.

53 past perfect: basic information

This entry deals with the simple past perfect. For the past perfect progressive, ▶ 55.

1 forms

had + past participle

I had forgotten. *Where had she been?* *It hadn't rained for weeks.*

For passives (e.g. *The work had been done*), ▶ 57. →

2 meaning and use: earlier past

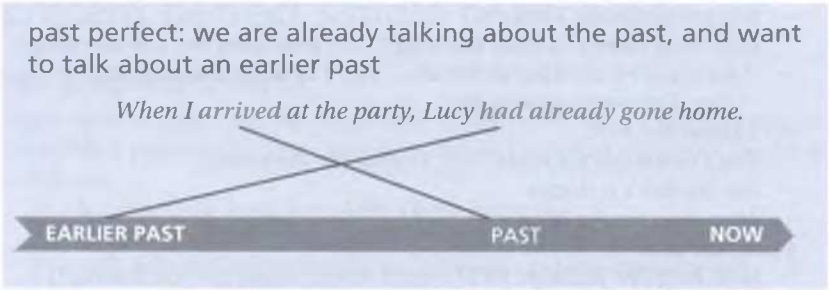
The basic meaning of the past perfect is 'earlier past'. A common use is to 'go back' for a moment when we are already talking about the past, to make it clear that something had already happened at the time we are talking about.

During our conversation, I realised that we ***had met*** *before.*
(NOT ~~*I realised that we met before*~~ OR . . . ~~*have met before.*~~)

When I arrived at the party, Lucy ***had*** *already* ***gone*** *home.*
(NOT . . . ~~*Lucy already went home.*~~ OR . . . ~~*has already gone home.*~~)

The past perfect is common after past verbs of saying and thinking, to talk about things that had happened before the saying or thinking took place.

I ***told*** *her that I* ***had finished****.* (NOT . . . ~~*that I (have) finished.*~~)
I ***wondered*** *who* ***had left*** *the door open.*
I ***thought*** *I* ***had sent*** *the money a week before.*



3 past perfect not used

The past perfect is normally only used as described above. The past perfect is not used simply to say that something happened some time ago, or to give a past reason for a present situation.

Alex Cary, who ***worked*** *for my father in the 1980s, is now living in Greece.*
(NOT ~~*Alex Cary, who had worked for my father*~~ . . .)

I ***left*** *a jacket to be cleaned. Is it ready yet?* (NOT ~~*I had left a jacket*~~ . . .)

4 unreal events: *if*, etc

After *if* (► 241), *wish* (► 632) and *would rather* (► 566), the past perfect can be used to talk about past events that did not happen.

If *I* ***had gone*** *to university I would have studied medicine.*
I ***wish*** *you* ***had told*** *me the truth.*
*I'****d rather*** *she* ***had asked*** *me before borrowing the car.*

5 *how long?* past perfect, not simple past

We use a past perfect, not a simple past, to say how long something had continued up to a past moment. A simple past perfect is used with non-progressive verbs like *be*, *have* and *know*.

She told me that her father ***had been*** *ill since Christmas.*
(NOT . . . ~~*that her father was ill since Christmas.*~~)

I was sorry to sell my car. I ***had had*** *it since College.*
(NOT . . . ~~*I had it since College.*~~)

When they got married, they ***had known*** *each other for 15 years.*
(NOT . . . ~~*they knew each other for 15 years.*~~)

With most other verbs, we use the past perfect progressive for this meaning (► 55).

For the difference between *since* and *for*, ► 469.

54 past perfect: advanced points

1 past perfect or simple past with *after, as soon as*, etc

We can use time conjunctions (e.g. *after, as soon as, when, once*) to talk about two actions or events that happened one after the other. Usually the past perfect is not necessary in these cases, because we are not 'going back' from the time that we are mainly talking about, but simply moving forward from one event to the next.

After *it* ***got*** *dark, we came back inside.*
As soon as *Megan* ***arrived****, we sat down to eat.*
Once *it* ***stopped*** *raining, we started the game again.*

However, we can use the past perfect with *after, as soon as*, etc to emphasise that the first action is separate, independent of the second, completed before the second started.

She didn't feel the same ***after*** *her dog* ***had died****.*
As soon as *he* ***had finished*** *his exams, he went to Paris for a month.*

This use of the past perfect is especially common with *when*. (*When* has several meanings, so we often have to show the exact time relations by the verb form.) Compare:

– *When I* ***had opened*** *the windows, I sat down and had a cup of tea.* (NOT ~~*When I opened the windows, I sat down*~~ . . .: the first action was quite separate from the second.)
When I ***opened*** *the window, the cat jumped out.* (More natural than *When I had opened the window, . . .*: one action caused the other.)
– *When I* ***had answered*** *my emails, I did some gardening.*
(NOT ~~*When I answered my emails, I did some gardening.*~~)
When I ***wrote*** *to her, she came at once.*

2 unrealised hopes and wishes; things that did not happen

The past perfect can be used to express an unrealised hope, wish, etc. *Had* is usually stressed in this case.

I ***HAD hoped*** *we would leave tomorrow, but it won't be possible.*
He ***HAD intended*** *to make a cake, but he ran out of time.*

3 past perfect with *It was the first/second . . . that . . .*

We generally use a past perfect after *it was the first/second . . . that . . .* and similar structures (► 56).

It was ***the first time*** *that I* ***had heard*** *her sing.*
It was ***the fifth time*** *she* ***had asked*** *the same question.*
It was only ***the second opera*** *I* ***had seen*** *in my life.*

For the past perfect with *before* (e.g. *He went out before I had finished my sentence*), ► 250.3.

55 past perfect progressive

1 forms

had been + -ing

I had been working. *Where had she been staying?*
They hadn't been listening.

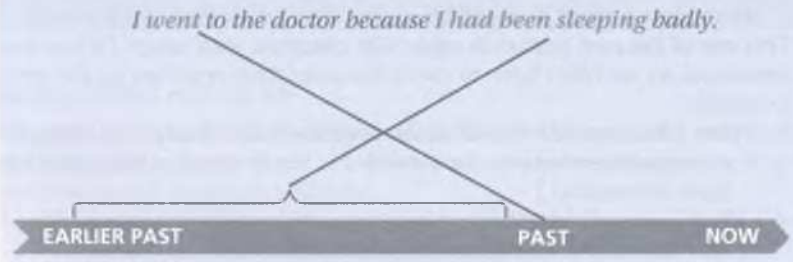
For double letters in words like *sitting, stopping,* ► 347.

2 use

We use the past perfect progressive to talk about actions or situations which had continued up to the past moment that we are thinking about, or shortly before it.

At that time we ***had been living*** *in the caravan for about six months.*
When I found Emily, I could see that she ***had been crying****.*
I went to the doctor because I ***had been sleeping*** *badly.*

past perfect progressive: actions or situations which had continued up to the past moment that we are thinking about, or shortly before it



3 *how long?* past perfect progressive, not past progressive

We use a past perfect progressive, not a past progressive, to say how long something had been happening up to a past moment.

We ***'d been walking*** *since sunrise, and we were hungry.* (NOT ~~*We were walking since sunrise*~~ . . .)

When she arrived, she ***had been travelling*** *for twenty hours.* (NOT . . . ~~*she was travelling*~~ . . .)

For the difference between *since* and *for,* ► 469.

4 progressive and simple: differences

Progressive forms are mostly used to talk about more temporary actions and situations. When we talk about longer-lasting or permanent situations we prefer simple forms. Compare:

My legs were stiff because I ***had been standing*** *still for a long time.*
The tree that blew down ***had stood*** *there for 300 years.*

Progressive forms generally emphasise the continuation of an activity; we use simple tenses to emphasise the idea of completion. Compare:

I ***had been reading*** *science fiction, and my mind was full of strange images.*
I ***had read*** *all my magazines, and was beginning to get bored.*

Some verbs are not normally used in progressive forms (► 4), even if the meaning is one for which a progressive form would be more suitable.

I ***hadn't known*** *her for very long when we got married.* (NOT ~~*I hadn't been knowing her*~~ . . .)

56 *This is the first/last . . .*, etc

1 *This is the first time*, etc

We use the present perfect in sentences constructed with *this/it/that is the first/second/third/only/best/worst*, etc.

This is the first time that ***I've heard*** *her sing.* (NOT ~~*This is the first time that I hear her sing.*~~)
This is the first time ***I've seen*** *a volc*(NOT ~~*This is my first time to see a*~~***see a***~~ *volcano.*~~)
This is the fifth time you've ***asked*** *me the same question* (NOT ~~*This is the fifth time you ask*~~ . . .)
That's the third cake you've ***eaten*** *this morning.*
It's one of the most interesting books I've ever ***read****.*
I'm flying to New York tomorrow. It'll be the first time ***I've travelled*** *by plane.*

When we talk about the past, we generally use the past perfect in these structures.

It was the third time he ***had been*** *in love that year.*

2 tenses with *This is the last . . .*, etc

Present (simple or progressive) and future tenses are both possible with *This is the last . . .* and similar structures.

This is the last time ***I pay*** */* ***I'm paying*** *for you.* (OR *This is the last time I'll pay for you.*)
That's the last email ***he gets*** */* ***he's getting*** *from me.* (OR *That's the last email he'll get from me.*)
This is the last thing ***I'm going*** *to say to you.*

Section 6 **Passives**

INTRODUCTION

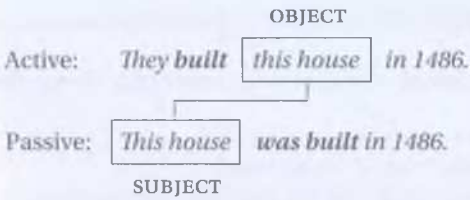
active and passive structures

Compare:

- *They **built** this house in 1486.* (active)
  *This house **was built** in 1486.* (passive)
- *Most Austrians **speak** German.* (active)
  *German **is spoken** by most Austrians.* (passive)
- *A friend of ours **is repairing** the roof.* (active)
  *The roof **is being repaired** by a friend of ours.* (passive)
- *This book **will change** your life.* (active)
  *Your life **will be changed** by this book.* (passive)

When A does something to B, there are often two ways to talk about it. If we want A (the 'doer' or 'agent') to be the subject, we use an active verb: *built, speak, is repairing, will change.* If we want B (the 'receiver' of the action) to be the subject (► 67), we use a passive verb: *was built, is spoken, is being repaired, will be changed.*

The object of an active verb corresponds to the subject of a passive verb.



In most cases, the subject of an active verb is not expressed in the corresponding passive sentence. If it does have to be expressed, this usually happens in an expression with *by*; the noun is called the 'agent' (► 58).

*This house was built in 1486 **by Sir John Latton.***

meaning and grammar

Meaning and grammar do not always go together. Not all active verbs have 'active' meanings; for instance, if you say that somebody *receives* something or *suffers*, you are really saying that something is done to him/her.

Some English active verbs might be translated by passive or reflexive verbs in certain other languages: e.g. *My shoes **are wearing out**; She **is sitting**; Suddenly the door **opened**.* And some English passives might be translated by active or reflexive verbs: e.g. *I **was born** in 1956; English **is spoken** here.*

Some verbs can be used in both active and passive forms with similar meanings: for example *to worry* / *to be worried*; *to drown* / *to be drowned* (► 438). Sometimes active and passive infinitives can be used with very similar meanings: for example *There's a lot of work to do* / *to be done* (for details, ► 106). And some active verbs can have both active and passive meanings, for example *She* ***opened*** *the door* / *The door* ***opened*** (► 9).

For more about reflexive verbs, ► 178. For active and passive past participles, ► 96.3–96.4. For *-ing* forms with passive meanings after *need* and *want* (e.g. *My watch needs cleaning*), ► 100.3. For more about the way information is organised in sentences, ► 267.

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- ✗ I was very interesting in the lesson. ► 96.3
- ✗ She has put in prison for life. ► 57.4
- ✗ Tact is lacked by your mother. ► 57.3
- ✗ He was shot by a rifle. ► 58
- ✗ Our house got built in 1827. ► 60
- ✗ The children were explained the problem. ► 61
- ✗ We were suggested a meeting place. ► 61
- ✗ I don't like to be shouted. ► 62.1
- ✗ He was thrown stones at. ► 62.2
- ✗ She was broken her mirror. ► 62.2
- ✗ That she was a spy was thought by nobody. ► 63.1
- ✗ It is expected to make a profit this year. ► 63.2
- ✗ They say his company to be in trouble. ► 64.2
- ✗ Doris was wanted to be the manager. ► 64.6
- ✗ Emily telling everybody what to do annoyed me. ► 67.4

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57 passive structures and verb forms

1 passive verb forms

We normally make passive forms of a verb by using tenses of the auxiliary *be* followed by the past participle (= pp) of the verb. (For *get* as a passive auxiliary, ► 60.) Here is a list of all the passive forms of an ordinary English verb.

Name	Construction	Example
simple present	*am/are/is* + pp	*English* ***is spoken*** *here.*
present progressive	*am/are/is being* + pp	*Excuse the mess; the house* ***is being painted.***
present perfect	*have/has been* + pp	***Has*** *Emily* ***been told?***
(simple) future	*will be* + pp	*You'll* ***be told*** *soon enough.*
future perfect	*will have been* + pp	*Everything* ***will have been done*** *by Tuesday.*
simple past	*was/were* + pp	*I* ***wasn't invited,*** *but I went.*
past progressive	*was/were being* + pp	*I felt as if I* ***was being watched.***
past perfect	*had been* + pp	*I knew why I* ***had been chosen.***

Future progressive passives (***will be being*** + **pp**) and perfect progressive passives (***has been being*** + **pp**) are unusual.
Examples of passive infinitives: *(to) be taken; (to) have been invited.*
Examples of passive *-ing* forms: *being watched; having been invited.*
Note that verbs made up of more than one word (► 12–13) can have passive forms if they are transitive.

The furniture ***was broken up*** *for firewood.*
She likes ***being looked at.*** *I need* ***to be taken care of.***
He hates ***being made a fool of.***

For more about structures with prepositions at the ends of clauses, ► 209.

2 use of tenses

Passive tenses are normally used in the same way as active tenses. So for example the present progressive passive is used, like the present progressive active, to talk about things that are going on at the time of speaking (► 32).

The papers ***are being prepared*** *now.*
The secretary ***is preparing*** *the papers now.*

And the present perfect passive can be used, like the present perfect active, to talk about finished actions with present consequences (► 47).

Alex ***has been arrested!*** *The police* ***have arrested*** *Alex!*

3 verbs not used in the passive

Not all verbs can have passive forms. Passive structures are impossible with intransitive verbs (► 7.2) like *die* or *arrive*, which cannot have objects, because there is nothing to become the subject of a passive sentence. Some transitive verbs, too, are seldom used in the passive. Most of these are 'stative verbs' (verbs which refer to states, not actions). Examples are *fit, have, lack, resemble, suit.*

They ***have*** *a nice house.* (BUT NOT ~~*A nice house is had by them.*~~)

My shoes ***don't fit*** *me.* (BUT NOT ~~*I'm not fitted by my shoes.*~~)
Sylvia ***resembles*** *a Greek goddess.* (BUT NOT ~~*A Greek goddess is resembled by Sylvia.*~~)
Your mother ***lacks*** *tact.* (BUT NOT ~~*Tact is lacked by your mother.*~~)
She ***was having*** *a bath.* (BUT NOT ~~*A bath was being had by her.*~~)

4 confusing forms

Students often confuse active and passive verb forms in English. Typical mistakes:

~~*I was very interesting in the lesson.*~~
~~*We were questioning by the immigration officer.*~~
~~*She has put in prison for life.*~~
~~*These houses build in wood.*~~
~~*We are write to each other in English.*~~
~~*The play performed in the evening.*~~
~~*This exhibition will be visit 5 million people.*~~

Mistakes like these are not surprising, because:
1. *Be* is used in both passive verb forms and active progressive tenses.
2. Past participles are used in both passive verb forms and active perfect tenses.
Compare:

He ***was calling.*** (active – past progressive)
He ***was called.*** (passive – simple past)
He has ***called.*** (active – present perfect)

For active verb forms, ▶ 2.

58 *by* + agent

In a passive clause, we usually use *by* to introduce the agent – the person or thing that does the action, or that causes what happens. (Note, however, that agents are mentioned in only about 20 per cent of passive clauses.)

All the trouble was caused ***by your mother.***
These carpets are made ***by children*** *who work twelve hours a day.*

Some past participles can be more like adjectives than verbs (▶ 96): for example *shocked, worried, frightened.* After these, we often use other prepositions instead of *by.* (And such structures are not really passives, but examples of ***be*** + **adjective**.)

I was ***shocked at/by*** *your attitude.*
We were ***worried about/by*** *her silence.*
Are you ***frightened of*** *spiders?*

With is used when we talk about an instrument which is used by an agent to do an action (▶ 416).

He was shot (by the policeman) ***with a rifle.***

59 passive modal structures: *It can be done tomorrow.*

Modal structures can be passivised.

*We **can do** it tomorrow. → **It can be done** tomorrow.*

*They **may close** the hospital. → The hospital **may be closed**.*

An interesting, rather complicated point about modal verbs is that their meaning usually 'spreads over' a whole clause. This means that one can change a modal structure from active to passive, for example, without affecting the meaning very much. Compare:

- *A child **could understand** his theory.*
  *His theory **could be understood** by a child.*
- *You **shouldn't put** adverbs between the verb and the object.*
  *Adverbs **shouldn't be put** between the verb and the object.*
- *Dogs **may** chase cats.*
  *Cats **may get chased** by dogs.*

With most other verbs that are followed by infinitives, their meaning is attached to the subject, so that a change from active to passive changes the sense of the sentence completely. Compare:

- *Dogs **like to chase** cats.*
  *Cats **like to be chased** by dogs.* (different and – of course – untrue)
- *Dan **wants to phone** Anna.*
  *Anna **wants to be phoned** by Dan.* (not the same meaning)

60 *get* as passive auxiliary: *He got caught.*

***Get* + past participle** can be used to make passive structures in the same way as ***be* + past participle**. This structure is mostly used in an informal style. It is often used to talk about events that happen by accident, unexpectedly, or outside one's control, and that have good or bad consequences.

*I **get paid** on Fridays.* *She's always **getting invited** to parties.*

*My watch **got broken** while I was playing with the children.*

*He **got caught** by the police speeding through the town centre.*

The passive with *be* is preferred for longer, more deliberate, planned actions.

*The Emperor Charlemagne **was crowned** in the year 800.* (It would be strange to say *Charlemagne got crowned . . .*)

*The new school **will be opened** by the Prime Minister on May 25th.*

*Our house **was built** in 1827.*

61 verbs with two objects in the passive

Many verbs, such as *give, send, show, lend, pay, promise, refuse, tell, offer,* can be followed by two objects, an '**indirect object**' and a '**direct object**'. These usually refer to a person (indirect object) and a thing (direct object). Two structures are possible.

A. verb + indirect object + direct object

She gave her sister the car.

I had already shown the police officer Sam's photo.

B. verb + direct object + preposition + indirect object

She gave the car to her sister.
I had already shown Sam's photo to the police officer.

Both of these structures can be made passive.

A. indirect object becomes subject of passive verb

***Her sister** was given the car.*
***The police officer** had already been shown Sam's photo.*

B. direct object becomes subject of passive verb

***The car** was given to her sister.*
***Sam's photo** had already been shown to the police officer*

The choice between the two passive structures may depend on what has been said before, or on what needs to be put last in the sentence (► 67.2, 67.4). Structure A (e.g. *Her sister was given the car*) is the more common of the two.

More examples:

*I've just **been sent** a whole lot of information.*
***You were lent** ten thousand pounds last year.*
***The visitors were shown** a collection of old manuscripts.*
***They are being paid** a lot of money for doing very little.*
***He was refused** a visa because he had been in prison.*
*We will never **be told** the real truth.*
*How much **have you been offered?***

In structure B (e.g. *The car was given to her sister*), prepositions are sometimes dropped before indirect object pronouns.

*This watch was given **(to)** me by my father.*

Explain (► 459) and *suggest* (► 598) cannot be used in structure A.

***The problem was explained** to the children.* (BUT NOT ~~*The children were explained the problem.*~~)
***A meeting place was suggested** to us.* (BUT NOT ~~*We were suggested a meeting place.*~~)

Note that prepositional phrases like 'to the police officer' are not called 'indirect objects' in all grammars.

For more details of verbs with two objects, ► 8.

62 verbs with prepositions in the passive

1 *The plan has been looked at carefully.*

The objects of prepositional verbs can become subjects in passive structures.

*We have looked **at the plan** carefully. → **The plan** has been looked at carefully.*
*Nobody listens **to her**. → **She** is never listened to.*
*Somebody has paid **for your meal**. → **Your meal** has been paid for.*

Note the word order. The preposition cannot be dropped.

*I don't like to be shouted **at**.* (NOT ~~*I don't like to be shouted.*~~)

For more about prepositions at the ends of clauses, ► 209. →

2 *Stones were thrown at him.*

If there is already a direct object, the second object (after the preposition) cannot become a passive subject.

*They threw **stones at him**. → **Stones** were thrown at him.*
(BUT NOT ~~*He was thrown stones at.*~~)

*They stole **a bicycle from him**. → **A bicycle** was stolen from him.*
(BUT NOT ~~*He was stolen a bicycle from.*~~)

*They poured **water on us**. → **Water** was poured on us.*
(BUT NOT ~~*We were poured water on.*~~)

Note that possessive nouns or pronouns cannot become passive subjects, either.

*They called **Mr Archer's name**. → **Mr Archer's name** was called.*
(BUT NOT ~~*Mr Archer was name called.*~~)

*I broke **her mirror**. → **Her mirror** was broken.*
(BUT NOT ~~*She was broken her mirror.*~~)

3 *give, send,* etc

Verbs like *give, send, lend* can have two objects with no preposition (e.g. *They gave him a gold watch*). For the passive of this structure (e.g. *He was given a gold watch, A gold watch was given to him*), ► 61.

For structures with ***have* + object + past participle** (e.g. *We had water poured on us*), ► 109, 267.3.

63 *It was thought that . . .*

1 clause objects: *Nobody thought that she was a spy.*

Some sentences have clauses as their objects. These cannot normally become the subjects of passive sentences.

*Nobody thought **that she was a spy**.* (BUT NOT ~~*That she was a spy was thought by nobody.*~~)

*We felt **that he was the right man for the job**.* (BUT NOT ~~*That he was . . . was felt.*~~)

*The newspapers say **that his company is in trouble**.* (BUT NOT ~~*That his company is in trouble is said . . .*~~)

However, passive structures are often possible with preparatory *it* (► 268).

***It was thought** that she was a spy.*
***It was felt** that he was the right man for the job.*
***It is said** that his company is in trouble.*

2 infinitive objects: *They decided to . . .*

A few verbs that are followed by infinitives (for example *decide, agree*) can also be used in passive structures beginning with *it*.

*They **decided to meet** at twelve. → **It was decided** to meet at twelve.*
*We **agreed to open** a new branch. → **It was agreed** to open a new branch.*

However, most verbs cannot be used in this way.

NOT ~~*It is started to make a profit.*~~ OR ~~*It is not expected to rain today.*~~

64 *He is believed to be . . .*

1 *I was asked to send . . .*

Many verbs can be followed by **object + infinitive** (► 98).

***He asked me to send** a stamped addressed envelope.*
*We **chose Felicity to be** the Carnival Queen.*

In most cases, these structures can be made passive.

***I was asked to send** a stamped addressed envelope.*
***Felicity was chosen to be** the Carnival Queen.*
***We were told not to come** back.*
***They are allowed to visit** Harry once a week.*

2 *He is believed to be dangerous.*

With verbs like *think, feel, believe, know,* etc, the **object + infinitive** structure is rather formal and often unusual.

*They **believe him to be** dangerous.* (more usual: *They believe that he . . .*)

However, the passive structure (e.g. *He is believed to be . . .*) is common, and often occurs in news reports.

***He is believed to be** dangerous.*
***Moriarty is thought to be** in Switzerland.*
***She is known to have been** married before.*
***It is considered to be** the finest cathedral in Scotland.*

Note that with *say,* the infinitive structure is only possible in the passive.

***His company is said to be** in trouble.*
(BUT NOT ~~*They say his company to be in trouble.*~~)

3 *hear, see, make* and *help*

These verbs can be followed, in active structures, by **object + infinitive without *to*** (► 91). In passive structures *to*-infinitives are used. Compare:

– *I saw him **come** out of the house.*
*He was seen **to come** out of the house.*
– *They made him **tell** them everything.*
*He was made **to tell** them everything.*
– *They helped him **(to) get** out of the country.*
*He was helped **to get** out of the country.*

4 preparatory *there*

With some verbs (e.g. *say, think, feel, report, presume, understand*), the passive structure is possible with *there* as a '**preparatory subject**'.

***There are thought to be** more than 3,000 different languages in the world.*
(= It is thought that there are . . .)
***There was said to be** disagreement between Ministers.*

5 perfect, progressive and passive infinitives

A passive verb can be followed by a perfect, progressive or passive infinitive.

*He is believed **to have crossed** the frontier last night.*
*I was told **to be waiting** outside the station at six o'clock.*
*The hostages are expected **to be released** today.*

→

6 **exceptions**: wanting and liking

Verbs that refer to wanting, liking and similar ideas cannot usually be used in passive structures with infinitives after them.

*Everybody **wanted Doris to be** the manager.* (BUT NOT ~~*Doris was wanted to be the manager.*~~)

*We **like our staff to say** what they think.* (BUT NOT ~~*Our staff are liked to say what they think.*~~)

65 *He was considered a genius.*

After some verbs the direct object can be followed by an '**object complement**' – a noun or adjective which describes or classifies the object.

*Queen Victoria considered him **a genius**.*
*They elected Mrs Sanderson **President**.*
*We all regarded Kathy as **an expert**.*
*Most people saw him as **a sort of clown**.*
*The other children called her **stupid**.*
*You've made the house **beautiful**.*

In passive clauses these are '**subject complements**'; they come after the verb.

*He was considered **a genius** by Queen Victoria.*
*Mrs Sanderson was elected **President**.*
*Kathy was regarded as **an expert**.*
*He was seen as **a sort of clown**.*
*She was called **stupid** by the other children.*
*The house has been made **beautiful**.*

For more about object complements, ► 10.

66 *My suitcase is packed.*

Some verbs refer to actions that produce a finished result. Examples are *cut, build, pack, close*. Other verbs do not: for example *push, live, speak, hit, carry*. The past participles of finished-result verbs, and some of their passive tenses, can have two meanings. They can refer to the action, or they can describe the result (rather like adjectives). Compare:

*The theatre **was closed** by the police on the orders of the mayor.* (refers to the action of closing)

*When I got there I found that the theatre **was closed**.* (refers to the state of being shut – the result of the action)

Because of this, ***be* + past participle** can have a similar meaning to a present perfect passive.

*The vegetables **are all cut up** – what shall I do now?* (= The vegetables have all been cut up . . .)

*I got caught in the rain and my suit's **ruined**.* (= . . . has been ruined.)

*I think your ankle **is broken**.* (= . . . has been broken.)

*My suitcase **is packed**.* (= . . . has been packed.)

67 When do we use passive structures?

1 interest in the action

We often choose passive structures when we want to talk about an action, but are not so interested in saying (or not able to say) who or what does/did it. Passives without 'agents' (► 58) are common in academic and scientific writing for this reason.

*Those pyramids **were built** around 400 AD.*
*Too many books **have been written** about the Second World War.*
*The results **have not** yet **been analysed**.*

2 putting the news at the end

We often prefer to begin a sentence with something that is already known, or that we are already talking about, and to put the 'news' at the end. This is another common reason for choosing passive structures. Compare:

*Jack's **painting** my portrait.* (active verb so that the 'news' – the portrait – can go at the end)
*'Nice picture.' 'Yes, it **was painted** by my grandmother.'* (passive verb so that the 'news' – the painter – can go at the end)

3 keeping the same subject

In order to keep talking about the same person or thing, it may be necessary to switch from active to passive and back.

*He **waited** for two hours; then he **was seen** by a doctor; then he **was sent** back to the waiting room. He **sat** there for another two hours – by this time he **was getting angry**. Then he **was taken** upstairs and examined by a specialist, after which he **had to wait** for another hour before he **was allowed** to go home.*
(More natural than *He waited for two hours; then a doctor saw him . . .*)

4 putting heavier expressions at the end

Longer and heavier expressions often go at the end of a clause, and this can also be a reason for choosing a passive structure.

*I was annoyed by **Emily wanting to tell everybody what to do**.*
(More natural than ***Emily wanting to tell everybody what to do** annoyed me* – the phrase *Emily . . . do* would make a very long subject.)

For more about reflexive verbs, ► 178. For active and passive past participles, ► 96.3–96.4.
For *-ing* forms with passive meanings after *need* and *want* (e.g. *My watch needs cleaning*), ► 100.3.
For more about the way information is organised in sentences, ► 267.

Section 7 Modal Auxiliary Verbs

INTRODUCTION

What are modal auxiliary verbs?

The **modal auxiliary verbs** are *will, would, shall, should, can, could, ought, may, might* and *must*. Their grammar is different from that of other verbs: for example, they have no infinitives, participles or past tenses . For details, ► 68.1. Some other verbs and expressions are used in similar ways to modals: *have to, be able to, be supposed to, had better* and *need*.

meanings

We do not usually use modal verbs to say that situations definitely exist, or that particular events have definitely happened. We use them, for example, to talk about things which we expect, which are or are not possible, which we think are necessary, which we want to happen, which we are not sure about, which tend to happen, or which have not happened. This is a complicated area of grammar: each modal verb has more than one use; on the other hand, different modals can have very similar uses. Modal meanings fall into four groups.

1 **degrees of certainty** (► 69–72)

Most modal verbs can be used to express degrees of certainty about facts, situations or events: for instance to say that something is certain, probable, possible or impossible.

*It **will** rain tomorrow.* *She **should** be here soon.*
*We **may** get a new car.* *It **can't** be true.*

2 **obligation, freedom to act, etc** (► 73–81)

Most modal verbs can also express various ideas relating to obligation, freedom to act, recommended behaviour, permission, willingness and similar matters. They are common in requests, suggestions, invitations and instructions.

*Students **must** register by 30 January.* *You **should** see the doctor.*
*If you **will** come this way . . .* ***Could** I talk to you for a moment?*

Note that these meanings are usually expressed from the speaker's point of view in statements, and from the hearer's in questions. Compare:

*You **must** go and see Anna.* (**I** think it is necessary.)
***Must** you go and see Anna?* (Do **you** think it is necessary?)

3 **ability** (► 82–85)

Modal verbs, especially *can* and *could*, are used to say what people and things are able to do because of their knowledge, skill, design and so on.

*She **can** speak six languages.* *My old car **could** do 120mph.*

4 **typical behaviour** (► 86–87)

We can talk about what people and things typically or habitually do or did, using *can, may, will, would* and *used to*.

*Dan **can** really get on your nerves.* *Most evenings he'll just sit watching TV.*
*A female crocodile **may** lay 30–40 eggs.* *I **used to** play a lot of tennis.*

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- ✗ I must to water the plants. ► 68.1
- ✗ It mustn't be Emily at the door – she's in Ireland. ► 69.2
- ✗ You mustn't work tomorrow if you don't want to. ► 73.4
- ✗ It can rain this afternoon. ► 71.1
- ✗ May you go camping this summer? ► 71.3
- ✗ I felt very hot and tired. I might be ill. ► 71.7
- ✗ I might read what I liked when I was a child. ► 81.3
- ✗ Next week's exam must be easy. ► 69.9
- ✗ Yesterday I should clean the whole house. ► 76.2
- ✗ James should get back home yesterday. Has anybody seen him? ► 70.2
- ✗ It can rain this afternoon. ► 71.1
- ✗ I'm not sure where Emma is. She can be out shopping. ► 71.1
- ✗ You have better hurry up. ► 77.2
- ✗ 'The phone's ringing.' 'I'm going to answer it.' ► 79.1
- ✗ 'There's the doorbell.' 'I go.' ► 79.1
- ✗ I phone you tonight. ► 79.3
- ✗ May everybody park here? ► 81.2
- ✗ Yesterday evening Daniel could watch TV for an hour. ► 81.3
- ✗ I could run 10km yesterday. ► 82.4
- ✗ I can speak French at the end of this course. ► 83.1
- ✗ He uses to smoke. ► 87.2
- ✗ You used not to like him, used you? ► 87.3

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68 **modals**: grammar, pronunciation and contractions

Modal verbs differ from ordinary verbs in several ways.

1 grammar

a Modal verbs have no *-s* in the third person singular.
*She **may** know his address.* (NOT ~~*She mays*~~ . . .)

b Questions, negatives, tags and short answers are made without *do*.
*'**Can you** swim?* (NOT ~~*Do you can swim*~~)' *'Yes, **I can**.'*
*He **shouldn't** be doing that, should he?* (NOT ~~*He doesn't should*~~ . . .)

c After modal auxiliary verbs, we use the infinitive without *to* of other verbs. *Ought* is an exception, ► 70.1.
*I must **water** the flowers.* (NOT ~~*I must to water*~~ . . .)
Progressive, perfect and passive infinitives are also possible (► 89).
*I may not **be working** tomorrow.*
*She was so angry she could **have killed** him.*
*The kitchen ought **to be painted** one of these days.*

d Modal verbs do not have infinitives or participles (~~*to may, maying, mayed*~~ do not exist), and they do not normally have past forms. Other expressions are used when necessary.
*I'd like **to be able** to skate.* (NOT . . . ~~*to can skate.*~~)
*People really **had to** work hard in those days.* (NOT ~~*People really musted work*~~ . . .)
Could, might, would and *should* usually have present and future reference, but they can sometimes be used as past tenses of *can, may, will* and *shall*.

e Certain past ideas can be expressed by a modal verb followed by a perfect infinitive (***have*** + **past participle**).
*You **should have told** me you were coming.*
*I think I **may have annoyed** Aunt Mary.*
For details of these uses, see the entries on particular modal verbs.

f *There* is quite often used as a preparatory subject with modal verbs, especially when these are followed by *be* (► 605).
***There** may be rain later today.*

2 pronunciation and contractions

Several modals have weak pronunciations, used when they are not stressed: *shall* /ʃəl/, *should* /ʃəd/, *can* /kən/, *could* /kəd/, *must* /məst/. For more about weak pronunciations, ► 315. *Ought to* is generally pronounced /ˈɔːtə/ ('oughta') in conversational speech; *should have, could have* and *might have* are often pronounced /ˈʃʊdə/, /ˈkʊdə/ and /ˈmaɪtə/. *Can't* is pronounced /kɑːnt/ in standard British English and /kænt/ in standard American English.

Contracted negatives are *won't, wouldn't, shan't* (BrE), *shouldn't, can't, couldn't, oughtn't, mightn't* (BrE) and *mustn't* (mostly BrE). *Will* and *would* also have contracted affirmative forms (*'ll, 'd*). For more about contractions, ► 337.

69 deduction (deciding that something is certain): *must, can't,* etc

1 statements: *Emily must have a problem.*

Must can be used to express the deduction or conclusion that something is certain or highly probable: it is normal or logical, there are excellent reasons for believing it, or it is the only possible explanation for what is happening.

If A is bigger than B, and B is bigger than C, then A ***must*** *be bigger than C.*
'I'm in love.' 'You ***must*** *be very happy.'*
Emily ***must*** *have a problem – she keeps crying.*
There's the doorbell. It ***must*** *be George.*

Have (got) to is also possible in this sense.

There's the doorbell. It ***has to*** *be George.*
Getting married next week? You ***have to*** *be joking.*
Only five o'clock? It's ***got to*** *be later than that!*

2 negatives: *It can't be Emily.*

Must is not often used to express certainty in negative clauses. We normally use *cannot/can't* to say that something is certainly not the case, because it is logically or practically impossible, or extremely improbable.

If A is bigger than B, and B is bigger than C, then C ***can't*** *be bigger than A.*
It ***can't*** *be Emily at the door. She's in Ireland.* (NOT ~~*It mustn't be Emily*~~ . . .)
She's not answering the phone. She ***can't*** *be at home.*

However, *mustn't* is used in question tags (► 305–306) after *must*, especially in British English.

It ***must*** *be nice to be a cat,* ***mustn't*** *it?* (NOT . . . ~~*can't it?*~~)

And *must not* is occasionally used, especially in American English, to say that there is evidence that something is not the case (► 69.8 below).

3 *need not / does not have to*

Need not / needn't is used (especially in British English) to say that something is not necessarily so; *does not have to* can also be used. *Must not* is not used in this sense.

'Look at those tracks. That ***must*** *be a dog.' 'It* ***needn't*** *be – it could be a fox.'*
(OR . . . *It* ***doesn't have to*** *be . . .*) (NOT . . . ~~*It mustn't be*~~ . . .)

4 *That must have been nice.*

We can use ***must have*** + **past participle** to express certainty about the past.

'We went to Rome last month.' 'That ***must have been*** *nice.'*
'A woman phoned while you were out.' 'It ***must have been*** *Kate.'*

Can is used in questions and negatives.

Where ***can*** *Jack* ***have put*** *the matches? He* ***can't have thrown*** *them away.* →

5 *will*

Will can express certainty or confidence about present or future situations.

*As I'm sure you **will** understand, we cannot wait any longer for our order.*
*Don't phone them now – they'**ll** be having dinner.*
*'There's somebody coming up the stairs.' 'That'**ll** be Emily.'*
*Tomorrow **will** be cloudy, with some rain.*

Will have + **past participle** refers to the past.

*Dear Sir, You **will** recently **have received** a form . . .*
*We can't go and see them now – they'**ll have gone** to bed.*

For more about *will* as a future auxiliary, ► 38.

6 indirect speech

Must can be used in past indirect speech as if it were a past tense.

*I felt there **must** be something wrong.*

7 *must* and *should*

Should can be used as a weaker form of *must* (► 70). Compare:

*Anna **must** be at home by now.* (= I'm certain she's at home.)
*Anna **should** be at home by now.* (= I think she's very probably at home.)

8 a British-American difference: *can't* and *must not*

In American English, *must not* is often used when something is not logically impossible, but when there is strong evidence for believing that it is not the case. Compare:

– *He only left the office five minutes ago. He **can't** be home yet.* (It's logically impossible that he's home.)
*She's not answering the doorbell. She **must not** be at home.* (It's not logically impossible that she's home, but it seems pretty certain that she isn't.)
– *The restaurant **can't** be open – the door's locked.*
*That restaurant **must not** be any good – it's always empty.*

In British English, *can't* is normal for both meanings (though some people use *must not* for the 'seems pretty certain' meaning). Compare:

*She walked past without saying 'Hello'. She **must not** have seen you.* (AmE; some British speakers.)
*She walked past without saying 'Hello'. She **can't** have seen you.* (most British speakers.)

Note that the contracted form *mustn't* is rare in AmE.

9 *must:* not used for predictions

Must is not often used for predictions about the future – to say what people expect to happen. *Will* is used to express certainty (► 38); *should* or *ought to* suggest that things are probable (► 70).

– *It **will** be fine tomorrow.* (NOT ~~*It must be fine tomorrow.*~~)
*Next week's exam **should/ought to** be easy.* (NOT ~~*Next week's exam must be easy.*~~)

70 deduction (deciding that something is probable): *should, ought to,* etc

1 present or future

Should can be used to express the deduction or conclusion that something is probable now or in the future: it is expected, normal or logical.

*I've bought three loaves – that **should** be enough.*
*I'll phone Ruth – she **should** be home by now.*
*'We're spending the winter in Miami.' 'That **should** be nice.'*

Ought to (► 76.3) is used in a similar way, but is much less common.

*Henry **ought to** be here soon – he left home at six.*
*The weather **ought to** improve after the weekend.*

2 past: *should have / ought to have . . .*

We do not normally use ***should*** + **infinitive** to talk about the past.
However, we can use ***should have / ought to have*** + **past participle** to make guesses or draw conclusions about things which are not certain to have happened.

*James **should have got** back home yesterday. Has anybody seen him?*
(NOT ~~*James should get back home yesterday*~~ . . .)

We can also use this structure to talk about actions which we expect to have been completed by now or at a future time.

*Ten o'clock. She **should have arrived** at her office by now. I'll try calling her.*
*We **ought to have finished** painting the house by the end of next week.*

3 *be supposed to*

We can use *be supposed to* to say that something is or was normal or expected.

*Cats **are supposed to** be afraid of dogs, but ours isn't.*
*Bill **was supposed to** get back home yesterday.*

Note the pronunciation: /səˈpəʊst tə/, NOT /səˈpəʊzd tə/.

For *be supposed to* to express obligation, ► 78.

For more about structures with *ought*, ► 76.3.

71 chances: *may, might* and *could*

1 *You may be right; We may go climbing.*

We often use *may, might* and *could* to talk about the chance (possibility) that something will happen, or is happening.

*We **may** go climbing in the Alps next summer.*
*'I think Labour are going to win.' 'You **may** be right.'*
*Daniel **might** phone. If he does, ask him to ring later.*
*'Where's Emma?' 'I don't know. She **might** be out running, I suppose.'*
*They've agreed, but they **could** could change their minds.*

May well, might well and *could well* suggest stronger possibilities.

*'I think it's going to rain.' 'You **may well** be right – the sky's really black.'* →

Can is not normally used to talk about the chance that something will happen or is happening.

NOT ~~*It can rain this afternoon.*~~

NOT ~~*Emma can be out running.*~~

2 *may, might* and *could*: the difference

Might and *could* are not often used as past forms of *may* and *can*: more often they are used to talk about the present or future. *Might* and *could* are less definite or more hesitant than *may*, suggesting a smaller chance – they are used when people think something is possible but not very likely. Compare:

*I **may** go to London tomorrow.* (perhaps a 50% chance)

*Joe **might** come with me.* (perhaps a 30% chance)

3 questions: *may* not used

May is not normally used to ask about the chance of something happening.

*Are you **likely** to go camping this summer?* (NOT ~~*May you go camping . . .?*~~)

*Has Emma gone running, **I wonder?*** (NOT ~~*May Emma have gone running?*~~)

But *may* is possible in indirect questions (for example after *Do you think*).

***Do you think** you **may** go camping this summer?*

Might can be used in direct questions, but this is rather formal.

***Might** you go camping?* (less natural than *Do you think you may/might . . .?*)

4 two negatives: *may/might not* and *can't*

There are two ways to make *may/might* negative: with *may/might not* (= It is possible that . . . not . . .) and with *can't* (= It is not possible that . . .) Compare:

– *She **may** be at home.* (= Perhaps she is at home.)
  *She **may not** be at home.* (= Perhaps she is not at home.)
  *She **can't** be at home.* (= She is certainly not at home.)

– *You **might** win.* (= Perhaps you will win.)
  *You **might not** win.* (= Perhaps you won't win.)
  *You **can't** win.* (= You certainly won't win.)

Couldn't is possible with the same meaning as *can't*, but is less common.

5 *might* meaning 'would perhaps'

Might and *could* (but not *may*) can have a conditional meaning (= would perhaps).

*Don't play with knives. You **might/could** get hurt.*
(= Perhaps you would get hurt.)

*If you went to bed for an hour, you **might** feel better.*
(= . . . perhaps you would feel better.)

6 indirect speech: *might/could*

Might/could is used in past indirect speech when *may* was used in direct speech.

*'I **may** go to Scotland.' 'What?' 'I said I **might** go to Scotland.'*

7 past: *might/could* + infinitive not used

Might/could** + **infinitive is not normally used to talk about past possibility (except in indirect speech).

*I felt very hot and tired. **Perhaps I was ill.*** (NOT . . . ~~*I might be ill.*~~)

BUT *I thought I **might** be ill.*

8 *may/might/could have . . .*: *She may have missed her train.*

However, to say that it is possible that something happened or was true in the past, we can use ***may/might/could have*** + **past participle**.

*'Polly's very late.' 'She **may have missed** her train.'* (= It is possible that she missed . . .)

*'What was that noise?' 'It **might/could have been** a cat.'*

May/might have . . . can sometimes refer to the present or future.

*I'll try phoning him, but he **may have gone** out by now.*

*By the end of this year I **might have saved** some money.*

9 *might/could have . . .*: *You might/could have killed yourself.*

To say that something was possible but did not happen, we can use *might/could have . . .*

*You were stupid to try climbing up there. You **might/could have killed** yourself.*

*If she hadn't been so bad-tempered, I **might/could have married** her.*

May have . . . is now sometimes used with this meaning too; some people feel that this is not correct.

*You were stupid to try climbing up there. You **may have killed** yourself.*
(More normal: . . . *You **might/could have killed** yourself.*)

For *might/could have . . .* used to criticise people for not doing things, ► 80.3.

10 the difference between *may/might/could* and *should/ought to*

We use *should* and *ought to* to express a **deduction** that something is **probable**: they suggest that we have a good reason for this belief.

May, might and *could* simply say that something is **possible**, without suggesting that we have a good reason for thinking it is true or will happen. Compare:

– *Anna **should** be in the office now – it's ten o'clock.*
*Dan **may** be in the office now – I don't know what time he starts work.*
– *I've got all John's keys here. One of them **ought to** open the safe.*
*Let's ask Amy. She **might** know which is the right one. It's worth a try.*

72 *may* and *might*: some special uses

1 *may* in wishes and hopes

May (but not *might*) is used in formal expressions of wishes and hopes.

*I hope that the young couple **may** enjoy many years of happiness together.*

*Let us pray that peace **may** soon return to our troubled land.*

May often comes at the beginning of the sentence.

***May** you both be very happy!* ***May** God be with you.*

***May** the New Year bring you all your heart desires.*

***May** she rest in peace.* (prayer for a dead person) →

2 *may/might . . . but*

May (and sometimes *might*) can be used in a discussion rather like *although* or *even if*: to say that something is true, but that this makes no difference to the main argument. They are often followed by *but*.

*He **may** be clever, but he hasn't got much common sense.* (= Even if he's clever, he . . . OR Although he's clever, he . . .)

*It **may** be a comfortable car, but it uses a lot of fuel.*

*She **might** have had a lovely voice when she was younger, but . . .*

Note that in this structure, *may* and *might* can be used to talk about things that are definitely true, not just possible.

*You **may** be my boss, but that doesn't mean you're better than me.*

3 *may/might as well*

This structure is used informally to suggest that one should do something because there is nothing better, nothing more interesting or nothing more useful to do. There is little difference between *may* and *might* in this case.

*There's nobody interesting to talk to. We **may as well** go home.*

*'Shall we go and see Fred?' 'OK, **might as well**.'*

Note the difference between *may/might as well* and *had better* (► 77). Compare:

*We **may as well** eat.* (= There is nothing more interesting to do.)

*We'd **better** eat.* (= We ought to eat; there is a good reason to eat.)

Might as well is also used to compare one unpleasant situation with another.

*This trip isn't much fun. We **might** just **as well** be back home.* (= Things wouldn't be any different if we were at home.)

*You never listen – I **might as well** talk to a brick wall.*

73 strong obligation: *must, will*

The following explanations apply particularly to British English. Americans often use *have (got) to* where British people use *must* (► 75). However, this use of *have (got) to* is becoming more common in British English under American influence. And note that *must* is becoming less common in both British and American English.

1 statements: *I really must stop smoking.*

In affirmative statements, we can use *must* to say what is necessary, and to give strong advice and orders to ourselves or other people.

*Plants **must** get enough light and water if they are to grow well.*

*British industry **must** improve its productivity.*

*I really **must** stop smoking.*

*You **must** be here before eight o'clock tomorrow.*

Must is common in emphatic invitations.

*You really **must** come and see us soon.*

2 questions: *Must I . . .?*

In questions, we use *must* to ask about what the hearer thinks is necessary.

***Must** I clean all the rooms?*

*Why **must** you always bang the door?*

3 negatives: *You mustn't/can't . . .*

We use *must not / mustn't* to say that it is wrong to do things, or to tell people not to do things. *Can't* is also possible.

*The government **mustn't/can't** expect people to work for no money.*
*You **mustn't/can't** open this parcel until Christmas Day.*

4 *mustn't* and *needn't / don't have to*

Mustn't is not used to say that things are unnecessary. This idea is expressed by *needn't* (BrE), *don't need to* (► 532) or *don't have to*.

*You **needn't** work tomorrow if you don't want to.* (BrE) OR *You **don't have to** work . . .* (NOT ~~*You mustn't . . . if you don't want to.*~~)

*You **don't need to** get a visa to go to Scotland.* OR *You **don't have to** get a visa . . .* (NOT ~~*You mustn't get a visa to go to Scotland.*~~)

5 past necessity and obligation: *They had to work very hard.*

Must is not normally used to talk about past obligation (except in indirect speech – see below). This is because *must* is used mainly to influence people's behaviour – for example through orders or advice – and one cannot do this in the past. *Had to* is used to talk about obligation that existed in the past.

*I **had to** cycle three miles to school when I was a child.*
*My parents **had to** work very hard to build up their business.*

Note the difference between ***had to* + infinitive** and ***must have* + past participle**. The structure with *must have . . .* is used to express certainty about the past (► 69). Compare:

*Nadia isn't in her office. She **had to** go home.* (= It was necessary for her to go home.)
*Nadia isn't in her office. She **must have gone** home.* (= It seems certain that she has gone home.)

6 orders with *will*: *Will you be quiet!*

We use *will you* to tell people what to do.

***Will you** send me the bill, please?* *Come this way, **will you**?*
***Will you** be quiet!*

Will can be used in affirmative structures to give impersonal, military-type orders.

*All staff **will** submit weekly progress reports.*

7 indirect speech: *He said I must stop.*

Must can be used after a past reporting verb as if it were a past tense.

*The doctor said that I **must** stop smoking.*

Obligation can also be reported with *had to* and *would have to*.

*The doctor said that I **had to / would have to** stop smoking.*

8 *must* and *should*

Should can be used as a weaker form of *must* (► 76). Compare:

*That carpet **must** be cleaned.* (= It is absolutely necessary.)
*That carpet **should** be cleaned.* (= It would be a good idea.)

74 strong obligation: *have (got) to*

1 meaning: obligation, certainty

We can use ***have (got)*** + **infinitive** to talk about obligation: things that it is necessary to do. The meaning is quite similar to *must*; for differences, ► 75.1.

Sorry, I've ***got to*** *go now.* *Do you often* ***have to*** *travel on business?*

2 grammar: with or without *do*; *got*

In this structure, *have* can be used like an ordinary verb (with *do* in questions and negatives), or like an auxiliary verb (without *do*). *Got* is usually added to present-tense auxiliary-verb forms in an informal style.

When ***do you have*** *to be back?*
When ***have you (got)*** *to be back?*

Have got to is not normally used to talk about repeated obligation.

I usually ***have to*** *be at work at eight.* (NOT ~~*I've usually got to*~~ . . .)

Progressive forms are possible to talk about temporary continued obligation.

I'm having to *work very hard at the moment.*

For more details of the use of *do*-forms and *got*-forms of *have*, ► 24.

3 pronunciation of *have to*; *gotta*

Have to is often pronounced /ˈhæftə/.

He'll ***have to*** /ˈhæftə/ *get a new passport soon.*

Note the spelling *gotta*, sometimes used in informal American English (for instance in cartoon strips) to show the conversational pronunciation of *got to*.

I ***gotta*** *call home.* *A man's* ***gotta*** *do what a man's* ***gotta*** *do.*

75 *have (got) to* and *must*

1 Where does the obligation come from?

In statements about obligation with *must* the obligation most often comes from the speaker (and in questions, from the hearer). To talk about an obligation that comes from 'outside' (for instance a regulation, or an order from somebody else), we usually prefer *have to*. Compare:

- *I* ***must*** *do some more work; I want to pass my exam.*
  In my job I ***have to*** *work from nine to five.* (More natural than . . . *I must work from nine to five.*)
- *We* ***must*** *go to New York soon – we haven't seen your mother since Christmas.*
  My wife's an interpreter: she often ***has to*** *go to New York.* (More natural than . . . *she must often go to New York.*)
- *I* ***must*** *stop smoking.* (I want to.)
  I've ***got to*** *stop smoking.* (Doctor's orders.)
- *This is a terrible party. We really* ***must*** *go home.*
  This is a lovely party, but we've ***got to*** *go home because of the children.*
- *I've got bad toothache. I* ***must*** *make an appointment with the dentist.*
  I can't come to work tomorrow morning because I've ***got to*** *see the dentist.*

– *You really **must** go to church next Sunday – you haven't been for ages.* (I am telling you to.)
*Catholics **have to** go to church on Sundays.* (Their religion tells them to.)
– ***Must** you wear dirty old jeans all the time?* (Is it personally important for you?)
*Do you **have to** wear a tie at work?* (Is there a regulation?)

Have to can also be used to talk about obligation coming from the speaker or hearer, in the same way as *must*. This is normal in American English (which uses *must* less often in this sense), and is becoming very common in British English.

*I really **have to** stop smoking.* (OR *I really must . . .*)
*Do I **have to** clean all the rooms?* (OR *Must I . . .?*)

2 future obligation: *will have to, have (got) to* and *must*

Will have to is used to talk about future obligation (~~*will must*~~ is impossible, ► 68.1); but *have (got) to* is preferred when arrangements for the future have already been made. Compare:

*When you leave school you'll **have to** find a job.*
*I've **got to** go for a job interview tomorrow.*

Going to have to is also possible.

*We're **going to have to** repair that window.*

Must can be used to give orders or instructions for the future.

*You can borrow my car, but you **must** bring it back before ten.*

Will have to can be used to 'distance' the instructions (► 311), making them sound less like direct orders from the speaker.

*You can borrow my car, but you'll **have to** bring it back before ten.*

Will need to can be used in the same way (► 532.4).

For *have to* and *have got to*, ► 74. For the use of *got* with *have*, ► 24.5–24.6.

76 weaker obligation: *should* and *ought to*

1 use

Should and *ought to* are very similar, and can often replace each other.

*They **ought to** be more sensible, **shouldn't** they?*

They are both used to talk about obligation and duty, to give and ask for advice, and to say what we think it is right for people to do. *Should* is much more frequent than *ought to*, especially in negatives and questions.

*You **should/ought to** see 'Daughter of the Moon' – it's a great film.*
*You **shouldn't** say things like that to Granny.*
*Applications **should** be sent before December 30th.* (More polite than *Applications must be sent . . .*)
*He **ought to** get a medal for living with her.*

In questions, *should* is used to ask for advice or instructions, like a less definite form of *shall* (► 80).

***Should** I go and see the police, do you think?*
*What **should** we do?*

Should and *ought to* are not used in polite requests.

***Could** you move your head a bit? I can't see.* (NOT ~~*You should move*~~ . . .) →

2 past use: *should have . . .*

Should and *ought to* are not normally used to talk about past obligation. Instead, we can use, for example, *was/were supposed to* (► 78).

*It was going to be a long day. I **was supposed to** clean the whole house.*
(NOT ~~*I should clean . . .*~~)

But ***should/ought to have*** + **past participle** can be used to talk about unfulfilled past obligations: things which weren't done, or which may or may not have been done.

*I **should have phoned** Ed this morning, but I forgot.*
*Alice **ought to have spoken** to James, but I'm not sure she did.*

3 *ought*: forms

After *ought*, we use the infinitive with *to* before other verbs. (This makes *ought* different from other modal auxiliary verbs.)

*You ought **to see** a dentist.*

To is not used in question tags.

*We ought to wake Ella, **oughtn't we?*** (NOT . . . ~~*oughtn't we to?*~~)

Mid-position adverbials (► 200) can go before or after *ought*. The position before *ought* is more common in an informal style.

*You **always ought** to count your change when you buy things.*
*You **ought always** to count your change . . .* (more formal; rare in AmE)

In American English, interrogative and contracted negative forms of *ought to* are rare; *should* is generally used instead.

*He ought to be here soon, **shouldn't he?***

In some English dialects, questions and negatives are made with *did* (e.g. *She didn't ought to do that*), but this structure is not used in standard English.

77 weaker obligation: *had better*

1 meaning

We use *had better* to give strong advice, or to tell people what to do (including ourselves).

*You**'d better** turn that music down before your dad gets angry.*
*It's seven o'clock. I**'d better** put the meat in the oven.*

Had better refers to the immediate future. It is more urgent than *should* or *ought*. Compare:

*'I really **ought** to go and see Fred one of these days.' 'Well, you**'d better** do it soon – he's leaving for South Africa at the end of the month.'*

Had better is not used in polite requests. Compare:

***Could you** help me, if you've got time?* (request)
***You'd better** help me. If you don't, there'll be trouble.* (order/threat)

2 forms

Had better refers to the immediate future, but the form is always past (~~*have better*~~ is impossible). After *had better* we use the infinitive without *to*.

It's late – you ***had*** *better* ***hurry*** *up.* (NOT . . . ~~*you have better*~~ . . . OR . . . ~~*you had better hurrying / to hurry*~~ . . .)

We normally make the negative with ***had better not*** + **infinitive**.

You'd ***better not wake*** *me up when you come in.* (*You hadn't better wake me . . .* is possible in British English but very unusual.)

A negative interrogative form *Hadn't . . . better . . .?* is possible.

Hadn't *we* ***better*** *tell him the truth?*

Normal unemphatic short answer forms are as follows:

*'Shall I put my clothes away?' '****You'd better****!'*

*'He says he won't tell anybody.' '****He'd better not****.'*

Had (*'d*) is sometimes dropped in very informal speech.

You better *go now.* ***I better*** *try again later.*

78 expectations: *supposed to*

Be supposed + **infinitive** is used to say what people have to do (or not do) according to the rules or the law, or to say what is (not) expected to happen.

Catholics ***are supposed to go*** *to church on Sundays.*

*We****'re supposed to pay*** *the Council Tax at the beginning of the month.*

*You****'re not supposed to park*** *on double yellow lines.*

There is often a suggestion that things do not happen as planned or expected.

This country ***is supposed to be*** *a democracy.*

Lucy ***was supposed to come*** *to lunch. What's happened?*

Questions with *supposed to* can suggest that there are problems.

The train's already left. What ***are we supposed to do*** *now?*

How ***am I supposed to finish*** *all this work by ten o'clock?*

That's a lovely picture, but what's ***it supposed to be?***

Another use of *supposed to* is to say what is generally believed.

He's ***supposed to be*** *quite rich, you know.*

This stuff ***is supposed to kill*** *flies. Let's try it.*

Note the pronunciation: /səˈpəʊst tə/, not /səˈpəʊzd tə/.

79 willingness: *will, can*

1 announcing decisions: *I'll answer it.*

We often use *will* when we tell people about a decision as we make it, for instance if we are agreeing to do something.

OK. ***I'll*** *buy the tickets. You can buy supper after the show.*

*'The phone's ringing.' 'I****'ll*** *answer it'.* (NOT ~~*I'm going to answer it.*~~)

'Remember to phone Joe, won't you?' 'Yes, I ***will****.'*

Note that the simple present is not normally used to announce decisions.

I think I'll go to bed. (NOT ~~*I think I go to bed.*~~)

*'There's the doorbell.' 'I****'ll*** *go.'* (NOT . . . ~~*I go.*~~) →

To announce decisions that have already been made, we generally prefer *going to . . .* or the present progressive (► 35–36).

Well, we've agreed on a price, and ***I'm going to*** *buy it.*

I've made my decision and ***I'm sticking*** *to it.*

Stressed *will* can express determination.

I ***will*** *stop smoking! I really* ***will!***

2 refusals: *I won't do it!*

Will not or *won't* is used to refuse, or to talk about refusals.

I don't care what you say – I ***won't*** *do it!* *The car* ***won't*** *start.*

3 promises and threats: *I'll phone you tonight.*

We often use *will/'ll* in promises and threats. Note that the simple present is not possible in these cases.

I promise I ***won't*** *smoke again.* (NOT ~~*I promise I don't smoke*~~ . . .)

I'll phone you tonight. (NOT ~~*I phone*~~ . . .)

I'll hit you if you do that again. *You'll suffer for this!*

Shall is also possible in British English after *I* and *we*, but it is much less common than *will*.

I ***shall*** *give you a teddy bear for your birthday.*

In older English, *shall* was often used with second- and third-person subjects in promises and threats. This is now very unusual.

You ***shall*** *have all you wish for.* *He* ***shall*** *regret this.*

4 offers: *Can I carry your bag?*

We often use *can* when we offer to do things for people.

'***Can*** *I carry your bag?*' (= Would you like me to . . .) '*Oh, thank you.*'

'*I* ***can*** *babysit for you this evening if you like.*' '*No, it's all right, thanks.*'

Could is possible if we want an offer to sound less definite.

I ***could*** *fix your bicycle for you, if that would help.*

80 instructions and requests: *will, would, can, could, might, shall*

1 instructions, requests and suggestions: *will, would, can, could, might*

We can use *will you . . .?* to tell people to do things. *Would you . . .?* is less direct and more polite.

Will you *get me a newspaper while you're out?*

Will you *be quiet, please!* *Make me a cup of coffee,* ***will you?***

Would you *open a window, please?*

If you will/would . . . can be used in polite requests.

If you'll *just wait here for a moment, I'll see if Mr Andrews is free.*

If you would *come this way . . .*

Can and *could* are used to give instructions or make requests. *Could* is less direct and more polite.

Can *you put the children to bed?*

Could *you lend me £5 until tomorrow?*

*Do you think you **could** help me for a few minutes?*

Could and *might* are often used in suggestions.

*When you've finished the dishes you **could** iron the clothes, if you like.*
*If you don't know what to do, you **could** sort out your photos.*
*You **might** see if John's free this evening.*

For more about *if . . . will*, ► 243.

2 asking for instructions and decisions: *shall*

Questions with *shall I/we* are used (in both British and American English) to ask for instructions or decisions, to offer services, and to make suggestions. In American English, this is rather formal. *Will* is not used in this way.

***Shall I** open a window?* (NOT ~~*Will I open a window?*~~)
***Shall I** carry your bag?*
*What time **shall we** come and see you?*
*What on earth **shall we** do?*
***Shall we** go out for a meal?* *Let's go and see Lucy, **shall we**?*

3 criticisms: *You could have told me . . .*

Could and *might* can be used to criticise people for not doing things.

*You **could** ask before you borrow my car.*
*You **might** try to be nicer to my mother.*

Could/might have . . .** + **past participle can be used in criticisms about past behaviour.

*You **could have told** me you were getting married.*
*She **might have warned** us she was going to stay out all night.*

81 permission: *can, could, may, might, be allowed to*

1 asking for, giving and refusing permission: *Can I . . .?*

We use *can* to ask for and give permission.

*'**Can** I ask you something?' 'Yes, of course you **can**.'*
*You **can** go now if you want to.*

Cannot/can't are used to refuse permission (often with other words to soften the refusal).

*'Can I have some more cake?' 'No, I'm afraid you **can't**.'*

We also use *could* to ask for permission; it is more polite or formal than *can*.

We do not use *could* to give or refuse permission (it suggests respect, so is more natural in asking for permission than in giving it).

*'**Could** I ask you something?' 'Yes, of course you can.'* (NOT . . . ~~*of course you could.*~~)

May and *might* are also used to ask for permission, and *may* to give permission. They are more formal than *can/could*, and are less common. *Might* is very polite and formal, and is mostly used in indirect question structures.

***May** I switch on the TV?*
*I wonder if I **might** have a little more cheese?* →

May not (but not *might not*) can be used to refuse permission.

*'May I smoke?' 'I'm sorry, you **may not**.'*

There is an old belief that *may/might* are more 'correct' than *can/could* in these uses, but this does not reflect actual usage.

Must not (► 73.3) can also be used to refuse permission; it is more emphatic than *can't / may not*.

2 talking about permission: *Can everybody . . .?*

Can is used to talk about permission that has already been given or refused, and about things that are allowed by rules or laws. *May* is not normally used in this way.

***Can** everybody park here?* (NOT ~~*May everybody park here?*~~)

(NOT ~~*May everybody park here?*~~)

3 past permission: *could* is not always possible

In talking about the past, we use *could* (but not *might*) to say that somebody had permission to do something at any time ('general permission'), but we do not use *could* to talk about permission for one particular action in the past. Compare:

*When I was a child, I **could** watch TV whenever I wanted to.*

*Yesterday evening, Daniel **was allowed** to watch TV for an hour.*

(NOT . . . ~~*Daniel could watch TV for an hour.*~~)

But *could not* can be used to talk about one particular action.

*Daniel **couldn't** watch TV yesterday because he was naughty.*

(The difference between *could* and *was/were allowed to* is similar to the difference between *could* and *was/were able to*. ► 82.4.)

4 indirect speech

Can, could, may and *might* can however all be used to report the giving of permission (general or particular). *Can/may* are used after present reporting verbs, and *could/might* after past verbs.

*She says we **can** park here.* *They told us we **couldn't** go in yet.*

*The manager says we **may** leave our coats in the waiting room.*

*Mr Newson agreed that I **might** look round.* (very formal)

5 *be allowed to*

Modal verbs have no infinitives or participles. When necessary, permission is expressed in other ways: for example with forms of *be allowed to*.

*She's always **been allowed** to do what she liked.* (NOT ~~*She's always could*~~ . . .)

82 ability: *can* and *could*

1 knowledge, skill, strength, etc: *I can read Italian.*

We use *can* to say what people and things are able (or unable) to do because of their knowledge, skill, strength, nature, design, etc.

*I **can** read Italian, but I **can't** speak it.*
*Dogs **can't** climb trees.*
*Henry **can** lift 100 kilos.*
*These roses **can** grow anywhere.*
__Can__ gases freeze?
*My car **can** do 150mph.*

Be able to (► 85) is used with similar meanings, especially when we are talking about people's ability.

*Henry **is able to** lift 100 kilos.*

2 possible in the situation: *We can go to Paris.*

We also use *can* to say what we are able (or unable) to do because of the circumstances that we are in – what is possible in the situation.

*We **can** go to Paris this weekend, because I don't have to work.*
*I **can't** come out this evening: I have to see my brother.*
*There are three possibilities: we **can** go to the police, we **can** talk to a lawyer, or we **can** forget all about it.*
*'What **can** we do?' 'We **can** try asking Lucy for help.'*
*Anybody who wants to **can** join the club.*

3 past: *She could read when she was four.*

We use *could* to talk about general ability in the past.

*She **could** read when she was four.*
*My grandmother **could** sing like an angel.*
*My last car **could** do 160mph.*
*In those days everybody **could** find a job.*
*It **could** be quite frightening if you were alone in our big old house.*

Was/were able to is also possible, especially to talk about people's ability.

*She **was able to** read when she was four.*

4 past: *could* is not always possible

We use *could* for 'general ability' – for example to say that somebody could do something at any time, whenever he/she wanted.

*When I was younger, I **could** run 10km in under 40 minutes.*

We do not normally use *could* to say that somebody did something on one occasion. Instead, we use other expressions.

*I **managed to** run 10km yesterday in under an hour.* (NOT ~~*I could run 10km yesterday*~~ . . .)
*How many eggs **were** you **able to** get?* (NOT . . . ~~*could you get?*~~)
*After six hours' climbing, we **succeeded in** getting to the top of the mountain.* (NOT . . . ~~*we could get to the top*~~ . . .)
*I **found** a really nice dress in the sale.* (NOT ~~*I could find*~~ . . .)

However, we use *couldn't* to say that something did not happen on one occasion.

*I managed to find the street, but I **couldn't** find her house.* →

5 other uses of *could*

Could is not only past: we also use it as a 'softer', less definite form of *can*.

*'What shall we do tomorrow?' 'Well, we **could** go fishing.'*

*When you're in Spain, you **could** go and see Alex.*

Could can mean 'would be able to'.

*You **could** get a better job if you spoke a foreign language.*

Could is used in past indirect speech, when *can* was used in direct speech.

*'**Can** you help me?' 'What did you say?' 'I asked if you **could** help me.'*

6 *could have . . .*

We use a special structure to talk about unrealised past ability or opportunities – to say that somebody was able to do something, but did not do it; or that something was possible, but did not happen.

could have + past participle

*I **could have married** anybody I wanted to.*

*I was so angry I **could have killed** her!*

*Why did you jump out of the window? You **could have hurt** yourself.*

*I **could have won** the race if I hadn't fallen.*

This structure can be used to criticise people for not doing things.

*You **could have helped** me – why did you just sit and watch?*

Negative sentences suggest that somebody would not have been able to do something even if they had wanted or tried to.

*I **couldn't have won**, so I didn't go in for the race.*

*I **couldn't have enjoyed** myself more – it was a perfect day.*

The structure is sometimes used to talk about past events which are not certain to have happened (like *may/might have*, ► 71.8).

*'Who sent those flowers?' 'I'm not sure. It **could have been** your mother.'*

This structure can also refer to present situations which were possible but which have not been realised.

*He **could have been** Prime Minister now if he hadn't decided to leave politics.*

*We **could have spent** today at the beach, but we thought it was going to rain so we decided not to go.*

7 chances: *Will it happen? / Is it happening?* – *can* not used

We do not use *can* to talk about the chances (probability) that something will actually happen, or is actually happening. Instead, we use *may* (► 71).

*We **may** go camping this summer.* (NOT ~~*We can go*~~ . . .)

*'Where's Sarah?' 'She **may** be with Joe.* (NOT ~~*She can be*~~ . . .)'

However, *could* is possible in this sense.

*It **could** rain later this evening, perhaps.* (BUT NOT ~~*It can rain later*~~ . . .)

83 ability: advanced points

1 future: *can* or *will be able*

We use *can* to talk about future actions which we will be able to do because of present ability, present circumstances, present decisions, etc.

*She **can** win the race tomorrow if she really tries.*
*I've bought the tent, so we **can** go camping next weekend if we want to.*
*I haven't got time today, but I **can** see you tomorrow.*
***Can** you come to a party on Saturday?*

In other cases we prefer other structures, for example *will be able to*.

***I'll be able** to speak French at the end of this course.*
(NOT ~~*I can speak French*~~. . .)
*One day people **will be able** to go to the moon for the weekend.* (OR *it will be possible to go . . .*)

2 *could* in the past

Could is not normally used to say that somebody did something on one occasion in the past (► 82.4).

*I **managed to** buy a really nice coat yesterday.* (NOT ~~*I could buy a really nice coat yesterday.*~~)

However, *could* can refer to one occasion with certain verbs: *see, hear, taste, feel, smell, understand, remember* and *guess* (► 84).

*I **could smell** something burning.*
*I **could understand** everything she said.*

And we can use *could* to talk about one occasion with words like *hardly* or *only*, that have a negative sense.

*She **could hardly** believe her eyes.* *I **could only** get six eggs.*

Could can also sometimes refer to one occasion in subordinate clauses.

*I'm so glad that you **could** come.*

3 languages and instruments: *She speaks Greek.*

We often leave out *can* when we are talking about the ability to speak languages or to play instruments.

*She **speaks** Greek. / She **can speak** Greek.*
***Do/Can** you **play** the piano?*

4 *can/could always*

Can/could always can mean 'can/could . . . if there is nothing better'.

*'I don't know what to get Mark for his birthday.' 'Well, you **can always** give him a gift card.'*
*'What are we going to eat?' 'We **could always** warm up that soup.'*

84 *can* and *could* with *see, hear,* etc

1 *see, hear, feel, smell, taste*

When these verbs refer to perception (receiving information through the eyes, ears, etc), we do not normally use progressive forms. To talk about seeing, hearing, etc at a particular moment, we often use *can see, can hear,* etc (especially in British English).

*I **can see** Susan coming.* (NOT ~~*I'm seeing*~~ . . .)
*Can you **hear** somebody coming up the stairs?*
*What did you put in the stew? I **can taste** something funny.*
*Suddenly she realised she **could smell** something burning.*

In American English, *I see/hear,* etc are common in this sense.

2 *guess, tell*

Can and *could* are often used with *guess* and with *tell* (meaning *see, know*). *Can/could* are not normally used with *know* in the sense of 'find out' (► 504.5).

*I **could guess** what she wanted.*
*You **can tell** he's Irish from his accent.* (NOT ~~*You can know*~~ . . .)

3 *understand, follow, remember*

Can/could is often used with these verbs too. It does not always add very much to the meaning.

*I **can't/don't understand** what she's talking about.*
*Do/Can you **follow** what he's saying?*
*I **(can) remember** your grandfather.*

85 *be able to*

We use *able* especially in the structure ***be able to*** + **infinitive**. This often has the same meaning as *can* (► 82). There is a negative form *unable.*

*Some people **are able to** / **can** walk on their hands.*
*I **am unable to** / **can't** understand what she wants.*

Can is preferred in the sense of 'know how to', and in expressions like *can see, can hear,* etc (► 84).

***Can** you knit?* (More natural than *Are you able to knit?*)
*I **can see** a ship.* (More natural than *I am able to see a ship.*)

Be able to is used most often for people or other living things. Compare:

*Jake **can lift / is able to lift** 150 kilos.*
*This crane **can lift** 30 tonnes.* (More natural than *This crane is able to lift 30 tonnes.*)

Be able to is used in cases (e.g. future, present perfect) where *can/could* is not grammatically possible because it has no infinitive or participles (► 68.1).

*One day scientists **will be able** to find a cure for cancer.*
(NOT . . . ~~*will can find*~~ . . .)
*What **have** you **been able** to find out?* (NOT ~~*What have you could*~~ . . .?)
*I **might be able** to help you.* (NOT ~~*I might can*~~ . . .)

Able is not often followed by passive infinitives.

*He **can't be understood.*** (More natural than *He's not able to be understood.*)

For differences between *could* and *was able to,* ► 82.4, 83.2.

86 typical behaviour: *can, could, may, might, will, would*

1 *can, could, may* and *might*

These verbs can be used to talk about typical behaviour and occurrences, in the sense of what is possible. *May* and *might* are a little more formal than *can* and *could*, and are common in scientific and academic language.

*Amy **can** really get on your nerves.*
*Scotland **can** be very warm in summer.*
*In the days of sailing ships, a voyage round the world **could** take years.*
*A female crocodile **may** lay 30–40 eggs.*
*The flowers **may** have five or six petals, red or white in colour.*
*In those days, a man **might** be hanged for stealing a sheep.*

2 *will* and *would*

These verbs can also describe typical behaviour, often in the sense of what is habitual or regular.

She'll sit talking to herself for hours.
*When you look at clouds they **will** often remind you of animals.*
*If something breaks down and you kick it, it **will** often start working again.*
*Anything that can go wrong **will** go wrong.*
*Sulphuric acid **will** dissolve most metals.*
*Sometimes he **would** bring me little presents without saying why.*
*On Sundays when I was a child we **would** all get up early and go fishing.*
*Every summer he **would** go away for a month, without saying where or why.*

3 criticisms: *She* WILL *fall in love with the wrong people.*

Stressed *will* and *would* can be used to criticise people's behaviour.

She WILL *fall in love with the wrong people.*
Well, if you WILL *keep telling people what you think of them . . .*
He was a nice boy, but he WOULD *talk about himself all the time.*

Would can be used to criticise a single past action, with the suggestion 'That's typical of you/him, etc'.

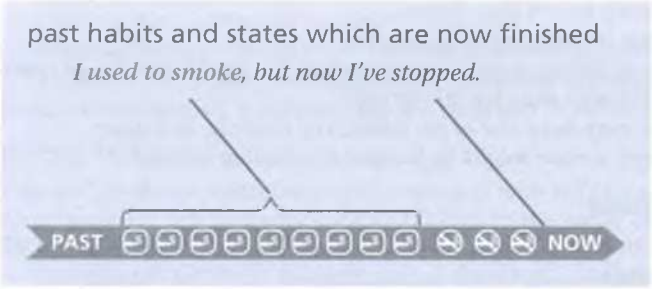
You WOULD *tell Emily about the party – I didn't want to invite her.*

87 typical behaviour: *used to* + infinitive

1 meaning

We use ***used to*** + **infinitive** to talk about past habits and states which are now finished.

*I **used to smoke**, but now I've stopped.* (NOT ~~*I was used to smoke*~~. . .)
*That casino **used to be** a cinema.*



2 only past

Used to . . . has no present form (and no progressive, perfect, infinitive or *-ing* forms). To talk about present habits and states, we usually just use the simple present tense (► 31).

*He **smokes**.* (NOT ~~*He uses to smoke.*~~) *Her brother still **collects** stamps.*

3 questions and negatives

When questions and negatives are written, they often have *did . . . used* instead of *did . . . use*. Many people consider this incorrect.

*What **did people use(d) to do** in the evenings before TV?*
*I **didn't use(d) to like** opera, but now I do.*

The contraction *usedn't* is also possible, especially in British English.

*I **usedn't** to like opera.*

But the most common negative is *never used . . .*

*I **never used** to like opera.*

In a formal style, questions and negatives without *do* are possible, but these are not very common, and are rare in American English.

*I **used not to like** opera, but now I do.* (OR *I **used to not like** opera . . .*) (BrE)
***Used you to play** football at school?* (BrE)

These forms are not used in tags.

*You used not to like him, **did you?*** (NOT . . . ~~*used you?*~~)

4 when *used to . . .* is not used

Used to refers to things that happened at an earlier stage of one's life and are now finished: there is an idea that circumstances have changed. The structure is not used simply to say what happened at a particular past time, or how long it took, or how many times it happened.

*I **worked** very hard last month.* (NOT ~~*I used I used to live in Chester for three years.*~~)
*I **lived** in Chester for three years.* (NOT ~~*I used to live in Chester for three years.*~~)

*I **went** to France seven times last year.* (NOT ~~*I used to go to France seven times last year.*~~)

5 word order

Mid-position adverbials (► 200) can go before or after *used*. The position before *used* is more common in an informal style.

*I **always used to be** afraid of dogs.* (informal)

*I **used always to be** afraid of dogs.* (formal, and rare in AmE) (NOT ~~*I wou*~~

6 pronunciation

Note the pronunciation of *used* /juːst/ and *use* /juːs/ in this structure.

7 *used* + infinitive and *be used to . . .ing*

***Used* + infinitive** has a quite different meaning from *be used to . . .ing* (► 615). Compare:

*I **didn't use to drive** a big car.* (= Once I didn't drive a big car, but now I do.) (NOT ~~*I wasn't used to drive a big car.*~~)

*I **wasn't used to driving** a big car.* (= Driving a big car was a new and difficult experience – I hadn't done it before.)

8 *used to* and *would*

Used to and *would* can both refer to repeated actions and events in the past.

*When she was old, she **used to** / **would** sit in the corner talking to herself for hours.*

*Sometimes he **used to** / **would** bring me little presents without saying why.*

But only *used to* can refer to past states. Compare:

*When we were children we **used to** / **would** go skating every winter.*

*I **used to** have an old Rolls-Royce.* (BUT NOT ~~*I would have an old Rolls-Royce.*~~)

And we use *used to*, not *would*, to talk about regular and important habitual behaviour.

*Robert **used to** play a lot of football.* (NOT ~~*Robert would play . . .*~~ ~~*I would have an old Rolls-Royce.*~~)

*I **used to** smoke.* (NOT ~~*I would smoke.*~~)

Section 8 Infinitives, *-ing* forms and Past Participles

INTRODUCTION

This Section, and Sections 9–10, deal with verb forms like *(to) write* (**infinitive**), *speaking* (*-ing* **form**) and *seen* (**past participle**). These forms do not themselves have any time reference (unlike for example *writes* or *spoke*), and grammarians call them '**non-finite**'. However, they can be used together with auxiliary verbs to form tenses: e.g. *will* ***write****, is* ***speaking****, has* ***seen*** (► 15). They also have various other uses which are explained in Sections 8–10.

-ing forms have two grammatical names. They are often called '**gerunds**' when they are used in similar ways to nouns, as subjects or objects. Gerunds may correspond to infinitives in some other languages.

Smoking *is dangerous.*
I enjoy ***skiing****.*

They are called '**present participles**' when they are used more like verbs or adjectives:

She ran out ***laughing****.*
faster than a ***speeding*** *bullet*

The names 'present participle' and 'past participle' are misleading, because these forms do not have any particular time reference.
The dividing line between participles and adjectives is not always clear, ► 96.

All of these verb forms can begin clauses (► Section 10).

I'd like ***to look at those papers again****.* (infinitive clause)
She ran out ***laughing like a hyena****.* (participle clause)
Cooked in a slow oven*, it will taste delicious.* (participle clause)

For the sake of simplicity, 'infinitive' and 'participle' are used for infinitive and participle clauses in the following explanations unless the longer term is needed.

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- ✗ Try to not be late. ▶ 89.5
- ✗ I wanted go home. ▶ 89.6
- ✗ I must to go now. ▶ 91.1
- ✗ He shouting gets on my nerves. ▶ 94.3
- ✗ Thank you for your waiting. ▶ 94.3
- ✗ We're all excited about his arriving. ▶ 94.6
- ✗ I was very interesting in the lesson. ▶ 96.3
- ✗ Look at all those stopped cars at the crossroads. ▶ 96.4
- ✗ The questioned people gave very different opinions. ▶ 96.6
- ✗ He's a speaking-French Canadian. ▶ 96.5
- ✗ Britain's trade position has been very weakened by inflation. ▶ 96.8
- ✗ He's very known in the art world. ▶ 96.8

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88 infinitives: introduction

Infinitives have many functions. An infinitive can be used, for example, after *do* or a modal auxiliary verb as part of a verb phrase.

*Do you **think** she's ready?* *We **must get** some more light bulbs.*

An infinitive can also be used, alone or with other words:

- as the subject or complement of a clause (► 92)
  __To watch__ him eating really gets on my nerves.
  The main thing is __to relax__. *It's nice __to talk__ to you.*
- as the object or complement of a verb, adjective or noun (► 97–98, 101–102)
  I don't __want to talk__. *I'm __anxious to contact__ your brother.*
  You have __the right to remain__ silent.
- to express a person's purpose (► 112)
  He came to London __to look__ for work.

For full details of the uses of infinitives, see the following sections.

89 infinitives: forms

Infinitives are most often used with *to* (e.g. ***to** go*, ***to** start*). For infinitives without *to*, ► 91. Besides simple infinitives, there are also progressive infinitives (e.g. *(to) be writing*), perfect infinitives (e.g. *(to) have written*), and passive infinitives (e.g. *(to) be written*).

1 progressive infinitive: *(to) be . . .ing*

Like other progressive forms (► 3), progressive infinitives suggest that situations are / were / will be continuing around the time that we are talking about.

It's nice __to be sitting__ here with you.
I noticed that he seemed __to be smoking__ a lot.
This time tomorrow I'll __be lying__ on the beach. (future progressive tense: ► 41)
Why's she so late? She can't still __be working__.

2 perfect infinitive: *(to) have* + past participle

Perfect infinitives can have the same kind of meaning as perfect tenses (► 6) or past tenses (► 44–45).

It's nice __to have finished__ work for the day.
(= It's nice that I have finished . . .)
I'm sorry not __to have come__ on Thursday. (= . . . that I didn't come . . .)

We often use perfect infinitives to talk about 'unreal' past events: things that did not happen, or that may not have happened (► 90).

3 passive infinitive: *(to) be* + past participle

Passive infinitives have the same kind of meaning as other passive forms (► 57).

There's a lot of work __to be done__. *She ought __to be told__ about it.*
That window must __be repaired__ before tonight.

Sometimes active and passive infinitives can have similar meanings, especially after a noun or *be* (► 106).

There's a lot of work __to do__ / __to be done__.

4 combinations: *to have been sitting; could have been killed*

Perfect progressive and perfect passive infinitives are common.

I'd like ***to have been sitting*** *there when she walked in.*

They were lucky – they could ***have been killed.***

Progressive passive infinitives are possible but unusual.

'What would you like to be doing right now?' 'I'd like ***to be being massaged.***'

Progressive perfect passive infinitives (e.g. *It must* ***have been being built*** *at the time*) are very unusual.

5 negative forms: *Try not to be late.*

Negative infinitives are normally made by putting *not* before the infinitive.

Try ***not to be*** *late.* (NOT USUALLY ~~*Try to not be late.*~~ OR ~~*Try to don't be late.*~~)

You were silly ***not to have locked*** *your car.*

He's very busy. I'm afraid he ***can't be disturbed.***

6 *to*

Note that the infinitive marker *to* (as in *He wanted* ***to*** *go*) is not a preposition. After the preposition *to* we use *-ing* forms (► 104.2).

For the use of *to* instead of a whole infinitive (e.g. *I'd like to*), ► 280.

7 split infinitive: *to really understand*

A 'split infinitive' is a structure in which *to* is separated from the rest of the infinitive by an adverb.

I'd like ***to really understand*** *philosophy.*

He began ***to slowly get up*** *off the floor.*

Split infinitive structures are quite common in English, especially in an informal style. There is an old rule which says that split infinitives are incorrect. This is not true, but people who believe in the rule try to avoid split infinitives by putting the adverb in another position.

He began ***slowly to get*** *up off the floor.*

90 use of perfect infinitives: *glad to have left*

1 perfect or past meaning

Perfect infinitives (*to have gone, to have left,* etc) can have the same kind of meaning as perfect or past tenses.

I'm glad ***to have left*** *school at last.* (= I'm glad that I have left . . .)

She was sorry ***to have missed*** *James.* (= . . . that she had missed James.)

We hope ***to have finished*** *the job by next Saturday.* (= . . . that we will have finished . . .)

2 perfect infinitive for 'unreal' past

After some verbs (e.g. *mean, be, would like*), perfect infinitives can refer to 'unreal' past situations that are the opposite of what really happened.

I ***meant to have telephoned,*** *but I forgot.* (OR *I meant to telephone . . .*)

He ***was to have been*** *the new ambassador, but he fell ill.*

I ***would like to have seen*** *Harry's face when Nadia walked in.* →

With *would like, would prefer* and one or two other verbs, a double perfect infinitive is sometimes used in informal speech; the extra perfect infinitive does not change the meaning.

*I **would have liked to have seen** Harry's face.*

3 modals: *He could have killed himself.*

After the modal verbs *could, might, ought, should, would* and *needn't* (BrE), perfect infinitives are also often used to refer to unreal situations.

*Did you see him fall? He **could have killed** himself.* (He did not kill himself.)
*You **should have called** – I was getting worried.* (The person did not call.)
*I **would have gone** to university if my parents had had more money.*
*She **needn't have sent** me flowers.* (BrE) (She did send flowers.)

Modal verbs with perfect infinitives can also refer to situations that are not unreal, but uncertain.

*She **could/should/ought to/may/will/must have arrived** by now.*

For more details, see the entries for the different modal verbs.

91 infinitives without *to*: *I saw you come in.*

We usually use *to* with infinitives (e.g. *I want **to know***). But we use the infinitive without *to* (sometimes called the 'bare infinitive') in some cases.

1 after modal auxiliary verbs

After the modal auxiliary verbs *will, shall, would, should, can, could, may, might* and *must*, we use the infinitive without *to*.

*I **must go** now.* (NOT ~~*I must to go now.*~~) *Can you **help** me?*
*Do you think she **might be** joking?* *I **would** rather **go** alone.*

We also use the infinitive without *to* after *had better* (► 77), and sometimes after *dare* and *need* (► 431, 532).

*You'd **better see** what she wants.* *I **daren't go** out at night.* (BrE)
*She **needn't do** the washing up.*

2 after *let, make, hear,* etc

Certain verbs expressing perception and causation are followed by **object + infinitive without *to***. They include *let, make, see, hear, feel, watch* and *notice.*

*She **lets** her children **stay** up very late.* (NOT ~~*She lets her children to stay. . .*~~ OR ~~*She lets her children staying. . .*~~)
*I **made** them **give** me the money back.* *I didn't **see** you **come** in.*
*We both **heard** him **say** that he was leaving.* *Did you **feel** the earth **move**?*

Help can also be used in this way (► 483).

*Could you **help** me **(to) unload** the car?*

This structure is also possible with *have* (► 109) and *know* (► 504).

***Have** Mrs Hansen **come** in, please.* (especially AmE)
*I've never **known** him **(to) pay** for a drink.*

In passive versions of these structures the infinitive with *to* is used.

*He **was made to pay** back the money.*
*She **was heard to say** that she disagreed.*

For more information about structures with *let*, ► 512. For *make*, ► 107.
For more information about ***see, hear, watch,* etc + object + verb**, ► 110.
For verbs that are followed by **object + *to*-infinitive**, ► 98.

3 after *why (not)*

We can introduce questions and suggestions with ***why (not)*** + **infinitive without *to***. For more details, ► 630.

Why pay *more at other shops? We have the lowest prices.*
Why stand up *if you can sit down?* ***Why sit down*** *if you can lie down?*
You're looking tired. ***Why not take*** *a break?*

4 after *and, or, except, but, than, as* and *like*

When two infinitive structures are joined by *and, or, except, but, than, as* or *like*, the second is often without *to*.

I'd like to lie down ***and sleep****.*
Do you want to have lunch now ***or wait*** *till later?*
We had nothing to do ***except look*** *at the sea.*
I'm ready to do anything ***but work*** *on a farm.*
It's easier to do it yourself ***than explain*** *to somebody else how to do it.*
It's as easy to smile ***as frown****.*
I have to feed the animals as well ***as look*** *after the children.*
Why don't you do something useful ***like clean*** *the kitchen?*

Rather than is usually followed by an infinitive without *to*.

Rather than wait *any more, I decided to go home by taxi.*

5 after *do*

Expressions like *All I did was, What I do is*, etc can be followed by an infinitive without *to*.

All I did was ***(to) give*** *him a little push.*
What a fire-door does is ***(to) delay*** *the spread of a fire.*
The only thing we can do is ***(to) accept****.*

92 infinitive as subject or complement

1 subject: *To practise is important. / It's important to practise.*

An infinitive (or a clause beginning with an infinitive) can be the subject of a sentence.

To practise regularly *is important.*
To wait for people *who were late made him angry.*

In modern English, this is unusual, and especially unusual in an informal style. We more often use a structure with *it* as a preparatory subject (► 268).

It's *important* ***to practise regularly****.*
It *made him angry* ***to wait for people who were late****.*

We can also use an *-ing* structure at the beginning of a sentence as the subject, instead of an infinitive (clause) (► 94).

Selling insurance *is a boring job.* (More natural than *To sell insurance . . .*)

2 complement: *Your task is to get across the river.*

An infinitive (clause) can be used after *be* as a subject complement.

Your task is ***to get across the river*** *without being seen.*
My ambition was ***to retire at thirty****.*

Sentences like these can also be constructed with preparatory *it* (► 268).

*It is your task **to get across the river** without being seen.*
*It was my ambition **to retire at thirty**.*

For infinitives or infinitive clauses as the objects of verbs, ► 97.
For structures like *He made it difficult to refuse*, ► 269.

93 *-ing* forms: introduction

1 'participles and 'gerunds'

We can use *-ing* forms (e.g. *smoking, walking*) not only as verbs, but also like adjectives or nouns. Compare:

*You're **smoking** too much these days.* (verb: part of present progressive)
*There was a **smoking** cigarette end in the ashtray.* (adjective-like: description of *cigarette end*)
***Smoking** is bad for you.* (noun-like: subject of sentence)

When *-ing* forms are used verbally or adjectivally, they are often called '**present participles**'. (This is not a very suitable name, because these forms can refer to the past, present or future.) When they are used more like nouns, they are often called '**gerunds**'.

Before nouns, both noun-like *-ing* forms (gerunds) and adjective-like *-ing* forms (participles) can be used. The two structures do not have quite the same kind of meaning. Compare:

- *a **waiting** room* (= a room for waiting. *Waiting* is a gerund, used rather like a noun. Compare *a guest room.*)
  *a **waiting** train* (= a train that is waiting. *Waiting* is a participle, used rather like an adjective. Compare *an early train.*)
- *a **sleeping** pill* (***sleeping*** is a gerund)
  *a **sleeping** child* (***sleeping*** is a participle)
- ***working** conditions* (gerund)
  ***working** men and women* (participle)

2 perfect, passive and negative *-ing* forms

Note the structure of perfect, passive and negative *-ing* forms.

***Having slept** for twelve hours, I felt marvellous.* (perfect)
*She loves **being looked at**.* (passive)
***Not knowing** what to do, I went home.* (negative)
*She's angry about **not having been invited**.* (negative perfect passive)

3 'participles' and 'gerunds': an unclear difference

The distinction between 'participles' and 'gerunds' is not always clear-cut, and it can sometimes be difficult to decide which term to use. For this reason, some grammarians prefer to avoid the terms 'participle' and 'gerund'. For a detailed discussion of this point, see Section 17.54 of *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*, by Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik (Longman, 1985). In *Practical English Usage* the expression '*-ing* form' is used except when there is a good reason to use one of the other terms.

For spelling of *-ing* forms, ► 346–347.

94 *-ing* form as subject, object or complement

1 *Smoking is bad for you.*

An *-ing* form (gerund) can be used, just like a noun, as the subject or complement of a verb.

***Smoking** is bad for you.* (subject)

*My favourite activity is **reading**.* (complement)

Infinitives (e.g. *To smoke is bad for you*) are possible in these cases, but are formal and uncommon.

-ing forms can also be used as objects after certain verbs (► 100).

*I hate **packing**.* (object)

2 *-ing* form with its own object

The *-ing* form subject, complement or object is used like a noun, but it is still a verb and can have its own object.

***Smoking cigarettes** is bad for you.* *My favourite activity is **reading thrillers**.*

*I hate **packing suitcases**.*

3 *the opening of Parliament; my smoking*

We can often use determiners (for example *the, my, this*) with *-ing* forms.

***the** opening of Parliament* *Does **my** smoking annoy you?*

*I hate all **this** useless arguing.*

Possessive *'s* forms are also possible.

***Jack's** going to sleep during the wedding was rather embarrassing.*

*She was angry at **Lina's** trying to lie to her.*

Subject pronouns are not possible.

His shouting gets on my nerves. (BUT NOT ~~*He shouting*~~ . . .)

Note that possessives and pronouns are not used before *-ing* forms if it is already clear who is being talked about.

*Thank you for **waiting**.* (NOT ~~*Thank you for your waiting.*~~)

When an *-ing* form is used with an article, it cannot usually have a direct object. Instead, we can use an *of*-structure.

***the** smoking **of** cigarettes* (NOT ~~*the smoking cigarettes*~~)

No is often used with an *-ing* form to say that something is not allowed, or is impossible. This often happens in notices and after *there is*.

NO SMOKING *NO PARKING* *NO WAITING*

*Sorry – there's **no smoking** in the waiting room.*

*She's made up her mind; there's **no arguing** with her.*

4 object forms: *Do you mind me smoking?*

In an informal style it is more common to use object forms (like *me, Jack*) instead of possessives (*my, Jack's*) with *-ing* forms, especially when these come after a verb or preposition.

*Do you mind **me** smoking?*

*She was angry at **Lina** lying to her.*

After some verbs (e.g. *see, hear, watch, feel*) possessives are not normally used with *-ing* forms, in formal or informal language.

*I **saw him** getting out of the car.* (NOT ~~*I saw his getting*~~ . . .) →

5 *It's nice being with you.*

We can use *it* as a preparatory subject or object for an *-ing* form (► 268–269).

It's nice ***being*** *with you.*

I thought ***it*** *pointless* ***starting*** *before eight o'clock.*

This is common with *any/no good, any/no use* and *(not) worth* (► 634).

It's no good *talking to him – he never listens.*

Is ***it any use*** *expecting them to be on time?*

It's no use his/him *apologising – I will never forgive him.*

I didn't think ***it worth*** *complaining about the meal.*

6 nouns and *-ing* forms

When there is a noun which has a similar meaning to an *-ing* form, the noun is usually preferred.

We're all excited about his ***arrival.*** (NOT . . . ~~*about his arriving.*~~)

95 infinitive or *-ing* form?

Infinitives and *-ing* forms are often used in similar ways. For instance, they can follow certain verbs, adjectives or nouns (► Section 9). Compare:

– *He agreed* ***to wait.***
  He suggested ***waiting.*** (NOT ~~*He suggested to wait.*~~)
– *She's ready to* ***listen.***
  She's good at ***listening.*** (NOT ~~*She's good to listen.*~~)
– *the need to* ***talk***
  the idea of ***talking*** (NOT ~~*the idea to talk*~~)

Unfortunately, there is no easy way to decide which verbs, adjectives and nouns are followed by *-ing* forms, and which are followed by infinitives. It is best to check in a good dictionary.

Expressions with *-ing* forms can be used both as subjects in sentences, or as complements after *be*. Infinitives are less common, especially in informal English. Compare:

Smoking cigarettes *can kill you.* (More natural than *To smoke cigarettes can kill you.*)

My favourite activity is ***reading thrillers.*** (More natural than *My favourite activity is to read thrillers.*)

A bad rule

Students' grammars sometimes say that infinitives are used when the reference is forward in time, and *-ing* forms in other cases (as in *I expected* ***to see*** *Megan; I enjoyed* ***meeting*** *her parents*). Unfortunately, this is not a reliable rule: it's true when it's true, but there are too many exceptions. (Compare *I anticipated* ***seeing*** *her brother; I was sorry not* ***to meet*** *him.*)

96 participles: *-ing* and *-ed* forms used like adjectives

1 names

When *-ing* forms are used in similar ways to adjectives, they are called '**present participles**'. Forms like *broken, sung, opened, started* are called '**past participles**'. But note that both forms can be used for the past, present or future.

*We were nearly hit by **falling** rocks.*
*We haven't got a single **working** computer in the office.*
*The house is going to be full of **screaming** children.*
*I was taken to hospital with a **broken** arm.*
*These cakes are beautifully **cooked**.* *Daniel will be **surprised** to see you.*

(The same terms are used when these forms are used as parts of verb tenses, ► Section 1).

2 active and passive

When *-ing* forms are used like adjectives, they have similar meanings to active verbs.

***falling** leaves* (= leaves that fall)
*a meat-**eating** animal* (= an animal that eats meat)

Most past participles have passive meanings when they are used like adjectives.

*a **broken** heart* (= a heart that has been broken)
*The house looked **abandoned**.* (= . . . as if it had been abandoned.)

3 participles and adjectives: *interested* and *interesting*, etc

Some adjectives look like present or past participles (and the difference between adjectives and participles is not always clear). They are discussed here for convenience. These adjectives, too, may have an active/passive contrast. For example, *interesting, boring, exciting* and *confusing* have active meanings: they describe things that *interest* people, *bore* them and so on. *Interested, bored,* etc have passive meanings: they show how people *are made* to feel. Compare:

– *The lesson was really **interesting**.*
*I was very **interested** in the lesson.* (NOT ~~*I was very interesting in the lesson.*~~)
– *It was a terribly **boring** party.*
*I didn't enjoy the party because I was **bored**.* (NOT . . . ~~*because I was boring.*~~)
– *Granny takes the kids to **exciting** places.*
*The kids get **excited** when Granny comes.* (NOT . . . ~~*The kids get exciting*~~. . .)
– *He's a very **confusing** writer.*
*She explained everything, but I was still very **confused**.*
(NOT . . . ~~*very confusing.*~~)

4 active past participles: *a fallen leaf; advanced students*

Some past participles can be used as adjectives with active meanings before nouns.

*a **fallen** leaf* (= a leaf that has fallen)

***advanced** students*	*a **retired** general*	*an **escaped** prisoner*
***developed** countries*	*a **collapsed** building*	***faded** colours*
***increased** activity*	*a **grown-up** daughter*	***swollen** ankles*
***vanished** civilisations*		

→

Most of these can be used after *be*.

She ***is retired*** *now.* *This class* ***is the most advanced.***
My family ***are all grown up.*** *My wrist* ***is swollen.***
Those curtains ***are*** *badly* ***faded.***

Some others are used after *be*, but not before nouns.

Why ***are*** *all those cars* ***stopped*** *at the crossroads?* (BUT NOT . . . ~~*a stopped car*~~)
I hope you're fully ***recovered*** *from your operation.*
We're camped *in the field across the stream.*
I'll be finished *in a few minutes.* *Those days* ***are gone*** *now.*

Sat and *stood* are often used like this in informal speech in British English.

When I saw her she was ***sat*** *on the ground crying.*
Why is that man ***stood*** *in the doorway?*

A few past participles are used with active meanings in expressions with adverbials but not otherwise.

a well-read *person* (BUT NOT ~~*a read person*~~)
a much-travelled *man* ***recently-arrived*** *immigrants*
The train ***just arrived*** *at platform six is the delayed 13.15 from Hereford.*

5 compound structures: *English-speaking Canadians*

Participles used as adjectives can have objects. Note the word order.

English-speaking *Canadians.* (NOT ~~*speaking English Canadians.*~~)
a fox-hunting *man* *Is that watch* ***self-winding?***

Other compound structures with participles are also common before nouns.

quick-growing *trees* ***government-inspired*** *rumours*
home-made *cake* *the* ***above-mentioned*** *point*
a recently-built *house*

6 after nouns: *the people questioned*

We often use participles after nouns in order to define or identify the nouns, in the same way as we use identifying relative clauses (► 234).

We couldn't agree on any of the ***problems discussed.*** (= . . . the problems that were discussed.) (NOT . . . ~~*the discussed problems.*~~)
The ***people questioned*** *gave very different opinions.* (= The people who were questioned . . .) (NOT ~~*The questioned people*~~ . . .)
I watched the match because I knew some of the ***people playing.*** (NOT . . . ~~*the playing people.*~~)
I got the only ***ticket left.*** (NOT . . . ~~*the only left ticket.*~~)

Those is often used with a participle to mean 'the ones who are/were'.

Most of ***those questioned*** *refused to answer.*
Those selected *will begin training on Monday.*

7 differences of meaning

A few participles change their meaning according to their position. Compare:

- ***a concerned*** *expression* (= a worried expression)
  the people ***concerned*** (= the people who are/were affected)
- ***an involved*** *explanation* (= a complicated explanation)
  the people ***involved*** (= the same as *the people concerned*)
- ***an adopted*** *child* (= a child who is brought up by people who are not his/her biological parents)
  the solution ***adopted*** (= the solution that is/was chosen)

8 *much admired; very frightened*

When a past participle is part of a passive verb, we can put *much* or *very much* before it, but not *very*.

*He's **(very) much admired** by his students.* (NOT . . . ~~*very admired*~~ . . .)
*Britain's trade position has been **(very) much weakened** by inflation.*
(NOT . . . ~~*very weakened*~~ . . .)

When a past participle is used as an adjective, we usually prefer *very*. This is common with words referring to mental states, feelings and reactions.

*a **very frightened** animal* (NOT ~~*a much frightened animal*~~)
*a **very shocked** expression* *The children were **very bored**.*
*She looked **very surprised**.*

Common exceptions:

*That's Alice, unless I'm **(very) much mistaken**.* (NOT . . . ~~*unless I'm very mistaken.*~~)
*He's **well known** in the art world.* (NOT . . . ~~*very known*~~ . . .)

With *amused*, *very* and *(very) much* are both possible.

*I was **very amused** / **much amused** / **very much amused** by Miranda's performance.*

9 *frightened by / frightened of*

By is used after passive verbs to introduce the agent (the person or thing that does the action, ► 58).

*Most of the damage was caused **by your sister**.*

After past participles that are used like adjectives, we prefer other prepositions. Compare:

– *She was **frightened by** a mouse that ran into the room.*
(*Frightened* is part of a passive verb referring to an action.)
*She's always been terribly **frightened of** dying.*
(*Frightened* is an adjective referring to a state of mind.)
– *The kids were so **excited by** the music that they kept screaming.*
*Joe's **excited about** the possibility of going to the States.*
– *I was **annoyed by** the way she spoke to ~~me~~.*
*I'm **annoyed with** you.*
– *The burglar was **surprised by** the family coming home unexpectedly.*
*I'm **surprised at/by** your attitude.*
– *He was badly **shocked by** his fall.*
*We were **shocked at/by** the prices in London.*

Other examples:

*His whereabouts are **known to** the police.*
*The hills are **covered in** snow.* *The room was **filled with** thick smoke.*

10 special past participle forms: *drunken laughter*

A few older forms of past participles are still used as adjectives before nouns in certain expressions.

***drunken** laughter/singing*, etc *a **sunken** wreck/ship*, etc
*a **shrunken** head* ***rotten** fruit/vegetables*, etc

Section 9 Infinitives, *-ing* forms and Past Participles after Nouns, Verbs, etc

INTRODUCTION

verb + verb

Infinitive structures can be used after many verbs; structures with *-ing* forms can be used after many others.

*I **want to stop** now.* (NOT ~~*I want stopping now.*~~)

*We **enjoyed visiting** Edinburgh.* (NOT ~~*We enjoyed to visit Edinburgh.*~~)

Some verbs can also be followed by **object + infinitive** or **object + *-ing*** form.

*I **expected him to say** something.*

*Jack didn't **hear me calling** him.*

After some verbs, more than one of these structures is possible, sometimes with a difference of meaning.

*I don't **remember seeing** her before.*

***Remember to buy** coffee.*

After some verbs (e.g. *get, have, hear*), structures with past participles and passive meanings are also possible.

*We **had** our car **broken into**.*

*I've just **seen a man arrested**.*

structures after nouns, adjectives and prepositions

Many nouns and adjectives can also be followed by structures with infinitives, and many by **preposition + *-ing***.

*the **need to invest***

*an **excuse for leaving***

***happy to see** you*

***worried about getting** old*

Unfortunately, there is no good way of knowing which verbs, nouns and adjectives are followed by which kind of structure. The more important cases are dealt with in this Section; if in doubt, check in a good dictionary.

Note that prepositions are always followed by *-ing* forms.

*She left **without saying** goodbye.* (NOT . . . ~~*without to say goodbye.*~~)

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- ✗ I enjoy to sail. ▸ 97
- ✗ We don't expect that you stay. ▸ 98
- ✗ I suggested her to go home. ▸ 98
- ✗ He's finished to repair the car. ▸ 100.1
- ✗ Cricket is not very interesting to watch it. ▸ 101.4
- ✗ Iron is easy to rust. ▸ 101.4
- ✗ The thought to fail never entered his head. ▸ 103.1
- ✗ Always check the oil before to start the car. ▸ 104.1
- ✗ I look forward to hear from you. ▸ 104.2
- ✗ I forgot buying the soap. ▸ 105.1
- ✗ I wouldn't advise to take the car. ▸ 105.4
- ✗ I slowly began understanding how she felt. ▸ 105.10
- ✗ Responsible managers never stop to question their decisions. ▸ 105.12
- ✗ Susan was nowhere to find. ▸ 106.2
- ✗ I made her crying. ▸ 107.1
- ✗ I can't make work the washing machine. ▸ 107.1
- ✗ I can make myself understand in Japanese. ▸ 107.2
- ✗ The rain made wet the grass. ▸ 107.3
- ✗ You have made me be a happy man. ▸ 107.3
- ✗ I must have repaired my watch. ▸ 109.2
- ✗ I saw Emily's crossing the road. ▸ 110.2

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97 infinitives after verbs: *It's beginning to rain.*

After many non-auxiliary verbs, we can use the infinitives of other verbs.

*It's **beginning to rain**.*
*I don't **want to see** you again.*
*She **seems to be crying**.*
*I **expect to have finished** by tomorrow evening.*
*The car **needs to be cleaned**.*

Common verbs that can be followed by infinitives (for more detailed entries on some of these, see the Index):

afford	*begin*	*fail*	*intend*	*prefer*	*seem*
agree	*care*	*forget*	*learn*	*prepare*	*start*
appear	*choose*	*go on*	*like*	*pretend*	*swear*
arrange	*consent*	*happen*	*love*	*propose*	*trouble*
ask	*continue*	*hate*	*manage*	*promise*	*try*
attempt	*dare*	*help*	*mean*	*refuse*	*want*
(can't) bear	*decide*	*hesitate*	*neglect*	*regret*	*wish*
beg	*expect*	*hope*	*offer*	*remember*	

Some of these verbs can be followed by **object + infinitive** (e.g. *I **want her to be** happy*). For details, ► 98. A few verbs are followed by **verb + *for* + object + infinitive** (e.g. *I **arranged for her to have** violin lessons*). For details of these, ► 113.7.

After some verbs we can use not only an infinitive but also an *-ing* form (sometimes with a difference of meaning). For details, ► 105.

After some verbs, it is not possible to use an infinitive. Many of these can be followed by *-ing* forms (► 100).

*I **enjoy sailing**.* (NOT ~~*I enjoy to sail.*~~)

For perfect infinitives after verbs, ► 90. For ***have*** + **infinitive** (e.g. *I have to go now*), ► 74.
For ***be*** + **infinitive** (e.g. *You are to start tomorrow*), ► 42.
For information about the structures that are possible with a particular verb, see a good dictionary.

98 verb + object + infinitive: *I want you to listen.*

Many verbs are followed by **object + infinitive**.

*I want **you to listen**.*

With some verbs (e.g. *want*, *allow*), a *that*-clause is impossible.

*She didn't **want me to go**.* (NOT ~~*She didn't want that I go.*~~)
*They don't **allow people to smoke**.* (NOT ~~*They don't allow that people smoke.*~~)
*I didn't **ask you to pay** for the meal.* (NOT ~~*I didn't ask that you pay for the meal.*~~)

Some common verbs that can be followed by **object + infinitive**:

advise	*forbid*	*love*	*request*
allow	*force*	*mean*	*teach*
ask	*get* (also ► 108)	*need*	*tell*
(can't) bear	*hate*	*oblige*	*tempt*
beg	*help* (also ► 483)	*order*	*trouble*
cause	*instruct*	*permit*	*want*
command	*intend*	*persuade*	*warn*
compel	*invite*	*prefer*	*wish* (also ► 632)
encourage	*leave*	*recommend*	
expect	*like*	*remind*	

Let, make, see, hear, feel, watch, notice, have, and sometimes *know* and *help,* are followed by **object + infinitive without *to*** (► 91).

*Why won't you **let me explain**?* *I **heard her open** the door and go out.*

Some verbs cannot be followed by **object + infinitive**; for example *suggest.*

*I **suggested that** she should go home.* (NOT ~~*I suggested her to go home.*~~)

Many of the verbs listed above can also be followed by other structures such as an *-ing* form or a *that*-clause. For complete information, see a good dictionary.

For passive structures with these verbs, ► 64.
For verbs that are followed by ***for* + object + infinitive** (e.g. *I arranged for her to go early*), ► 113.7.
For **object + *to be* + complement** after verbs of thinking and feeling (e.g. *I considered him to be an excellent choice*), ► 10.3–10.4. For structures with *take* (e.g. *The ferry took two hours to unload*), ► 602.

99 *try and . . ., go and . . .*, etc

1 *try / be sure / wait and . . .*

We often use *and . . .* instead of *to* after *try / be sure.* This is informal.

***Try and** eat something – you'll feel better if you do.*
***I'll try and** phone you tomorrow morning.*
***Be sure and** ask Uncle Joe about his garden.*

Note also the common expression *Wait and see.*

*'What's for lunch?' '**Wait and see.**'*

We only use this structure with the simple base forms *try / be sure / wait.* It is not possible, for example, with *tries, trying, was sure* or *waited.* Compare:

*I **try and keep** a straight face when he talks, but I can't help smiling.*
*She **tries to keep** a straight face . . .* (NOT ~~*She tries and keeps . . .*~~)
***Try and** eat something.*
*I **tried to** eat something.* (NOT ~~*I tried and ate something.*~~)
*We **waited to see** what would happen.* (NOT ~~*We waited and saw . . .*~~)

2 *come/go,* etc *and . . .*

Come and . . ., go and . . ., run and . . ., hurry up and . . ., stay and . . . are often used informally.

***Come and** have a drink.* ***Stay and** have dinner.* ***Hurry up and** open the door.*

With these verbs, the structure is not only used with the base form.

*He often **comes and spends** the evening with us.*
*She **stayed and played** with the children.*
*She thought of **going and getting** him.* →

3 American English

In informal American English, *and* is sometimes dropped after the base forms *go* and *come*.

Let's ***go see*** *if Anne's home.* ***Go jump*** *in the river.* ***Come sit*** *on my lap.*

100 *-ing* forms after verbs: *I enjoy travelling.*

1 verbs that can be followed by *-ing* forms

After some verbs we can use an *-ing* form (gerund), but not normally an infinitive.

I ***enjoy travelling.*** (NOT ~~*I enjoy to travel.*~~)
He's ***finished repairing*** *the car.* (NOT ~~*He's finished to repair* . . .~~)
She's ***given up smoking.*** (NOT . . . ~~*given up to smoke.*~~)
The doctor ***suggested taking*** *a long rest.* (NOT ~~*The doctor suggested to take* . . .~~)

Some common verbs that are normally followed by *-ing* forms:

admit	*dislike*	*give up*	*practise*
appreciate	*endure*	*(can't) help*	*put off*
avoid	*enjoy*	*imagine*	*resent*
burst out (crying/ laughing)	*escape*	*involve*	*resist*
	excuse	*keep (on)*	*risk*
consider	*face*	*leave off*	*(can't) stand*
contemplate	*fancy*	*mention*	*suggest*
delay	*feel like*	*mind*	*understand*
deny	*finish*	*miss*	
detest	*forgive*	*postpone*	

Some verbs can be followed by both *-ing* forms and infinitives (► 100.4 below). Unfortunately, there is no easy way to decide which structures are possible after a particular verb. It is best to check in a good dictionary.

2 verb + object + *-ing* form: *I dislike people telling me . . .*

Some of the verbs listed above, and some others, can be followed by **object + *-ing* form**.

I ***dislike people telling*** *me what to think.*
I can't ***imagine him working*** *in an office.*
Nobody can ***stop him doing*** *what he wants to.*
He ***spends all his time gardening.***
I ***caught the next-door children stealing*** *my apples.*
We ***found a dead mouse lying*** *on the kitchen floor.*

Stop (in an informal style) and *prevent* are often followed by **object + *from* + *-ing* form**.

Try to ***stop/prevent them (from) finding*** *out.*

Note that after many verbs we can use **possessive + *-ing* form** rather than **object + *-ing* form**, especially in a formal style. (► 94.3 for details.)

3 *-ing* form with passive meaning: *Your hair needs cutting.*

After *deserve, need* and *require*, the *-ing* form has a passive sense. This structure is more common in British than American English.

I don't think his article ***deserves reading.*** (= . . . deserves to be read.)
Your hair ***needs cutting.*** (= . . . needs to be cut.)

In informal British English, *want* can also be used like this.

The car ***wants servicing.*** (= . . . needs to be serviced.)

4 *-ing* form or infinitive

After some verbs, either an *-ing* form or an infinitive can be used. These include:

advise	*forbid*	*hear*	*prefer*	*start*
allow	*forget*	*intend*	*propose*	*stop*
can't bear	*go*	*like*	*regret*	*try*
begin	*go on*	*love*	*remember*	*watch*
continue	*hate*	*permit*	*see*	

In some cases there is a difference of meaning: ► 105, 110.

101 infinitives after adjectives: *pleased to see you*

1 reactions and feelings: *pleased to see you*

Infinitives are often used after adjectives describing reactions and feelings.

I'm ***pleased to see*** *you.* *We're* ***happy to be*** *here.* *She's* ***anxious to go*** *home.*
Jack was ***surprised to get*** *Anna's message.*
I was ***shocked to see*** *how ill he was.*
Most people are ***afraid to hear*** *the truth about themselves.*

Not all adjectives of this kind are followed by infinitives. Some are followed by **preposition + *-ing* form** (► 103), or by *that*-clauses (► 192). Some adjectives (e.g. *afraid, sure*) can be followed by either an infinitive or an *-ing* form, often with a difference of meaning: for details, ► 105.13–105.16.

For structures with *for* (e.g. *She's anxious for the children to go home*), ► 113.

2 other adjectives: *certain to win*

Besides adjectives referring to reactions and feelings, many other adjectives can be followed by infinitives. Examples: *right, wrong, stupid, certain* (► 105.15), *welcome, careful, due, fit, able* (► 85), *likely* (► 516), *lucky.*

We were ***right to start*** *early.* *Be* ***careful not to wake*** *the children.*
I was ***stupid to believe*** *him.* *It's very* ***likely to rain.***
She's ***certain to win.*** *You were* ***lucky not to be killed.***
You're ***welcome to stay*** *as long as you like.*

For structures with preparatory *it* (e.g. *It is important to get enough sleep*), ► 268.

3 superlatives, etc: *the oldest athlete to win . . .*

Superlatives can be followed by an infinitive structure. The meaning is similar to an identifying relative clause (► 234). →

He's the ***oldest athlete ever to win*** *an Olympic gold medal.* (= . . . who has ever won . . .)

This structure is also common with *first, second, third,* etc, *next, last* and *only.*

Who was the ***first person to climb*** *Everest without oxygen?*

The ***next to arrive*** *was Mrs Patterson.*

She's the ***only scientist to have won*** *three Nobel prizes.*

This structure is only possible when the superlative has a subject relationship with the infinitive.

Is this the first time that you have stayed here? (NOT . . . ~~*the first time for you to stay here.*~~ *Time* is not the subject of *stay.*)

4 *easy to please*

Some adjectives can be used with infinitives in a special structure, in which the subject of the clause is really the object of the infinitive. Examples are *easy, hard, difficult, impossible, good, ready,* and adjectives after *enough* and *too.*

He's ***easy to please.*** (= *To please him is easy.* OR *It is easy to please him.*)

Japanese is ***difficult*** *for Europeans* ***to learn.*** (= *It is difficult for Europeans to learn Japanese.*)

His theory is ***impossible to understand.*** (= *It is impossible to understand his theory.*)

Are these berries ***good to eat?*** *The apples were* ***ripe enough to pick.***

The report is ***ready for you to check.*** *The box was* ***too heavy to lift.***

The structure often ends with a preposition (► 209.5).

She's nice to talk ***to.*** *He's very easy to get on* ***with.***

It's not a bad place to live ***in.***

There is no object pronoun after the infinitive or preposition in these cases.

Cricket is not very interesting to ***watch.*** (NOT ~~*Cricket is not very interesting to watch it.*~~)

She's nice to talk ***to.*** (NOT ~~*She's nice to talk to her.*~~)

When the adjective is before a noun, the infinitive is usually after the noun.

It's a ***good*** *wine* ***to keep.*** (NOT ~~*It's a good to keep wine.*~~)

Easy, difficult and *impossible* cannot be used in this structure when the subject of the clause is the subject of the following verb.

She has difficulty learning maths. (NOT ~~*She is difficult to learn maths.*~~)

Iron rusts easily. (NOT ~~*Iron is easy to rust.*~~)

This material can't possibly catch fire. (NOT ~~*This material is impossible to catch fire.*~~)

For more about ***enough/too*** **+ adjective + infinitive**, ► 450, 610.
For ***so*** **+ adjective + infinitive** (e.g. *Would you be so kind as to help me?*), ► 584.8.
For information about the structures that are possible with a particular adjective, see a good dictionary.

102 infinitives after nouns and pronouns: *my decision to leave*

1 nouns related to verbs: *no wish to change*

We can use infinitives after some nouns which are related to verbs that can be followed by infinitives (e.g. *wish, decide, need*).

I have no ***wish to change****.* (= I do not wish to change.)
I told her about my ***decision to leave****.* (= I told her that I had decided to leave.)
Is there any ***need to ask*** *Jasmine?* (= Do we need to ask Jasmine?)

Not all nouns can be followed by infinitives in this way.

I hate the ***thought of getting*** *old.* (NOT . . . ~~*the thought to get old.*~~)

And note that not all related verbs and nouns are followed by the same structures. Compare:

– *I hope* ***to arrive****.*
  There's no hope ***of arriving****.*
– *She prefers* ***to live*** *alone.*
  I understand her preference ***for living*** *alone.*
– *I do not intend* ***to return****.*
  I have no intention ***of returning****.*

Unfortunately, there is no easy way to decide which structures are possible after a particular noun. It is best to check in a good dictionary.

2 nouns related to adjectives: *You were a fool to agree.*

We can also use infinitives after some nouns which are related to adjectives, or which have an adjectival sense.

You were a ***fool to agree****.* (= You were foolish to agree.)
What a ***nuisance to have*** *to go!* (= How annoying to have to go!)
It's a ***pleasure to see*** *you again.* (= It's pleasant to see you again.)

3 purpose: *a key to open the door*

An infinitive can be used after a noun, or an indefinite pronoun like *something*, to explain the purpose of a particular thing: what it does, or what somebody does with it. The noun or pronoun can be like the subject of the infinitive.

Have you got a ***key to open*** *this door?* (The key will open the door.)
It was a ***war to end*** *all wars.* *I'd like* ***something to stop*** *my toothache.*

The noun or pronoun can also be like the object of the infinitive.

I need some more ***books to read****.* (I will read the books.)
Is there any ***milk to put*** *on the cornflakes?*
Did you tell her which ***bus to take****?* *Is there* ***anything to drink****?*

If the noun or pronoun is the object of the infinitive, we do not add an object pronoun after the infinitive.

I gave her a paper ***to read****.* (NOT . . . ~~*a paper to read it.*~~)
He needs a place ***to live in****.* (NOT . . . ~~*a place to live in it.*~~)

Some/any/nowhere can also be followed by infinitives.

The kids want ***somewhere to practise*** *their music.*

4 *enough, too much*, etc

Quantifiers like *enough, too much/many/little/few, plenty*, etc are often followed by **noun + infinitive**.

There was ***enough*** *light* ***to see*** *what I was doing.*
There's ***too much*** *snow (for us)* ***to be able*** *to drive.*
We've got ***plenty*** *of time* ***to see*** *the British Museum.*

Enough is often dropped before *room* and *time*.

There's hardly ***(enough) room to breathe*** *in here.*
Do you think we'll have ***(enough) time to do*** *some shopping?* →

5 infinitive with preposition: *a friend to play with*

A noun can be followed by **infinitive + preposition**.

Emily needs a ***friend to play with****.* *They're looking for a* ***room to meet in****.*

In a very formal style, another structure is possible: **noun + preposition + *whom*/*which* + infinitive**.

Emily needs a friend ***with whom to play****.*

They're looking for a room ***in which to meet****.*

This is not possible when there is no preposition. One cannot say, for example, ~~*I need a book which to read.*~~

6 *the life to come*, etc

In expressions like *the life* ***to come*** (= life after death), *the world* ***to come***, *his wife* ***to be*** (= his future wife), the infinitive has a future meaning, and is similar to a relative clause with *be* (= the life/world that is to come, etc).

For infinitives used to talk about people's purposes, ► 112.
For passive infinitives (e.g. *There's work to be done*), ► 106.
For ***for*** **+ object + infinitive** (e.g. *Is there any need for us to stay?*), ► 113.5.
For infinitives after ***first***, ***next***, ***last*** or **superlative + noun** (e.g. *the first woman to climb Everest*), ► 101.3.
For more about structures with prepositions at the end, ► 209.

103 *-ing* forms after nouns and adjectives: *tired of listening*

1 *the idea of getting old; tired of listening*

Some nouns and adjectives can be followed by *-ing* forms. A preposition is normally used to connect the noun/adjective to the *-ing* form. Nouns/adjectives that are followed by *-ing* forms cannot usually be followed by infinitives (► 105.11, 105.13–105.16 for some exceptions with adjectives).

I hate the ***idea of getting*** *old.* (NOT . . . ~~*the idea to get old.*~~)

The ***thought of failing*** *never entered his head.* (NOT ~~*The thought to fail*~~ . . .)

I'm ***tired of listening*** *to this.* (NOT ~~*I'm tired to listen*~~ . . .)

She's very ***good at solving*** *problems.* (NOT . . . ~~*good to solve*~~ . . .)

Unfortunately, there is no easy way to decide which nouns and adjectives can be followed by *-ing* forms. It is best to check in a good dictionary.

2 purpose: *a machine for cutting*

For **+ *-ing* form** can be used after a noun, or after an indefinite pronoun such as *something* or *anything*, to explain the purpose of an object or material – what it is for.

A strimmer is a ***machine for cutting*** *grass and weeds.*

Have you got any ***stuff for cleaning*** *silver?*

I need ***something for killing*** *flies.*

This structure is mostly used to talk in general about types of object and material. When we talk about somebody's purpose in using a particular object, we are more likely to use an infinitive (► 468.2).

I must find something ***to kill*** *that fly.*

3 *-ing* form or infinitive

After a few nouns and adjectives, we can use either an *-ing* form or an infinitive. Normally there is little or no difference of meaning (► 105.13–105.16 for some exceptions with adjectives).

We have a good ***chance of making*** */* ***to make*** *a profit.*
I'm ***proud of having won*** */* ***to have won.***

For *be used to . . .ing*, ► 615.

104 *-ing* forms after prepositions: *without breaking eggs*

1 after all prepositions

When we put a verb after a preposition, we normally use an *-ing* form (gerund), not an infinitive.

You can't make an omelette ***without breaking*** *eggs.* (NOT . . . ~~*without to break eggs.*~~)
Always check the oil ***before starting*** *the car.* (NOT . . . ~~*before to start the car.*~~)
We got the job finished ***by working*** *sixteen hours a day.*
He's talking ***about moving*** *to the country.*
I like to cycle to work ***instead of driving.*** (NOT . . . ~~*instead to drive*~~ . . .)

2 to as a preposition: *I look forward to . . .ing*

To is actually two different words. It can be an infinitive marker, used to show that the next word is an infinitive (e.g. ***to*** *swim,* ***to*** *laugh*). It can also be a preposition, followed for example by a noun (e.g. *She's gone* ***to*** *the park, I look forward* ***to*** *Christmas*).

When *to* is a preposition, it can be followed by the *-ing* form of a verb, but not normally by the infinitive. Common expressions in which this happens are *look forward to, object to, be used to, prefer (doing one thing* ***to doing*** *another), get round to, in addition to.*

In the following examples, note how the preposition *to* can be followed by either a noun or an *-ing* form.

– *I look forward* ***to your next email.***
  I look forward ***to hearing*** *from you.* (NOT . . . ~~*to hear from you.*~~)
– *Do you object* ***to Sunday work?***
  Do you object ***to working*** *on Sundays?*
– *I'm not used* ***to London traffic.***
  I'm not used ***to driving*** *in London.*
– *I prefer the seaside* ***to the mountains.***
  I prefer swimming ***to walking.***
– *I'll get round* ***to the bills*** *sooner or later.*
  I'll get round ***to paying*** *the bills sooner or later.*

A few verbs and adjectives are used with *to* before nouns, but are followed by the infinitives of verbs. Examples are *agree, consent, entitled, inclined, prone.*

She agreed ***to our plan.*** */ She agreed* ***to do*** *what we wanted.*
He's inclined ***to anger.*** */ He's inclined* ***to lose*** *his temper.*

Accustomed can be followed by ***to*** + ***-ing form*** or an infinitive (► 105.11). →

3 object + infinitive after *for*: *for her to arrive*

Note that some verbs are followed by ***for*** + **object + infinitive**. An *-ing* form is not usually possible in these cases.

*We're still waiting **for her to arrive**.* (NOT . . . ~~*waiting for her arriving.*~~)
*Can you arrange **for us to get** tickets?* (NOT . . . ~~*for our getting tickets?*~~)

For the difference between ***used to*** + **infinitive** and ***be used to*** + ***-ing*** **form**, ▶ 87.
For *-ing* forms after conjunctions (e.g. *When planning a trip . . .*), ▶ 115.6.
For time clauses with ***on*** + ***-ing*** **form**, ▶ 115.6.

105 infinitives or *-ing* forms: both possible with different uses

Some verbs and adjectives can be followed by either *-ing* forms or infinitives (▶ 100.4).

*I **started playing** / **to play** the violin when I was 10.*
*She was **proud of having** / **to have** won.*

With some of these verbs and adjectives, there is a difference of meaning.

1 *remember* and *forget*

Remember**/**forget + ***-ing*** **form** looks back at the past – at things that one did.
Forget . . .ing is used mostly in the phrase *I'll never forget . . .ing*, and expressions with similar meanings.

*I still **remember buying** my first bicycle.*
*I'll never **forget meeting** the Queen.*

Remember**/**forget + **infinitive** looks forward in time – at things that one still has or still had to do at the moment of remembering or forgetting.

*You must **remember to fetch** Mr Lewis from the station tomorrow.*
*I **forgot to buy** the soap.*

2 *go on*

Go on + ***-ing*** **form** means 'continue'.

*She **went on talking** about her illness until we all went to sleep.*

Go on + **infinitive** refers to a change of activity.

*She stopped talking about that and **went on to describe** her other problems.*

3 *regret*

Regret + ***-ing*** **form** looks back at the past – at something that one is sorry that one did.

*I **regret leaving** school at 16 – it was a big mistake.*

Regret + **infinitive** is used mostly in announcements of bad news.

*We **regret to inform** passengers that the 14.50 train is one hour late.*
*We **regret to say** that we are unable to help you.*

4 *advise, allow, permit* and *forbid*

In active clauses after these verbs, we use an *-ing* form if there is no object. If there is an object we normally use an infinitive. Compare:

- *I wouldn't* ***advise taking*** *the car – there's nowhere to park.*
  I wouldn't ***advise you to take*** *the car . . .*
- *We don't* ***allow/permit smoking*** *in the lecture room.*
  We don't ***allow/permit people to smoke*** *in the lecture room.*
- *The headmistress has* ***forbidden singing*** *in the corridors.*
  The headmistress has ***forbidden children to sing*** *. . .*

Note the corresponding passive structures.

- ***Smoking*** *is not allowed/permitted in the lecture room.*
  People *are not allowed/permitted* ***to smoke*** *in the lecture room.*
- ***Singing*** *is forbidden.*
  Children *are forbidden* ***to sing****.*
- *Early* ***reservation*** *is advised.*
  Passengers *are advised* ***to reserve*** *early.*

5 *see, watch* and *hear*

After these verbs, the difference between **object + *-ing* form** and **object + infinitive** is like the difference between progressive and simple tenses. With *-ing* forms the verbs suggest that one pays attention to events or actions that are already going on; infinitives usually refer to complete events/actions which are seen/heard from beginning to end. (Note that these verbs are followed by the infinitive without *to*.) Compare:

- *I looked out of the window and* ***saw Emily crossing*** *the road.*
  I ***saw Emily cross*** *the road and* ***disappear*** *into the bank.*
- *As I passed his house I* ***heard him practising*** *the piano.*
  I once ***heard Brendel play*** *all the Beethoven concerts.*

For more details, ► 110.

6 *try*

To talk about doing something to see what will happen, we use ***try*** **+ *-ing***.

I ***tried sending*** *her flowers,* ***writing*** *her letters,* ***giving*** *her presents, but she still wouldn't speak to me.*

To talk about making an effort to do something difficult, we can use either ***try*** **+ infinitive** or ***try*** **+ *-ing***.

I ***tried to change*** *the wheel, but my hands were too cold.* (OR *I* ***tried changing*** *the wheel . . .*)

7 *mean*

Mean in the sense of 'involve', 'have as a result' (► 526) can be followed by an *-ing* form.

If you want to pass the exam, it will ***mean studying*** *hard.*

In the sense of 'intend', *mean* is followed by an infinitive.

I don't think she ***means to get*** *married for the moment.*

8 *learn* and *teach*

These verbs (and others with similar meanings) are followed by *-ing* forms mostly when we are referring to lessons or subjects of study.

She goes to college twice a week to ***learn coding****.*
Mr Garland ***teaches skiing*** *in the winter.*

Infinitives are preferred when we talk about the result of the study – about successfully learning a skill.

She ***learned to read*** *German at school, but she* ***learned to speak*** *it in Germany.*

I ***taught*** *myself* ***to code.***

9 *like, love, hate* and *prefer*

After these four verbs, both infinitives and *-ing* forms can often be used without a great difference of meaning.

I ***hate working*** */* ***to work*** *at weekends.*

I don't get up on Sundays. I ***prefer staying*** */* ***to stay*** *in bed.*

Like **+ infinitive** is used to talk about choices and habits. Compare:

I ***like climbing*** */* ***to climb*** *mountains.* (*Like* = 'enjoy': both forms possible)

When I pour tea I ***like to put*** *the milk in first.* (*Like* = 'choose': infinitive more natural)

Hate **+ infinitive** can be used to introduce unwelcome news.

I ***hate to*** *tell you this, but we're going to miss the train.*

After *would like, would prefer, would hate* and *would love,* infinitives are most often used.

I'd ***like to tell*** *you something.* (NOT ~~*I'd like telling you something.*~~)

'Can I give you a lift?' 'No thanks, I'd ***prefer to walk.***'

(NOT . . . ~~*I'd prefer walking.*~~)

Compare:

Do *you* ***like dancing?*** (= Do you enjoy dancing?)

Would you like ***to dance?*** (= Do you want to dance now?)

For more about *like,* ► 514. For details of structures with *prefer,* ► 560.

10 *begin* and *start*

Begin and *start* can be followed by infinitives or *-ing* forms. Usually there is no important difference.

She ***began playing*** */* ***to play*** *the guitar when she was six.*

He ***started talking*** */* ***to talk*** *about golf, and everybody went out of the room.*

After progressive forms of *begin* and *start,* infinitives are preferred.

I'm ***beginning to learn*** *karate.* (NOT ~~*I'm beginning learning karate.*~~)

Infinitives are also preferred with *understand, realise* and *know.*

I slowly ***began to understand*** *how she felt.* (NOT . . . ~~*began understanding*~~ . . .)

He ***started to realise*** *that if you wanted to eat you had to work.*

(NOT . . . ~~*started realising*~~ . . .)

11 *attempt, intend, continue, can't bear, be accustomed to, be committed to*

After these words and expressions we can generally use either an *-ing* form or an infinitive without much difference of meaning.

I ***intend telling*** */* ***to tell*** *her what I think.*

I'm not ***accustomed to giving/give*** *personal information about myself to strangers.*

For details of structures with ***to*** **+** ***-ing,*** ► 104.2.

12 *-ing* form or infinitive of purpose: *stop*

Some verbs that are followed by *-ing* forms can also be followed by an infinitive of purpose (► 112). A common example is *stop*. Compare:

*I **stopped running**.* (NOT . . . ~~*I stopped to run.*~~)

*I **stopped to rest**.* (= . . . in order to rest.)

13 *afraid*

To talk about fear of things that happen accidentally, we prefer ***afraid of*** + ***-ing***.

*I don't like to drive fast because I'm **afraid of crashing**.*

*'Why are you so quiet?' 'I'm **afraid of waking** the children.'*

In other cases we can use ***afraid of*** + ***-ing*** or ***afraid*** + **infinitive** with no difference of meaning.

*I'm not **afraid of telling** / **to tell** her the truth.*

14 *sorry*

Sorry for/about + ***-ing*** is used to refer to past things that one regrets. (*That*-clauses are also very common in an informal style.)

*I'm **sorry for/about losing** my temper this morning.* (OR *I'm **sorry that I lost** my temper.*)

Sorry + **perfect infinitive** (more formal) can be used with the same meaning.

*I'm **sorry to have woken** you up.* (OR *I'm **sorry that I woke** you up.*)

Sorry + **infinitive** is used to apologise for current situations – things that one is doing or going to do, or that one has just done.

***Sorry to disturb** you – could I speak to you for a moment?*

*I'm **sorry to tell** you that you failed the exam.*

***Sorry to keep** you waiting – we can start now.*

15 *certain* and *sure*

Certain/sure of + ***-ing*** are used to refer to the feelings of the person one is talking about.

*Before the game she felt **certain of winning**, but after a few minutes she realised it wasn't going to be so easy.*

*You seem very **sure of passing** the exam. I hope you're right.*

Certain/sure + **infinitive** refer to the speaker's or writer's own feelings.

*The repairs are **certain to cost** more than you think.* (NOT ~~*The repairs are certain of costing*~~ . . .)

*Kroftova's **sure to win** – the other girl hasn't got a chance.* (= 'I am sure she will win.')

16 *interested*

To talk about reactions to things one learns, ***interested*** + **infinitive** is commonly used.

*I was **interested to read** in the paper that scientists have found out how to talk to whales.*

*I'm **interested to see** that Alice and Jake are going out together.*

*I shall be **interested to see** how long it lasts.*

To talk about a wish to find out something, both ***interested in*** + ***-ing*** and ***interested*** + **infinitive** are common.

*I'm **interested in finding out** / **to find out** what she did with all that money.* →

Aren't you ***interested in knowing / to know*** *whether I'm pregnant?*

To talk about a wish to do something, we use *interested in* with an *-ing* form.

I'm ***interested in working*** *in Switzerland. Do you know anybody who could help me?* (NOT ~~*I'm interested to work in Switzerland* . . .~~)

106 active and passive infinitive with similar meaning

1 obligation

We can use **noun + infinitive** to talk about obligation – things that people have to do. Active and passive infinitives are often both possible.

There's a lot of ***work to do / to be done****.*

Give me the names of the ***people to contact / to be contacted****.*

The ***people to interview / to be interviewed*** *are in the next room.*

We prefer active infinitives if we are thinking more about the person who will do the action.

I've got work ***to do****.* (NOT ~~*I've got work to be done.*~~)

They've sent ***Megan*** *a form* ***to complete****.*

We use passive infinitives if we are thinking more about the action, or the person/thing that the action is done to.

The ***carpets to be cleaned*** *are in the garage.* (NOT ~~*The carpets to clean* . . .~~)

His desk is covered with ***forms to be filled in****.*

After *be*, we normally use passive infinitives.

These sheets ***are to be washed****.* (NOT ~~*These sheets are to wash.*~~)

This form ***is to be filled in*** *in ink.* (NOT ~~*This form is to fill in* . . .~~)

The cleaning ***is to be finished*** *by midday.* (NOT . . . ~~*is to finish* . . .~~)

2 *to be seen/found/congratulated*, etc

Note the expressions *anywhere/nowhere to be seen/found.*

He wasn't ***anywhere to be seen****.* (NOT . . . ~~*anywhere to see.*~~)

Susan was ***nowhere to be found****.* (NOT . . . ~~*nowhere to find.*~~)

We also use passive infinitives to express value judgements with verbs like *congratulate, encourage, avoid.*

You are ***to be congratulated****.* (NOT . . . ~~*to congratulate.*~~)

This behaviour is ***to be encouraged****.*

But note the common expression *to blame*, meaning 'responsible' (for some unfortunate event).

Nobody was ***to blame*** *for the accident.*

3 *nothing to do* and *nothing to be done*, etc

Note the difference between *nothing to do* and *nothing to be done.*

I'm bored – there's ***nothing to do****.* (= There are no entertainments.)

There's ***nothing to be done*** *– we'll have to buy a new one.* (= There's no way of putting it right.)

For structures like *She's easy to amuse*, ► 101.4.
For structures with *take* (e.g. *The ferry took two hours to unload*), ► 602.
For more about ***be*** **+ infinitive**, ► 42.

107 causative structures with *make*

1 object + infinitive

After ***make*** + **object**, we use the infinitive without *to* (► 91).

*I made her **cry**.* (NOT ~~*I made her to cry.*~~ OR ~~*I made her crying.*~~)

Note that the infinitive must follow the object.

*I can't make **the washing machine work**.* (NOT ~~*I can't make work the washing machine.*~~)

In passive structures the infinitive with *to* is used.

*She **was made to repeat** the whole story.*

2 *make oneself understood*, etc

In a few cases *make* can be followed by *myself, yourself,* etc, and a past participle. The structure is common with *understood* and *heard.*

*I don't speak good Japanese, but I can **make myself understood**.*
(NOT . . . ~~*make myself understand.*~~)

*She had to shout **to make herself heard**.*

3 with object + object complement: *make people welcome*, etc

We can talk about an effect or change with ***make*** + **object** + **adjective**/**noun** (► 10).

*She **made everybody welcome**.*

*The rain **made the grass wet**.* (NOT ~~*The rain made wet the grass.*~~)

We do not use *make . . . be* in this stru(NOT ~~*You have made me be a happy man.*~~)

*You have **made me a happy man**.* (NOT ~~*You have made me be a happy man.*~~)

For other structures with *make* and the difference between *make* and *do*, ► 435.

108 causative and similar structures with *get*

1 causative: *Don't get him talking.*

Get + **object** + ***. . .ing*** means 'make somebody/something start . . .ing'.

*Don't **get him talking** about his illnesses.*

*Once we **got the heater going** the car started to warm up.*

2 causative: *Get Penny to help us.*

Get + **object** + **infinitive** means 'make somebody/something do something' or 'persuade somebody/something to do something': there is often an idea of difficulty.

*I can't **get that child to go** to bed.* ***Get Penny to help** us if you can.*

*See if you can **get the car to start**.*

For ***have*** + **object** + **infinitive** (meaning 'order/instruct somebody to do something'), ► 109.1. →

3 causative: *get something done*

***Get* + object + past participle** can mean 'cause something to be done by somebody else'. The past participle has a passive meaning.

*I must **get my watch repaired**.* (= I want my watch to be repaired.)

*I'm going to **get my hair cut** this afternoon.*

Have is used in a similar structure, ► 109.2.

4 experience: *We got our roof blown off.*

***Get* + object + past participle** can sometimes be used in the sense of 'experience'.

*We **got our roof blown off** in the storm last week.*

This idea is more often expressed with *have* (e.g. *We had our roof blown off*). ► 109.4

5 *Get the children dressed.*

We can also use ***get* + object + past participle** to talk about completing work on something.

*It will take me another hour to **get the washing done**.*

*After you've **got the children dressed**, can you make the beds?*

109 causative and similar structures with *have*

Have can be followed by **object + infinitive (without *to*)**, **object + *-ing***, and **object + past participle**.

1 causative: *have somebody do/doing something*

***Have* + object + infinitive** can mean 'cause somebody to do something'. This is mostly used in American English, to talk about giving instructions or orders.

*I'm ready to see Mr Smith. **Have him come in**, please.*

*The manager **had everybody fill out** a form.*

The structure with an *-ing* form can mean 'cause somebody to be doing something' (BrE and AmE).

*He **had us laughing** all through the meal.*

For ***get* + object + infinitive** (meaning 'persuade somebody/something to do something'), ► 108.2.

2 causative: *have something done*

***Have* + object + past participle** can mean 'cause something to be done by somebody else'. The past participle has a passive meaning.

*I must **have my watch repaired**.* (= I want my watch to be repaired.)

*I'm going to **have my hair cut** this afternoon.* (= I want my hair to be cut.)

*If you don't get out of my house I'll **have you arrested**.*

Get is used in a similar structure, ► 108.3.

3 experience: *have something happen/happening*

In the structure ***have* + object + infinitive/. . .*ing***, *have* can mean 'experience'.

*I **had a very strange thing happen** to me when I was fourteen.*

*We **had a tax inspector come** to the office yesterday.*

It's lovely to ***have children playing*** *in the garden again.*
I looked up and found we ***had water dripping*** *through the ceiling.*

Note the difference between the infinitive in the first two examples (for things that happened), and the *-ing* form in the last two (for things that are/were happening). This is like the difference between simple and progressive tenses (► 3.2).

4 experience: *We had our roof blown off.*

***Have* + object + past participle** can also be used in the sense of 'experience'. Again, the past participle has a passive meaning.

We ***had our roof blown off*** *in the storm.*
I ***had my car stolen*** *last week.*

5 *I won't have . . .*

I won't have* + object + verb form can mean 'I won't allow . . .'

I won't ***have you telling*** *me what to do.*
I won't ***have my house turned*** *into a hotel.*

110 *hear, see,* etc + object + verb form

1 *I heard him go/going.*

Hear, see, watch, notice and similar verbs of perception can be followed by **object + infinitive (without *to*)** or **object + *-ing* form**.

I ***heard him go*** *down the stairs.* OR *I* ***heard him going*** *down the stairs.*
(NOT ~~*I heard him went down the stairs.*~~)

There is often a difference of meaning. After these verbs, an infinitive suggests that we hear or see the whole of an action or event; an *-ing* form suggests that we hear or see something in progress, going on. Compare:

– *I* ***saw her cross*** *the road.* (= I saw her cross it from one side to the other.)
I ***saw her crossing*** *the road.* (= I saw her in the middle, on her way across.)
– *I once* ***heard him give*** *a talk on Japanese politics.*
As I walked past his room I ***heard him talking*** *on the phone.*
– ***Watch me jump*** *over the stream.*
I like to ***watch people walking*** *in the street.*
– *I* ***heard the bomb explode.*** (NOT ~~*I heard the bomb exploding.*~~)
I ***saw the book lying*** *on the table.* (NOT ~~*I saw the book lie . . .*~~)

A progressive form can suggest repetition.

I saw her ***throwing*** *stones at the other children.*

After *can see/hear* (which refer to actions and events that are in progress, ► 84), only the *-ing* structure is used.

I ***could see Jack getting*** *on the bus.* (NOT ~~*I could see Jack get . . .*~~)

These structures can be used after passive forms of *hear* and *see*. In this case, the infinitive has *to*.

He ***was*** *never* ***heard to say*** *'thank you' in his life.* (NOT ~~*He was never heard say . . .*~~)
Justice must not only be done; it must ***be seen to be done.***
She ***was seen walking*** *away from the accident.*

Passive forms of *watch* and *notice* are not used in this way. →

2 possessives not used

After these verbs, possessives cannot be used with *-ing* forms.

I saw ***Chloe*** *talking to Mia.* (NOT ~~*I saw Chloe's talking to Mia.*~~)

3 *I heard my name repeated.*

In this structure, the past participle has a passive meaning.

I heard my name repeated *several times.* (= My name was repeated.)

Have you ever ***seen a television thrown*** *through a window?*

The idea of 'action or event in progress' can be given by a progressive form (***being*** + **past participle**).

As I watched the tree ***being cut*** *down . . .*

I woke up to hear the bedroom door ***being opened*** *slowly.*

4 *Look at him eating!*

Look at can be followed by **object + *-ing* form**, and in American English also by **object + infinitive**.

Look at him ***eating!*** *Look at him* ***eat!*** (AmE)

For more about verbs that can be followed by both infinitives and *-ing* forms, ▸ 105.
For the difference between *hear* and *listen*, ▸ 481. For *see*, *look* and *watch*, ▸ 575.

Section 10 Infinitives, *-ing* forms and Past Participles: Other Uses

INTRODUCTION

Infinitives, *-ing* forms and participles can all begin clauses.

*I'd like **to look at those papers again**.* (infinitive clause)
*She ran out **laughing like a hyena**.* (participle clause)
__Cooked in a slow oven, it will taste delicious.__ (participle clause)

This Section deals with a few more complex structures of this kind.

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- ✗ I can't understand why to do it. ▸ 111.1
- ✗ How to tell her? ▸ 111.2
- ✗ Looking out of our window, the mountains were marvellous. ▸ 115.4
- ✗ I'm going to Austria for learning German. ▸ 112.1
- ✗ It's probable for her to be in a bad temper. ▸ 113.4
- ✗ I need for you to help me. ▸ 113.7

CONTENTS OF THIS SECTION

111 infinitives after question words: *who to . . .*, etc
112 infinitive of purpose: *I sat down to rest.*
113 *for . . . to . . .*
114 infinitives: other uses
115 participle clauses

111 infinitives after question words: *who to . . .*, etc

1 indirect questions: *Tell us what to do.*

In indirect speech (► 262.2), we can use an infinitive after the question words *who, what, where,* etc (but not usually *why*). This structure expresses ideas such as obligation and possibility.

I wonder ***who to invite****.* (= . . . who I should invite.)
Tell us ***what to do****.*
Can you show me ***how to get*** *to the station?* (= . . . how I can get to the station?)
I don't know ***where to put*** *the car.*
Tell me ***when to pay****.*
I can't decide ***whether to answer*** *her email.*
(BUT NOT ~~*I can't understand why to do it.*~~)

2 direct questions: *What shall we do?*

We do not usually begin a direct question with *How to . . .?, What to . . .?,* etc. After question words, we often use *shall* and *should.*

How shall *I tell her?* (NOT ~~*How to tell her?*~~)
What shall *we do?* (NOT ~~*What to do?*~~)
Who should *I pay?* (NOT ~~*Who to pay?*~~)

3 titles: *What to do if fire breaks out.*

How to . . ., What to . . ., etc are often found as titles for instructions, information leaflets, books, etc. (Note: these are not questions.)

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR PRONUNCIATION
WHAT TO DO IF FIRE BREAKS OUT

For questions beginning ***Why (not)*** **+ infinitive**, ► 630.

112 infinitive of purpose: *I sat down to rest.*

1 *I sat down to rest.*

We often use an infinitive to talk about a person's purpose – why he or she does something.

I sat down ***to rest****.* (NOT ~~*I sat down for resting / for to rest.*~~)
He went abroad ***to forget****.* *I'm going to Austria* ***to learn German****.*
To switch on*, press red button.*

2 *in order to; so as to*

We can also use *in order to . . .* (more formal) or *so as to . . .*

He got up early ***in order to have time to pack.***
I watched him ***in order to know more about him.***
I moved to a new flat ***so as to be near my work.***

In order to / so as to are normal before negative infinitives.

I'm going to leave now, ***so as not to be*** *late.* (More natural than *I'm going to leave now, not to be late.*)

A *for*-structure (► 113) can be used to talk about a purpose that involves action by somebody else.

I left the door unlocked ***for Harriet to get in.***

113 *for . . . to . . .*

1 infinitive with its own subject

The structure ***for* + noun/pronoun + infinitive** is very common in English. It is used when an infinitive needs its own subject. Compare:

– *Anna will be happy* ***to help*** *you.* (Anna will help.)
Anna will be happy ***for the children to help*** *you.* (The children will help.)
– *My idea was* ***to learn*** *Russian.*
My idea was ***for her to learn*** *Russian.*
– ***To ask*** *Joe would be a big mistake.*
For you to ask *Joe would be a big mistake.* (NOT ~~*You to ask Joe would be . . .*~~)

Note that the subject of the infinitive is the object of the preposition *for*. Object forms of pronouns are used.

Anna will be happy for ***them*** *to help you.* (NOT . . . ~~*for they to help you.*~~)

2 use

The structure is often used when we are referring to possibility, necessity or frequency, when we are expressing wishes, suggestions or plans for the future, and when we are giving personal reactions to situations. Like other infinitive structures, it is used especially after adjectives, nouns and verbs; it can also act as the subject of a clause. It often has the same meaning as a *that*-clause, but is generally less formal and often more natural. Compare:

It's important ***for the meeting to start*** *on time.*
It's important ***that the meeting should start*** *on time.*

3 after adjectives: *anxious for us to see . . .*

The structure ***for* + object + infinitive** can be used after certain adjectives which express wishes and other personal feelings about the importance or value of future events (e.g. *anxious, eager, delighted, willing, reluctant*).

adjective + *for* + object + infinitive

She's ***anxious for us to see*** *her work.*
I'm ***eager for the party to be*** *a success.*
Robert says he'd be ***delighted for Emily to come*** *and stay.* →

4 *It's impossible for . . . to . . .*

For-structures with preparatory *it* (► 268) are common with many adjectives expressing possibility, necessity, importance, urgency, frequency and value judgements.

it + verb + adjective + *for* + object + infinitive
verb + *it* + adjective + *for* + object + infinitive

It's impossible ***for the job to be*** *finished in time.*
Would ***it*** *be easy* ***for you to phone*** *me tomorrow?*
It's *important* ***for the meeting to start*** *at eight.*
It *seems unnecessary* ***for him to start*** *work this week.*
I consider ***it*** *essential* ***for the school to be*** *well heated.*
Is ***it*** *usual* ***for foxes to come*** *so close to the town?*
I thought ***it*** *strange* ***for her to be*** *out so late.*
It's *not good* ***for the oil tank to be*** *so close to the house.*

Other common adjectives that are used in this way include *vital, necessary, pointless, unimportant, common, normal, unusual, rare, right, wrong.* Note that *likely* and *probable* are not used like this.

She's ***likely to arrive*** *this evening.* (NOT ~~*It's likely for her to arrive this evening.*~~)
It's ***probable that she'll be*** *in a bad temper.* OR *She'll probably be . . .*
(NOT ~~*It's probable for her to be . . .*~~)

5 after nouns: *It's a good idea for us to . . .*

The structure can also be used after nouns in expressions with meanings similar to the adjectives listed above. Examples are: *time, a good/bad idea, plan, aim, need, request, mistake, shame.*

It's ***time for everybody to go*** *to bed.*
It's a good ***idea for us to travel*** *in separate cars.*
There's a ***plan for Jack to spend*** *a year in Japan.*
Our ***aim*** *is* ***for students to learn*** *as quickly as possible.*
It was a big ***mistake for them not to keep*** *John as manager.*
It was a real ***shame for them not to win*** *after all their work.*

6 *something for me to do*

Something, anything, nothing and similar words are often followed by ***for*** + **object** + **infinitive**.

Have you got ***something for me to do?***
There's ***nothing for the cats to eat.***
Is there ***anybody for Louise to play*** *with in the village?*
I must find ***somewhere for him to practise*** *the piano.*

7 after verbs: *ask for . . . to . . .*

For-structures are not normally used as objects after verbs.

I need you to help me. (NOT ~~*I need for you to help me.*~~)

However, verbs which are normally followed by *for* (e.g. *ask, hope, wait, look, pay, arrange*) can often be used with ***for* + object + infinitive**.

*Anna **asked for the designs to be** ready by Friday.*
*I can't **wait for them to finish** talking.*
*Can you **arrange for the gold to be** delivered on Monday?* (NOT . . . ~~*for the gold being delivered.*~~)

A few other verbs can be used like this, e.g. *suit* and *take (time).*

*When will it **suit you for us to call?***
*It **took** twenty minutes **for the smoke to clear.***

In informal American English, *like, hate, mean, intend* and some other verbs with similar meanings can be used with a *for*-structure. This is not usually possible in British English.

*I would **like for you to stay** as long as you want.*
*She **hates for people to feel** sad.*
*Did you **mean for Jack to take** the car?*

8 after *too* and *enough*

A *for*-structure is often used after *too* and *enough*.

*This is much **too** heavy **for you to lift.***
*There are **too** many people here **for me to talk** to all of them.*
*Do you think it's warm **enough for the snow to melt?***
*I explained **enough for her to understand** what was happening.*

9 as subject

The *for*-structure can be the subject of a clause.

***For us to fail** now would be a disaster.*
***For her to lose** the election would make me very happy.*

However, it is more common for a structure with preparatory *it* to be used (► 113.4 above).

***It** would make me very happy **for her to lose** the election.*

10 *for there to be*

The infinitive of *there is* (*there to be*) can be used after *for*.

*I'm anxious **for there to be** plenty of time for discussion.*
*It's important **for there to be** a fire escape at the back of the building.*

11 *that*-clauses

Instead of ***for* + object + infinitive**, a *that*-clause with *should* or a subjunctive (► 232) is often possible, especially when we want to express wishes, recommendations, suggestions and plans for the future. A *that*-clause is usually more formal than a *for*-structure.

*It is important **that there should be** a fire escape.*
*I'm anxious **that the party should be** a success.*
*His idea is **that we should travel** in separate cars.*
*It is essential **that the meeting start** at eight.*

For sentences like *He made it difficult for us to refuse*, ► 269.

114 *infinitives*: other uses

1 *I arrived home to find . . .*

Infinitive clauses can be used to say what somebody found out or learnt at the end of a journey or task.

I arrived home ***to find that the house had been broken into.***

The idea of surprise or disappointment can be emphasised by using *only*.

At last we got to Amy's place, ***only to discover that she was away.***
He spent four years studying, ***only to learn that there were no jobs.***

2 *To hear her talk, you'd think . . .*

The infinitives of *see* and *hear* can be used to explain the reason for a false impression. The infinitive structure is usually followed by *you'd think* or a similar expression.

To see them, you'd think *they were married. But they only met yesterday.*
To see him walk *down the street,* ***you'd never know*** *he was blind.*
To hear her talk, you'd think *she was made of money.*

3 *to be honest*

Some infinitive phrases are used to show the speaker's attitude or purpose in speaking.

To be honest, *I think you're making a mistake.*
To tell the truth, *I'm not sure what to do now.*
To sum up, *I think we all accept John's proposal.*
To put it another way, *we're spending more than we're earning.*

115 participle clauses

1 structures

Participles can combine with other words into participle clauses with active or passive meanings.

There's a woman ***crying her eyes out*** *over there.*
Most of the people ***invited to the reception*** *were old friends.*
Not knowing what to do, *I telephoned the police.*
Served with milk and sugar, *it makes a delicious breakfast.*
Who's the old man ***sitting in the corner?***
Rejected by society, *he decided to become a monk.*

2 after nouns: *the people invited to the party*

Participle clauses can be used after nouns and pronouns.

We can offer you a ***job cleaning cars****.*
There's ***Neville, eating as usual****.*
In came ***the first runner, closely followed by the second****.*
I found ***him sitting at a table covered with papers****.*

Participle clauses used like this are 'reduced relative clauses' (► 237.11).

Who's ***the girl dancing with your brother?*** (= . . . the girl who is dancing . . .)
Anyone touching that wire *will get a shock.* (= Anyone who touches . . .)
Half of ***the people invited to the party*** *didn't turn up.* (= . . . who were invited . . .)

Perfect participles are not often used in this way.

Do you know anybody ***who's lost a cat?*** (NOT ~~*Do you know anybody having lost a cat?*~~)

3 adverbial clauses: *Putting down my paper, I . . .*

Participle clauses can also be used in similar ways to full adverbial clauses, expressing condition, reason, time relations, result, etc. (This can only happen, of course, when the idea of condition, reason, etc is so clear that no conjunction is needed to signal it.) Adverbial participle clauses are usually rather formal.

Used economically*, one can will last for six weeks.* (= If it is used . . .)
Having failed my medical exams*, I took up teaching.* (= As I had failed . . .)
Putting down my newspaper*, I walked over to the window.* (= After I had put down my newspaper, . . .)
It rained for two weeks on end, ***completely ruining our trip****.* (= . . . so that it completely ruined our trip.)

Note that *-ing* clauses can be made with verbs like *be*, *have*, *wish* and *know*, which are not normally used in progressive tenses (► 4). In these cases, the participle clause usually expresses reason or cause.

Being unable to help in any other way*, I gave her some money.*
Not wishing to continue my studies*, I decided to become a dress designer.*
Knowing her pretty well*, I realised something was wrong.*

4 misrelated participles: *Looking out of the window, the mountains . . .*

Normally the subject of an adverbial participle clause is the same as the subject of the main clause in a sentence.

My wife had a talk with Sophie, ***explaining the problem****.* (*My wife* is the subject of *explaining*.)

It is often considered incorrect to make sentences with misrelated participles (often called 'dangling participles'), where an adverb clause has a different subject from the main clause.

Looking out of the window of our hotel room*, the mountains were covered with snow.* (This could sound as if the mountains were looking out of the window.)
Wrapped in red and gold gift paper*, I delivered the parcel to my girlfriend.* →

However, sentences like these are common and often seem quite natural, particularly when the main clause has preparatory *it* or *there* as a subject.

***Being French**, it's surprising that she's such a terrible cook.*
***Having so little time**, there was not much that I could do.*

Misrelated participles are normal in some fixed expressions referring to the speaker's attitude. Examples:

***Generally speaking**, men can run faster than women.*
***Broadly speaking**, dogs are more faithful than cats.*
***Judging from** his expression, he's in a bad mood.*
***Considering everything**, it wasn't a bad year.*
***Supposing** there was a war, what would you do?*
***Taking everything into consideration**, they ought to get another chance.*

5 participle clauses with their own subjects

A participle clause can have its own subject. This happens most often in a rather formal style.

***Nobody** having any more to say, the meeting was closed.*
***All the money** having been spent, we started looking for work.*
*A little girl walked past, **her doll** dragging behind her on the pavement.*
***Hands** held high, the dancers circle to the right.*

The subject is often introduced by *with* when the clause expresses accompanying circumstances.

*A car roared past **with smoke** pouring from the exhaust.*
***With Daniel** working in Birmingham, and Lucy travelling most of the week, the house seems pretty empty.*

6 participle clauses after conjunctions and prepositions

-ing clauses can be used after many conjunctions and prepositions. They are common with *after, before, since, when, while, on, without, instead of, in spite of* and *as*.

***After talking** to you I always feel better.*
***After having annoyed** everybody he went home.*
*Switch off printer **before replacing** roller.*
*She's been quite different **since coming** back from America.*
***When telephoning** from abroad, dial 1865, not 01865.*
***On being introduced**, British people often shake hands.*
*They left **without saying** goodbye.*
*She struck me **as being** a very nervy kind of person.*

Clauses with past participles are possible (mostly in a formal style) after *if, when, while, once* and *until*.

***If asked** to look after luggage for someone else, inform police at once.*
***When opened**, consume within three days.*
***Once deprived** of oxygen, the brain dies.*
*Leave in oven **until cooked** to a light brown colour.*

For clauses like *when ready*, ► 251.5.

7 object complements

The structure **object + participle (clause)** is used after verbs of sensation (e.g. *see, hear, feel, watch, notice, smell*) and some other verbs (e.g. *find, get, have, make*).

*I **saw a small girl standing** in the goldfish pond.*
*Have you ever **heard a nightingale singing?***
*I **found her drinking** my whisky.*
*We'll have to **get the car repaired** before Tuesday.*
*Do you think you can **get the radio working?***
*We'll soon **have you walking** again.*
*I can **make myself understood** pretty well in English.*

For more about structures with *see* and *hear*, ► 110. For *get*, ► 108.
For *have*, ► 109. For *make*, ► 107.

Section 11 Nouns and Noun Phrases; Agreement

INTRODUCTION

Nouns are words like *house, team, idea, arrival, confusion, Canada*. Together (usually) with other words such as determiners or adjectives, they form **noun phrases**, which act as subjects, objects and complements in sentences.

***Our house** was miles from anywhere.*
*Anna's had **a great idea**.*
*The discussion left us in **considerable confusion**.*

Names of people, places, events, etc, (e.g. *Alice, Canada, Christmas*) are called **proper nouns**; they are grammatically different from other (**common**) **nouns** in some ways – for instance, they may not have articles (► 136.6).

countable/uncountable

English makes a distinction between **countable** and **uncountable** (or **mass**) nouns. Countable nouns (e.g. *horse, microphone*) are typically words for classes of separable things that can be counted; uncountable nouns (e.g. *water, oxygen*) are typically words for mass-like materials, substances, etc that can't be separated into countable units. Countable nouns can be singular or plural (e.g. *horse, horses*); uncountable nouns are generally singular in form; and there are other grammatical differences between the two groups.

The countable-uncountable distinction is partly to do with the way things really are: clearly horses and microphones are separate objects, water and oxygen aren't. But it is also partly to do with the way things are seen. Wool can be seen as a mass or as separate strands: English chooses to make *wool* uncountable. *Aggression* and *attack* express similar ideas, but the first is generally uncountable and the second countable.

possessive

Besides singular and plural forms, nouns can also have **possessive** forms (e.g. *horse's, microphones'*).

agreement

1. Singular noun-phrase subjects are generally used with a special present-tense verb form (e.g. *works, goes*). For information about noun-verb agreement in some special cases, ► 128–130.
2. Some determiners (e.g. *an, each, many, much*) are only used with certain kinds of noun: singular, plural or uncountable. ► Sections 12–13 for details.

nouns in combination

English can put two or more nouns together in three ways:

- possessive noun + noun (e.g. *the **doctor's secretary***)
- noun + noun (e.g. ***garden furniture***)
- noun + preposition + noun (e.g. *the **head of the department***).

This is a very complicated area of English grammar. General guidelines are given in entries 124–127, but, unfortunately, there is no easy way to be quite sure which structure is used to express a particular compound idea. The most common expressions will be learnt by experience; in case of doubt a good dictionary will often show which form is correct or most natural.

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- ✗ The children were climbing like monkies. ▸ 116.1
- ✗ A new disease is affecting much cattle. ▸ 117.7
- ✗ A number of people has replied to my advertisement. ▸ 128.2
- ✗ Half of them lives in Scotland. ▸ 128.2
- ✗ Where are those five pounds I lent you? ▸ 129.1
- ✗ Tell the children to blow their nose. ▸ 131.1
- ✗ Did you have a good travel? ▸ 119.3
- ✗ Let me give you an advice. ▸ 119.3
- ✗ Good evening. Here are the news. ▸ 117.3
- ✗ Is there a parking near here? ▸ 119.3
- ✗ We're having a terrible weather. ▸ 119.1
- ✗ You speak an excellent English. ▸ 120.4
- ✗ I'm doing an interesting work. ▸ 119.3
- ✗ We were shown the childrens' room. ▸ 123.1
- ✗ How did the cat get onto the house's roof? ▸ 124.3
- ✗ I eat an awful lot of chocolate milk. ▸ 125.1
- ✗ My sister works in a shoes shop. ▸ 125.2
- ✗ All the staff were showing tiredness signs. ▸ 126.1
- ✗ Can you change a hundred euros note? ▸ 125.3
- ✗ Please stop kicking the table's leg. ▸ 127.3

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116 spelling of plurals

The plural of most nouns is made by just adding *-s* to the singular. But there are some special cases.

1 plural of nouns ending in consonant + *y*

If the singular ends in **consonant + *y*** (for example *-by, -dy, -ry, -ty*), the plural is normally made by changing *y* to *i* and adding *-es*.

Singular	Plural
. . . consonant + *y*	. . . consonant + *ies*
baby	*babies*
lady	*ladies*
ferry	*ferries*
party	*parties*

If the singular ends in **vowel + *y*** (e.g. ***day, boy, guy, donkey***), the plural is made by adding *-s* (***days, boys, guys, donkeys***).
Proper names ending in **consonant + *y*** usually have plurals in *-ys*.

*Do you know the **Kennedys**?* (NOT . . . ~~*the Kennedies?*~~) *I hate **Februarys**.*

2 plural of nouns ending in *-sh, -ch, -s, -x* or *-z*

If the singular ends in *-sh, -ch, -s, -x* or *-z*, the plural is made by adding *-es*.
Exceptions: words ending in *ch* pronounced /k/ (e.g. *stomach/stomachs, monarch/monarchs*).

Singular	Plural
. . . *ch/sh/s/x/z*	. . . *ches/shes/ses/xes/zes*
church	*churches*
crash	*crashes*
bus	*buses*
box	*boxes*
buzz	*buzzes*

Nouns ending in a single *-z* have plurals in *-zzes*: *quiz/quizzes, fez/fezzes*.

3 plural of nouns ending in *-o*

Most nouns ending in *-o* have plurals in *-s*. Examples:

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
avocado	*avocados*	*photo*	*photos*
commando	*commandos*	*piano*	*pianos*
concerto	*concertos*	*radio*	*radios*
euro	*euros*	*solo*	*solos*
kilo	*kilos*	*soprano*	*sopranos*
logo	*logos*	*zoo*	*zoos*

Some nouns ending in *-o* have plurals in *-es*. The most common:

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
echo	*echoes*	*tomato*	*tomatoes*
hero	*heroes*	*torpedo*	*torpedoes*
potato	*potatoes*	*veto*	*vetoes*

The following nouns can have plurals in *-s* or *-es*; *-es* is more common.

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
buffalo	*buffalo(e)s*	*motto*	*motto(e)s*
cargo	*cargo(e)s*	*tornado*	*tornado(e)s*
mosquito	*mosquito(e)s*	*volcano*	*volcano(e)s*

117 irregular and special plurals

1 irregular plurals in *-ves*

The following nouns ending in *-f(e)* have plurals in *-ves*.

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
calf	*calves*	*self*	*selves*
elf	*elves*	*sheaf*	*sheaves*
half	*halves*	*shelf*	*shelves*
knife	*knives*	*thief*	*thieves*
leaf	*leaves*	*wife*	*wives*
life	*lives*	*wolf*	*wolves*
loaf	*loaves*		

Dwarf, hoof, scarf and *wharf* can have plurals in either *-fs* or *-ves*. *Hooves, scarves* and *wharves* are more common than the plurals in *-fs*.
Other words ending in *-f(e)* have regular plurals, for example *roofs, beliefs, safes.*

2 other irregular plurals

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
child	*children*	*ox*	*oxen*
foot	*feet*	*penny*	*pence*
goose	*geese*	*person*	*people*
louse	*lice*	*tooth*	*teeth*
man	*men*	*woman*	*women*
mouse	*mice*		

The regular plural *pennies* can be used to talk about separate penny coins (and one-cent coins in the USA); *pence* is used to talk about prices and sums of money. Some British people now use *pence* as a singular (e.g. *That'll be three pounds and one pence, please*).
Persons is sometimes used as a plural of *person* in official language. There is also a singular noun *people* (plural *peoples*) meaning 'nation'. →

3 plural same as singular

Some words ending in *-s* do not change in the plural. Common examples:

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
barracks	*barracks*	*series*	*series*
crossroads	*crossroads*	*species*	*species*
headquarters	*headquarters*	*Swiss*	*Swiss*
means	*means*	*works* (= factory)	*works*

Note that some singular uncountable nouns end in *-s*. These have no plurals. Examples are *news*, *billiards*, *draughts* (and some other names of games ending in *-s*), *measles* (and some other illnesses).

*Here **is** the news.* (NOT ~~*Here are the news.*~~)

Most words ending in *-ics* (e.g. *mathematics*, *physics*, *athletics*) are normally singular uncountable and have no plural use.

*Too **much mathematics** is usually taught in schools.* (NOT ~~*Too many mathematics are*~~. . .)

Some words ending in *-ics* (e.g. *politics*, *statistics*) can also have plural uses.

***Politics is** a complicated business.* (BUT *What **are** your **politics**?*)

***Statistics is** useful in language testing.* (BUT *The unemployment **statistics are** disturbing.*)

Other nouns which do not change in the plural are *craft* (meaning 'vehicle'), *aircraft*, *hovercraft*, *spacecraft*, *Chinese*, *Japanese* (and other nationality nouns ending in *-ese*), *sheep*, *deer*, *fish*, and the names of some other living creatures, especially those that are hunted or used for food. *Fish* has a rare plural *fishes*, but the normal plural is *fish*.

Dozen, *hundred*, *thousand*, *million*, *stone* (= 14 pounds) and *foot* (= 12 inches) have plurals without *-s* in some kinds of expressions. For details, ► 322.14.

Dice (used in board games) is originally the plural of an old noun *die*. In modern English it is used as both singular and plural.

Data is originally the plural of *datum*, which is not now used. In modern English *data* can be used either as an uncountable noun (*this data is . . .*) or as a plural (*these data are . . .*), with no difference of meaning. The uncountable use is more common in modern English.

Media is originally the plural of *medium*. The plural expression *the media* (meaning 'radio, TV, newspapers, the internet . . .') is now quite often used as an uncountable noun with a singular verb.

4 foreign plurals

Some words which come from foreign languages have special plurals. Examples:

Singular	Plural
analysis	*analyses* (Latin)
appendix	*appendices* (Latin)
bacterium	*bacteria* (Latin)
basis	*bases* (Greek)
cactus	*cacti* (Latin) OR *cactuses* (less common)
corpus	*corpora* (Latin)

Singular	Plural
crisis	*crises* (Greek)
criterion	*criteria* (Greek)
diagnosis	*diagnoses* (Greek)
formula	*formulae* (Latin) OR *formulas*
fungus	*fungi* (Latin) OR *funguses*
hypothesis	*hypotheses* (Greek)
kibbutz	*kibbutzim* (Hebrew)
nucleus	*nuclei* (Latin)
oasis	*oases* (Greek)
phenomenon	*phenomena* (Greek)
radius	*radii* (Latin)
stimulus	*stimuli* (Latin)
vertebra	*vertebrae* (Latin)

Note that some foreign plurals (e.g. *agenda*, *spaghetti*) are singular in English (► 119.5).

5 plurals in *'s*

An apostrophe (') can be used before the *-s* in the plurals of letters of the alphabet, and sometimes in the plurals of dates and abbreviations.

*She wrote 'necessary' with two **c's**.*
*I loved **the 1990's**.* (*the 1990s* is more common)
***PC's** are getting cheaper.* (*PCs* is more common)

It is not correct to use *-'s* in other plurals, e.g. ~~*jean's*~~.

6 compound nouns

In **noun + adverb** combinations, the plural *-s* is usually added to the noun.

Singular	Plural
passer-by	***passers**-by*
runner-up	***runners**-up*

The plural of *mother-in-law* and similar words is generally ***mothers**-in-law*, etc, but some people use *mother-**in-laws***, etc. The plural of *court martial* (= military court or military trial) is either ***courts** martial* (more formal) or *court **martials*** (less formal).

In **noun + noun** combinations, the first noun is usually singular in form even if the meaning is plural (e.g. ***shoe** shop*). There are some exceptions. (► 125.4).

7 plurals with no singular forms

Cattle is a plural word used to talk collectively about bulls, cows and calves; it has no singular, and cannot be used for counting individual animals (one cannot say, for instance, ~~*three cattle*~~).

*At one time **many cattle** suffered from a disease called BSE.*
(NOT ~~*Much cattle suffered*~~ . . .)

Police, *staff* and *crew* are generally used in the same way.

***The police are** looking for a fair-haired man in his twenties.*
(NOT ~~*The police is looking*~~ . . . OR ~~*A police*~~ . . .)

***The staff are** on strike.* BUT *A member of staff said . . .* (NOT ~~*A staff*~~ . . .)

However, numbers are sometimes used before these three words (e.g. *four staff*, *six crew*). →

The expressions *the British, the Dutch, the English, the French, the Irish, the Spanish* and *the Welsh* (► 188.2) are also plural, with no singular forms.

In 1581 ***the Dutch*** *declared their independence from Spain.* (BUT *A Dutchman came into the shop.* NOT ~~*A Dutch*~~ . . .)

Trousers, jeans, pyjamas (AmE *pajamas*), *pants, tights, shorts, scales, scissors, glasses, spectacles* (meaning 'glasses'), *goggles, binoculars, pliers,* and the names of many similar objects that consist of two parts are plural, and have no singular forms. (The equivalent words in some other languages are singular.)

Your ***jeans are*** *too tight.* (NOT ~~*Your jean is*~~ . . .)

'Where ***are*** *my* ***glasses?'*** *'****They're*** *on your nose.'*

To talk about individual items, we can use *a pair of* (► 121.3).

Have you got ***a pair of nail scissors?***

Other common words which are normally plural and don't have singular forms include:

arms (= guns, etc), *clothes* (► 423), *congratulations, contents, customs* (at a frontier), *earnings, funds* (= money), *goods, groceries, leftovers, lodgings, manners* (= social behaviour), *the Middle Ages* (a period in history), *oats* (but *corn, wheat, barley* and *rye* are singular uncountable), *odds* (= chances), *odds-and-ends, outskirts, premises* (= building), *proceeds, refreshments, regards, remains, savings, supplies, surroundings, thanks, troops, valuables, wages.*

Congratulations *on your new job.* (NOT ~~*Congratulation*~~ . . .)

She lives on ***the outskirts*** *of Cambridge.* (NOT . . . ~~*the outskirt*~~ . . .)

For cases where plural nouns are used with singular verbs and pronouns (and the opposite), ► 128–129.

118 pronunciation of plurals

1 nouns ending in /s/, /z/ and other sibilants

After one of the sibilant sounds /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/ and /dʒ/, the plural ending *-es* is pronounced /ɪz/.

buses /ˈbʌsɪz/	*crashes* /ˈkræʃɪz/	*watches* /ˈwɒtʃɪz/
quizzes /ˈkwɪzɪz/	*garages* /ˈgærɑːʒɪz/	*bridges* /ˈbrɪdʒɪz/

2 nouns ending in other unvoiced sounds

After any other unvoiced sound (/p/, /f/, /θ/, /t/ or /k/), the plural ending *-(e)s* is pronounced /s/.

cups /kʌps/	*cloths* /klɒθs/	*books* /bʊks/
beliefs /bɪˈliːfs/	*plates* /pleɪts/	

3 nouns ending in other voiced sounds

After vowels, and all voiced consonants except /z/, /ʒ/ and /dʒ/, the plural ending *-(e)s* is pronounced /z/.

days /deɪz/	*clothes* /kləʊðz/	*legs* /legz/
boys /bɔɪz/	*ends* /endz/	*dreams* /driːmz/
trees /triːz/	*hills* /hɪlz/	*songs* /sɒŋz/
knives /naɪvz/		

4 plurals with irregular pronunciation

Singular	Plural
house /haʊs/	*houses* /ˈhaʊzɪz/
bath /bɑːθ/	*baths* /bɑːθs/ OR /bɑːðz/
mouth /maʊθ/	*mouths* /maʊθs/ OR /maʊðz/
path /pɑːθ/	*paths* /pɑːθs/ OR /pɑːðz/
roof /ruːf/	*roofs* /ruːfs/ OR /ruːvz/
truth /truːθ/	*truths* /truːθs/ OR /truːðz/
wreath /riːθ/	*wreaths* /riːθs/ OR /riːðz/
youth /juːθ/	*youths* /juːθs/ OR /juːðz/

Third person singular forms (e.g. *catches, wants, runs*) and possessive forms (e.g. *George's, Mark's, Joe's*) follow the same pronunciation rules as regular plurals.

119 countable and uncountable nouns: basic information

1 the difference

Countable nouns are the names of separate objects, people, ideas, etc, which can be counted. We can use numbers and the article *a/an* with countable nouns; they have plurals.

a cat *a newspaper* *three cats* *two newspapers*

Uncountable (or **mass**) nouns are the names of materials, liquids, abstract qualities, collections and other things which we see as masses without clear boundaries, and not as separate objects. Some examples:

oil	*water*	*steel*
oxygen	*plastic*	*granite*
baggage	*clothing*	*cutlery*
crockery	*equipment*	*furniture*
jewellery	*luggage*	*machinery*
underwear	*weather*	

We cannot use numbers with uncountable nouns, and most are singular with no plurals. We do not normally use *a/an* with uncountable nouns, though there are some exceptions (► 120.4).

clear water (NOT ~~*a clear water, two clear waters*~~)
pure wool (NOT ~~*a pure wool, two pure wools*~~)
bad weather (NOT ~~*a bad weather, three bad weathers*~~)

Some determiners can only be used with countable nouns (e.g. *many, few*); others can only be used with uncountables (e.g. *much, little*). Compare:

*How **many hours** do you work?* *How **much money** do you earn?*

Note that very many nouns are not simply countable or uncountable: they have countable or uncountable **uses** (► 119.4–119.7 below). →

2 problems

Usually it is easy to see whether a noun is countable or uncountable. Obviously *house* is normally a countable noun, and *water* is not. But it is not always so clear: compare *a journey* (countable) and *travel* (uncountable); *a glass* (countable) and *glass* (uncountable); *vegetables* (countable) and *fruit* (uncountable). The following rules will help, but to know exactly how a particular noun can be used, it is necessary to check in a good dictionary.

3 *travel* and *a journey*; *a piece of advice*

Travel and *journey* have very similar meanings, but *travel* is normally uncountable (it means 'travelling in general', and we do not talk about 'a travel'), while *journey* is countable (*a journey* is one particular movement from one place to another) and can have a plural: *journeys*.

*I like **travel**, but it's often tiring.* *Did you have **a good journey**?*

Often we can make an uncountable word countable by putting *a piece of* or a similar expression in front of it.

*He never listens to **advice**.* *Can I give you **a piece of advice**?*

Here are some other examples of general–particular pairs. (Note that some words that are uncountable in English have countable equivalents in other languages.)

Uncountable	Countable
accommodation	*a place to live* (NOT ~~*an accommodation*~~)
baggage	*a piece/item of baggage; a case/trunk/bag*
bread	*a piece/slice/loaf of bread; a loaf; a roll*
chess	*a game of chess*
chewing gum	*a piece of chewing gum* (NOT ~~*a chewing gum*~~)
equipment	*a piece of equipment; a tool*, etc
furniture	*a piece/article of furniture; a table, chair*, etc
information	*a piece of information*
knowledge	*a fact*
lightning	*a flash of lightning*
luck	*a piece/bit/stroke of luck*
luggage	*a piece/item of luggage; a case/trunk/bag*
money	*a note; a coin; a sum of money*
news	*a piece of news*
poetry	*a poem*
progress	*a step forward; an advance*
publicity	*an advertisement*
research	*a piece of research; a study; an experiment*
rubbish	*a piece of rubbish*
slang	*a slang word/expression*
thunder	*a clap of thunder*
traffic	*cars*, etc
vocabulary	*a word; an expression*
work	*a piece of work; a job*

Note that some English uncountable nouns or *-ing* forms may be borrowed into other languages and turned into countable nouns. This happens, for instance, with *parking*: in English it means the activity of parking in general; French uses *un parking* to mean 'a car park'. The same has happened with *training* and *planning* (used in several other languages, but not usually in English, to mean 'training session/course' and 'planning operation/meeting' respectively).

4 materials: *glass, paper,* etc

Words for materials are uncountable, but we can often use the same word as a countable noun to refer to something made of the material. Compare:

– *I'd like some typing* ***paper****.*
I'm going out to buy ***a paper*** (= a newspaper)
– *The window's made of unbreakable* ***glass****.*
Would you like ***a glass*** *of water?*

Nouns for materials, liquids, etc can be countable when they are used to talk about different types.

Not all washing ***powders*** *are kind to your hands.*
We have a selection of fine ***wines*** *at very good prices.*

The same thing happens when we talk about ordering drinks. Compare:

Have you got ***any coffee****?*
Could I have ***two coffees****?* (= cups of coffee)

5 *fruit, rice, wheat, spaghetti, hair; vegetables, peas, grapes*

Many things (e.g. *rice, grapes*) can be seen either as a collection of separate elements or as a mass. Some names for things of this kind are uncountable, while others are countable (usually plural). Things that come in small grains (e.g. *sand, rice*) are usually uncountable; collections made of larger grain-like things (e.g. *peas, grapes*) are more often countable. But the difference is not very systematic: compare *gravel* and *pebbles*. Note that some words of this kind (e.g. *grapes*) may be countable in English and uncountable in certain other languages.

Uncountable: *fruit, rice, spaghetti, macaroni* (and other pasta foods), *sugar, salt, corn, wheat, barley, rye, maize, gravel.*

Countable: *vegetable(s), bean(s), pea(s), grape(s), lentil(s), pebble(s).*

Fruit is *very expensive, but* ***vegetables are*** *cheap.*
Is *the* ***spaghetti*** *ready?* *These* ***grapes are*** *sour.*

Hair is normally uncountable in English.

His ***hair is*** *black.*

But one strand of hair is *a hair* (countable).

So why has he got ***two*** *blonde* ***hairs*** *on his jacket?*

For words that are used to talk about one 'piece' of uncountable collections (e.g. *a grain of corn, a blade of grass*), ► 121.

6 abstract nouns: *time, life, experience,* etc

Many abstract nouns can have both uncountable and countable uses, often corresponding to more 'general' and more 'particular' meanings. Compare:

– *Don't hurry – there's plenty of* ***time****.*
Have ***a*** *good* ***time****.*
There are ***times*** *when I just want to stop work.* →

– *Life is complicated.*
*He's had **a** really difficult **life**.*
– *She hasn't got enough **experience** for the job.*
*I had some strange **experiences** last week.*
– *It's hard to feel **pity** for people like that.*
*It's **a pity** it's raining.*
– *Your plan needs more **thought**.*
*I had some frightening **thoughts** in the night.*
– *I need to practise **conversation**.*
*Megan and I had **a** very interesting **conversation**.*

For more about *time*, ► 608; for *life*, ► 513.

7 illnesses

The names of illnesses are usually singular uncountable in English, including those ending in *-s*.

*If you've already had **measles**, you can't get **it** again.*
*There **is** a lot of **flu** around at the moment.*

The words for some minor ailments are countable: e.g. *a cold, a sore throat, a headache*. However, *toothache, earache, stomach ache* and *backache* are usually uncountable in British English. In American English, these words are generally countable if they refer to particular attacks of pain. Compare:

*I've got **toothache**.* (BrE) *I have **a toothache**.* (AmE)

For *the* with *measles, flu*, etc, ► 142.15.

For more information on the use of articles with countable and uncountable nouns, ► 137.

120 countable and uncountable nouns: advanced points

1 *20 square metres of wall*

Singular countable nouns are sometimes used as uncountables (e.g. with *much, enough, plenty of* or *a lot of*) in order to express the idea of amount.

*There's enough paint for 20 square metres of **wall**.*
*I've got **too much nose** and **not enough chin**.*
*If you buy one of these, you get **plenty of car** for your money.*

2 *not much difference*

Some countable abstract nouns can be used uncountably after *little, much* and other determiners. Common examples are *difference, point, reason, idea, change, difficulty, chance* and *question*.

*There's **not much difference** between 'begin' and 'start'.*
*I don't see **much point** in arguing about it.*
*We have **little reason** to expect prices to fall.*
*I haven't got **much idea** of her plans.*
*There isn't **any change** in his condition.*

*They had **little difficulty** in stealing the painting.*
*Do you think we have **much chance** of catching the train?*
*There's **some question** of our getting a new Managing Director.*

Note the expression *have difficulty (in) . . .ing.*

*I **have difficulty (in) remembering** faces.* (NOT ~~*I have difficulties . . .*~~)

3 *in all weathers; on your travels*

A few uncountable nouns have plural uses in fixed expressions.

*He goes running **in all weathers**.*
*Did you meet anybody exciting **on your travels?***
Gulliver's Travels (novel by Jonathan Swift)

4 *a/an* with uncountable nouns: *a first-class knowledge*

With certain uncountable nouns – especially nouns referring to human emotions and mental activity – we often use *a/an* when we are limiting their meaning in some way.

*We need a secretary with **a first-class knowledge** of German.*
(NOT . . . ~~*with first-class knowledge of German.*~~)
*She has always had **a deep distrust** of strangers.*
*That child shows **a surprising understanding** of adult behaviour.*
*My parents wanted me to have **a good education**.*
(NOT . . . ~~*to have good education.*~~)
*You've been **a great help**.*
*I need **a good sleep**.*

Note that these nouns cannot normally be used in the plural, and that most uncountable nouns cannot be used with *a/an* at all, even when they have an adjective.

*My father enjoys **very good health**.* (NOT . . . ~~*a very good health.*~~)
*We're having **terrible weather**.* (NOT . . . ~~*a terrible weather.*~~)
*He speaks **excellent English**.* (NOT . . . ~~*an excellent English.*~~)
*It's **interesting work**.* (NOT . . . ~~*an interesting work.*~~)
*His speech did serious **damage** to his chances of election.* (NOT . . . ~~*a serious damage . . .*~~)

5 plural uncountables: *the groceries; the customs*

Some uncountable nouns are plural. They have no singular forms with the same meaning, and cannot normally be used with numbers.

*I've bought the **groceries**.* (BUT NOT . . . ~~*a grocery.*~~ OR . . . ~~*three groceries.*~~)
*The Dover **customs** have found a large shipment of cocaine.*
(BUT NOT ~~*The Dover custom has . . .*~~)
*Many **thanks** for your help.* (BUT NOT ~~*Much thank . . .*~~)

For details, ► 117.7.

121 piece- and group-words: *a blade of grass; a bunch of flowers*

1 uncountable nouns: pieces

To talk about a limited quantity of something we can use a word for a piece or unit, together with *of*, before an uncountable noun. The most general words of this kind are *piece* and *bit*. *Bit* (informal) suggests a small quantity.

*a **piece/bit of** cake/bread* *some **pieces/bits of** paper/wood*
*a **piece/bit of** news/information*

Other words are less general, and are used before particular nouns. Some common examples:

*a **bar of** chocolate/soap*
*a **blade of** grass*
*a **drop of** water/oil/vinegar*
*a **grain of** sand/salt/rice/corn/dust/truth*
*an **item of** information/news/clothing/ furniture*
*a **length of** material*
*a **loaf of** bread*
*a **lump of** sugar/coal*
*a **slice of** bread/cake/meat*
*a **speck of** dust*
*a **sheet of** paper/metal/plast*
*a **stick of** dynamite/chalk/cel*
*a **strip of** cloth/tape/land*

2 *not a . . . of . . .*

Some words for small pieces can be used in a negative structure meaning 'no . . . at all'.

*There's **not a grain** of truth in what he says.*
*There has**n't** been **a breath** of air all day.*
*We have**n't** got **a scrap/bite** (of food) to eat.*
*He came downstairs **without a stitch** of clothing on.*

3 *pair*

Pair is used for many things that normally go in twos, and with plural nouns that refer to some two-part objects (► 117.7).

*a **pair of** shoes/boots/socks/earrings* *a **pair of** glasses/binoculars*
*a **pair of** trousers/jeans/shorts/pyjamas/leggings/tights* (BrE)*/pantyhose* (AmE)
*a **pair of** scissors/pliers/tweezers*

4 plural nouns: collections

Special words are used before certain plural nouns to talk about groups or collections.

*a **bunch of flowers*** *a **crowd of people*** *a **flock of sheep/birds***
*a **herd of cattle/goats*** *a **pack of cards*** (AmE a ***deck*** of cards)

Set is used before many uncountable and plural nouns referring to groups which contain a fixed number of things.

*a **set of** napkins/dishes/cutlery* (AmE *flatware/silverware*)*/*
spanners (AmE *wrenches*)

For *a bit* as a modifier before adjectives and adverbs, ► 406.
For *an amount, a lot, a large number,* etc, ► 172. For *sort, type, kind,* etc, ► 592.

122 noun + complement: What can follow a noun?

Many nouns, especially abstract nouns, can be followed by '**complements**' – other words and expressions that 'complete' their meaning. These complements can be prepositional phrases, infinitive expressions or clauses (with or without prepositions).

Luke's ***criticism of the plan*** *made him very unpopular.*
I hate the ***thought of leaving*** *you.*
Does she understand the ***need to keep*** *everything secret?*
I admire your ***belief that*** *you are always right.*
There's still the ***question of whether*** *we're going to pay her.*

Many nouns can be followed by more than one kind of complement.

He didn't give any ***reason for the changes****.*
You've no ***reason to get*** *angry.*
The main ***reason why*** *I don't believe her is this: . . .*

Not all nouns can be followed by all kinds of complement.

– *the* ***idea of*** *marriage*
the ***idea that*** *I might get married*
(BUT NOT ~~*the idea to get married*~~)
– ***freedom to*** *choose*
freedom of *choice*
(BUT NOT ~~*freedom of choosing*~~)

Note that a related noun and verb may have different kinds of complement.

I have no ***intention of resigning****.*
I do not ***intend to resign****.*

Nouns (possessive or not) can also act as modifiers of following nouns.

my father's *company* ***garden*** *furniture*

For details of **noun + noun structures**, ► 123–126.

Unfortunately, there is no easy way to decide which structures are possible after a particular noun. It is best to check in a good dictionary.

For more information about *-ing* forms after nouns, ► 103. For infinitives after nouns, ► 102.
For *should* in clauses after nouns, ► 264.6. For subjunctives in clauses after nouns, ► 232.
For the prepositions that are used after some common nouns, ► 213.
For prepositions before clauses, ► 210.
For relative clauses after nouns (e.g. *the people who live next door*), ► Section 21.

123 possessives: noun + 's (forms)

Forms like *John's, parents', children's* are generally called '**possessive**', although they express other ideas as well as possession.

1 spelling

singular noun + *'s*	*my* ***father's*** *car*
plural noun + *'*	*my* ***parents'*** *house*
irregular plural + *'s*	*the* ***children's*** *room,* ***men's*** *clothes,* ***women's*** *rights,* *an old* ***people's*** *home*

→

We sometimes just add an apostrophe (') to a singular noun ending in *-s*, especially in literary and classical references.

***Socrates'** ideas* ***Dickens'** novels*

But *'s* is more common.

***Mr Lewis's** dog*

We can add *'s* or *'* to a whole phrase.

***the man next door's** wife* ***Henry the Eighth's** six wives*

***the Smiths'** new house*

Note the difference between, for example:

***Joe and Anna's** children* (one lot of children: Joe and Anna are their parents)

***Joe's and Anna's** children* (two separate lots of children: Joe's and Anna's)

2 pronunciation

The ending *'s* is pronounced just like a plural ending (► 118).

doctor's /ˈdɒktəz/ *Jack's* /dʒæks/ *Madge's* /ˈmædʒɪz/

dog's /dɒgz/ *Alice's* /ˈælɪsɪz/ *James's* /ˈdʒeɪmzɪz/

president's /ˈprezɪdənts/

The apostrophe in a word like *parents'* does not change the pronunciation at all. But with singular classical (ancient Greek and Roman) names ending in *s'*, we often pronounce a possessive *'s* even when it is not written.

***Socrates'** /ˈsɒkrətiːzɪz/ ideas.*

124 nouns in combination: *my father's house*

1 possessive *'s* and other determiners

A possessive *'s* structure acts as a determiner (► Section 12) in a noun phrase. Compare:

***a** car* ***this** car* ***his** car* ***Jack's** car*

A noun cannot normally have an article or other determiner with it as well as a possessive word (► 143.3). Definite articles are usually dropped when possessives are used.

the car** that is Jack's = Jack's **car (NOT ~~*the Jack's car*~~ OR ~~*Jack's the car*~~)

But a possessive word may of course have its own article.

*the car that is **the boss's** = **the boss's** car*

When we want to use a noun with *a/an* or *this/that*, etc as well as a possessive, we usually use the *of mine*, etc construction (► 177).

*She's **a cousin of Jack's**.* (NOT . . . ~~*a Jack's cousin.*~~)

*I saw **that** stupid **boyfriend of Angie's** yesterday.* (NOT . . . ~~*that Angie's stupid boyfriend*~~ . . .)

2 meanings of the *'s* structure

We use the *'s* structure most often to talk about possessions, relationships and physical characteristics, especially when the first noun refers to a person or animal, or to a country, organisation or other group of living creatures.

*That's my **father's** house.* (NOT . . . ~~*the house of my father*~~)

***Emily's** brother is a lawyer.* (NOT ~~*The brother of Emily*~~ . . .)

*I don't like **Alice's** friends much.* ***Dan's** eyes are like yours.*

There's something wrong with the ***cat's*** *ear.*
Scotland's *climate is getting warmer.*
What do you think of the ***company's*** *management?*

We also use the structure to talk about things that people, etc produce.

I didn't believe the ***girl's*** *story.* *Have you read* ***Jack's*** *email?*
What are ***Norway's*** *main exports?*
The ***government's*** *decision was extremely unwise.*

With some words for people's actions, we can use either *'s* or a structure with *of*.

the ***Queen's*** *arrival* OR *the arrival* ***of the Queen***
the ***committee's*** *second meeting* OR *the second meeting* ***of the committee***

An *of*-structure is preferred when the 'possessing' expression is very long. Compare:

my ***sister's*** *husband*
the husband ***of the woman who sent you those papers***

3 *'s* not used: *the name of the street*

With nouns which are not the names of people, animals, countries, etc, *'s* is less common, and a structure with a preposition (usually *of*) is more normal.

the name ***of the street*** (NOT ~~*the street's name*~~)
the back ***of the room*** (NOT ~~*the room's back*~~)
the roof ***of the house*** (NOT ~~*the house's roof*~~)
the top ***of the page*** (NOT ~~*the page's top*~~)

However, both structures are possible in some expressions.

the ***earth's*** *gravity* OR *the gravity* ***of the earth***
the ***plan's*** *importance* OR *the importance* ***of the plan***
the ***concerto's*** *final movement* OR *the final movement* ***of the concerto***
the ***train's*** *arrival* OR *the arrival* ***of the train***
the ***world's*** *oldest mountains* OR *the oldest mountains* ***in the world*** (NOT . . . ~~*of the world*~~), ► 206.7

Unfortunately, it is not possible to give useful general rules in this area: the choice of structure often depends on the particular expression.

4 like a subject

Note that the *'s* structure often corresponds to a sentence in which the first noun is the subject of *have* or some other verb.

Joe's *brother* (Joe **has** a brother) *the* ***dog's*** *tail* (the dog **has** a tail)
America's *gold reserves* (America **has** gold reserves)
the ***manager's*** *decision* (the manager **made** a decision)
Harris's *novel* (Harris **wrote** a novel)

In a few cases, the first noun may correspond to the object of a verb.

the ***prisoner's*** *release* (they **released the prisoner**)

5 measurement of time: *a day's journey*

The *'s* structure (or the plural with *s'*) is often used to say how long things last.

a ***day's*** *journey* ***twenty minutes'*** *delay*

Noun + noun structures are also possible in expressions with numbers (► 125.3).

a ***three-hour*** *journey* *a* ***twenty-minute*** *delay* →

6 other expressions of time: *yesterday's news*

We can also use the *'s* structure to talk about particular moments and events.

***yesterday's** news* ***last Sunday's** match* ***tomorrow's** weather*

7 *worth*

Note the use of the *'s* structure before *worth*.

*a **pound's** worth of walnuts* ***three dollars'** worth of popcorn*

For the *'s* structure in compound nouns (e.g. *a doll's house, cow's milk*), ▶ 126.

8 possessive without a noun

We can use a possessive without a following noun, if the meaning is clear.

*'Whose is that?' '**Daniel's**.'*

We often talk about shops, companies, churches and people's houses in this way. The apostrophe is often dropped in the names of shops and companies.

*I bought it at **Smiths**.* *She got married at **St Joseph's**.*

*We had a nice time at **Jack and Susan's** last night.*

In modern English, expressions like *the doctor, the dentist, the hairdresser, the butcher* are often used without *'s*.

*Alice is at **the dentist('s)**.*

125 nouns in combination: *milk chocolate*

1 *milk chocolate; chocolate milk*

Many common ideas in English are expressed by **noun + noun** compounds. In this structure, the first noun modifies or describes the second, a little like an adjective. Compare:

- *milk chocolate* (a kind of chocolate)
  chocolate milk (a kind of milk)
- *a horse race* (a kind of race)
  a race horse (a kind of horse)
- *a garden flower* (a kind of flower)
  a flower garden (a kind of garden)

Noun + noun expressions are often related to structures where the second noun becomes a subject.

an oil well (the **well** produces oil)
a sheepdog (the **dog** looks after sheep)
a Birmingham man (the **man** comes from Birmingham)
the airport bus (the **bus** goes to the airport)

2 the first noun is singular: *a shoe shop*

Note that the first noun is usually singular in form, even if it has a plural meaning. (For exceptions, ▶ 125.4.)

***a shoe** shop* (= a shop that sells shoes)
a toothbrush (= a brush for teeth)
***a ticket** office* (= an office that sells tickets)
***a horse** race* (= a race for horses)
***coat** pockets* (= pockets in coats)

3 measurement: *a five-litre can*

Noun + noun is used in measurements, with a number before the first noun. The number is usually joined to the first noun by a hyphen (-). Note that the first noun is normally singular in form in these cases.

*a **five-litre** can* (NOT ~~*a five-litres can*~~)
*a **ten-pound** note* (NOT ~~*a ten-pounds note*~~)

*a **hundred-dollar** bill*	*a **six-pound** chicken*	*a **three-mile** walk*
*a **five-day** course*	*a **two-person** tent*	*ten **two-hour** lessons*

The number *one* is often left out.

*a **(one-)pint** mug*

In fractions, the plural *-s* is not usually dropped.

*a **two-thirds** share* (NOT ~~*a two-third share*~~)

Exception: *three quarters (a **three-quarter** length coat)*

4 exceptions: first noun plural – *a clothes shop*

Some nouns are plural in this structure, especially in British English. These include nouns which have no singular form (like *clothes*), nouns which are not used in the singular with the same meaning (like *customs*), and some nouns which are more often used in the plural than in the singular (like *savings*). In some cases, e.g. *antique(s)*, *drug(s)*, usage is divided, and both singular and plural forms are found. In general, plurals are becoming more common in this structure. Examples:

*a **clothes** shop*	*a **drinks** cabinet*
*a **glasses** case*	*a **goods** train* (British English)
*a **customs** officer*	*a **sports** car*
***arms** control*	*a **greeting(s)** card*
*a **savings** account*	*an **antique(s)** dealer/shop*
*the **accounts** department*	*the **drug(s)** problem*
*the **sales** department*	*the **arrival(s)** hall* (at an airport)

*the **outpatients** department* (of a hospital)

Note also that singular nouns ending in *-ics* can be used before other nouns.

***athletics** training* *an **economics** degree*

We use the plurals *men* and *women* to modify plural nouns when they have a 'subject' meaning; *man* and *woman* are used to express an 'object' meaning. Compare:

- ***men** drivers* (= men who drive)
  ***women** pilots* (= women who fly planes)
- ***man**-eaters* (= lions, tigers or other animals that eat people)
  ***woman**-haters* (= people who hate women)

5 articles

Articles belonging to the first (modifying) noun are dropped in **noun + noun** combinations.

***army** officers* (= officers in **the army**)
*a **sun** hat* (= a hat that protects you against **the sun**)

→

6 more than two nouns

More than two nouns can be put together. A group of two nouns can modify a third noun, these can modify a fourth, and so on.

***oil production** costs* ***road accident research** centre*

This kind of structure is very common in newspaper headlines (► 292) because it saves space.

FURNITURE FACTORY PAY CUT PROTEST

7 pronunciation

Most **noun + noun** combinations have the main stress on the first noun.

a ˈbicycle factory *a ˈfruit drink* *ˈski boots* *ˈcoffee beans*

However, there are quite a number of exceptions.

a garden ˈchair *a fruit ˈpie*

The difference between noun modifiers and adjectival modifiers is sometimes shown by stress. Compare:

a ˈGerman teacher (noun modifier: *a person who teaches German*)
a German ˈteacher (adjective modifier: *a teacher who is German*)

To be sure of the stress on a particular combination, it is necessary to check in a good dictionary. Note that there are occasional British–American differences.

For the stressing of road and street names, ► 570.

8 spelling

Some short common **noun + noun** combinations are generally written together like single words.

bathroom *toothbrush* *seaside*

Other combinations are generally written separately (e.g. *furniture shop*, *railway station*). Sometimes usage varies (e.g. *lampshade* or *lamp shade*), but except with very short common combinations like *bathroom*, it is usually acceptable to write the two words separately. **Noun + noun** combinations often used to be written with hyphens (e.g. *spectacle-case*), but this is now unusual.

For more information about the spelling of different kinds of compounds, ► 342.
For information about the most common current spelling of particular **noun + noun** expressions, see a good dictionary.

9 other structures

Not all compound ideas can be expressed by a **noun + noun** structure. Sometimes it is necessary to use a structure with *of* or another preposition; sometimes a structure with possessive *'s* is used.

*a feeling **of disappointment*** (NOT ~~*a disappointment feeling*~~)
*letters **from home*** (NOT ~~*home letters*~~)
***cow's** milk* (NOT ~~*cow milk*~~)

For more details, ► 126.

126 classifying expressions: noun + noun or preposition structure?

1 classifying expressions: *a sheepdog*

The **noun + noun** structure is mostly used to make 'classifying' expressions, which name a particular kind of thing.

mountain plants (a special group of plants)
mineral water (a sort of water)
a sheepdog (a particular kind of dog)

We use **noun + noun** especially to talk about things that belong to common well-known classes (so that the two nouns really describe a single idea). In other cases we prefer a preposition structure. Compare:

the postman, the milkman (well-known kinds of people who may call regularly at a British home)
a man from the health department (not a regular kind of visitor)

More examples:

– *He was reading a* ***history book****.* (a common cl~~*a moon book*~~)
He was reading a ***book about the moon****.* (NOT ~~*a moon book*~~)
– *She was sitting at a* ***corner table*** *in the restaurant.* (Restaurants often have corner tables.)
Who's the ***girl in the corner****?* (NOT ~~*Who's the corner girl?*~~)
– *What does that* ***road sign*** *say?*
She was showing ***signs of tiredness****.* (NOT . . . ~~*tiredness signs.*~~)

2 containers: *a matchbox; a box of matches*

Noun + noun is used for particular kinds of container.

a matchbox *a paint tin* *a coffee cup*

But we use the preposition structure (with *of*) to talk about a container together with its contents.

a box of matches *a tin of paint* *a cup of coffee*

3 units, selections and collections: *piece, group,* etc

We also prefer the *of*-structure with words that refer to units, selections and collections, like *piece, slice, lump* (of sugar), *bunch* (of flowers), *blade* (of grass), *pack* (of cards), *herd, flock, group* and so on.

a ***piece of*** *paper* (NOT ~~*a paper piece*~~)
a ***bunch of*** *flowers* (NOT ~~*a flower bunch*~~)

4 'made of': *a silk dress; silken skin*

Noun + noun is normally used to say what things are made of.

a silk dress *a stone bridge* *an iron rod* *a gold ring*

In older English, the *of*-structure was more common in this case (e.g. *a dress of silk, a bridge of stone*), and it is still used in some metaphorical expressions.

He rules his family with a ***rod of iron****.*
The flowers were like a ***carpet of gold****.* →

A few pairs of nouns and adjectives (e.g. *gold, golden*) are used as modifiers with different meanings. Generally the noun simply names the material something is made of, while the adjective has a more metaphorical meaning. Compare:

a ***gold*** *watch*	***golden*** *memories*
silk *stockings*	***silken*** *skin*
a ***lead*** *pipe*	*a* ***leaden*** *sky* (grey and depressing)
a ***stone*** *roof*	*a* ***stony*** *silence*

But *wooden* and *woollen* just mean 'made of wood/wool'.

127 classifying expressions with *'s*: *a child's toy; cow's milk*

1 noun + *'s* + noun: *children's clothes; a bird's nest*

In some classifying expressions we use a structure with possessive *'s*. This is common when we are talking about things that are used by a person or animal: the first noun refers to the user.

children's *clothes*	*a* ***man's*** *sweater*
women's *magazines*	*a* ***bird's*** *nest*

Generally, either both nouns are singular or both are plural.

a ***child's*** *toy*	***children's*** *clothes*

BUT *a* ***women's*** ***magazine***

Not all 'used by' expressions have possessive *'s*.

baby *clothes*	*a* ***bird****cage*

British and American usage sometimes differ. Compare:

a ***baby's*** *bottle* (BrE)	*a* ***baby*** *bottle* (AmE)
a ***baby's*** *pram* (BrE)	*a* ***baby*** *carriage* (AmE)
a ***doll's*** *house* (BrE)	*a* ***doll*** *house* (AmE)

2 noun + *'s* + noun: *cow's milk; a hen's egg*

The *'s* structure is often used for products from living animals.

cow's *milk*	***lamb's*** *wool*	*a* ***hen's*** *egg*
sheep's *wool*	*a* ***bird's*** *egg*	(BUT ***camel*** *hair,* ***horse****hair*)

When the animal is killed to provide something, we usually use **noun** + **noun**.

calf *skin*	***chamois*** *leather*	***fox*** *fur*
chicken *soup*	*a* ***lamb*** *chop*	***tortoise*** *shell*

3 parts: *a man's leg; a table leg*

We use the *'s* structure to talk about parts of people's and animals' bodies.

a ***man's*** *leg*	*an* ***elephant's*** *trunk*	*a* ***sheep's*** *heart*

But to talk about parts of non-living things, we usually use the **noun** + **noun** structure.

a ***table*** *leg* (NOT ~~*a table's leg*~~)	*a* ***car*** *door* (NOT USUALLY ~~*a car's door*~~)

4 pronunciation

Classifying expressions with possessive *'s* most often have the main stress on the first noun. Compare:

– *a ˈdoll's house* (a kind of house)
my brother's ˈhouse (not a kind of house)
– *ˈgoat's milk* (a kind of milk)
the goat's ˈtail (not a kind of tail)

Here, too, there are exceptions.

a child's ˈbicycle (a kind of bicycle)

For the use of structures with *'s* to talk about possession, relationships, etc, ► 124.

128 singular expressions with plural verbs

1 groups of people: *The team is/are . . .*

In British English, singular words like *family, team, government,* which refer to groups of people, can have either singular or plural verbs and pronouns.

*The team **is/are** going to lose.*

Plural forms are common when the group is seen as a collection of people doing personal things like deciding, hoping or wanting. Singular forms are more common when the group is seen as an impersonal unit. Compare:

– *My **family have decided** to move to York. **They're** going in April.*
*The average **family has** 3.6 members. **It is** smaller than 50 years ago.*
– *My **company are** wonderful. **They do** all they can for me.*
*My **company was** founded in the 18th century.*

We prefer *who* as a relative pronoun with plural forms, and *which* with singular forms. Compare:

*The committee, **who are** hoping to announce important changes, . . .*
*The committee, **which is** elected at the annual meeting, . . .*

When a group noun is used with a singular determiner (e.g. *a/an, each, every, this, that*), singular verbs and pronouns are normal. Compare:

***The team are** full of enthusiasm.*
***A team which is** full of enthusiasm **has** a better chance of winning.*
(More natural than *A team who are full . . .*)

Sometimes singular and plural forms are mixed.

*The group gave **its** first concert in June and **they are** now planning a tour.*

Examples of group nouns which can be used with both singular and plural verbs in British English:

bank	*company*	*government*	*public*
the BBC	*England* (the football team)	*jury*	*school*
choir		*ministry*	*staff*
class	*family*	*orchestra*	*team*
club	*firm*	*party*	*union*
committee			

In American English singular verbs are normal with most of these nouns in all cases (though *family* can have a plural verb). Plural pronouns can be used.

*The team **is** in Detroit this weekend. **They** expect to win.* →

2 *A number of people have . . .*

Many singular quantifying expressions (► 172) can be used with plural nouns and pronouns; plural verbs are normally used in this case.

***A number of people have** tried to find the treasure, but **they** have all failed.*
(More natural than *A number of people has tried . . .*)

***A group of us are** going to take a boat through the Dutch canals.*

***A couple of my friends plan** to open a travel agency.* (NOT ~~*A couple of my friends plans . . .*~~)

***A lot of social problems are** caused by unemployment.* (NOT ~~*A lot of social problems is caused . . .*~~)

***The majority of criminals are** non-violent.*

*Some of these people are relations and **the rest are** old friends.*

***Half of his students don't** understand a word he says.* (NOT ~~*Half of his students doesn't . . .*~~)

For more about some of these expressions, ► 172. For *the rest*, ► 569. For *(a) few*, ► 168.
For singular and plural nouns with fractions, ► 130.10.

129 plural expressions with singular verbs

1 amounts and quantities: *that five pounds*

When we talk about amounts and quantities we usually use singular determiners, verbs and pronouns, even if the noun is plural.

*Where **is that five pounds** I lent you?* (NOT ~~*Where are those five pounds . . .?*~~)

***Twenty miles is** a long way to walk.*

*'We've only got **five cans** of juice left.' '**That isn't** enough.'*

*More than **41 inches** of snow **has** fallen on the city this winter.*

2 calculations

Singular verbs are often possible after plural number subjects in spoken calculations.

*Two and two **is/are** four.*

*Ten times five **is** fifty.* (OR *Ten fives **are** fifty.*)

For more about spoken calculations, ► 322.21–322.22.

3 *more than one*

More than one is generally used with a singular noun and verb.

***More than one person is** going to have to find a new job.*

4 *one of . . .*

Expressions beginning *one of* normally have a plural noun and a singular verb.

***One of my friends is** getting married.* (NOT ~~*One of my friends are . . .*~~)

For singular and plural verbs in relative clauses after *one of . . .*, ► 130.1.

5 *and*

Some expressions joined by *and* have singular determiners, verbs and pronouns (► 130.4). This happens when the two nouns are used together so often that we think of them as a single idea.

This ***gin and tonic isn't*** *very strong,* ***is it?***
Your ***toast and honey is*** *on the table.*

6 countries and organisations: *The United States is . . .*

Plural names of countries usually have singular verbs and pronouns.

The United States is *anxious to improve* ***its*** *image in Latin America.*

Plural names of organisations may also have singular verbs and pronouns.

Consolidated Fruitgrowers has *just taken over Universal Foodstores.*

130 mixed singular and plural: other structures

In some complex structures, the same verb seems to belong with two different expressions, one singular and the other plural. And some noun phrases mix singular and plural elements.

1 *one of the few women who have climbed Everest*

After expressions like *one of the . . .* (► 544), singular and plural verbs are both used in relative clauses beginning *who, which* or *that.*

She's ***one of the few women*** *who* ***have/has*** *climbed Everest.*
This is ***one of those books*** *that* ***are/is*** *read by everybody.*

Strictly speaking, a plural verb is correct (to agree with *the few women who* or *those books that*). However, singular verbs are also very common in these structures. More examples:

One of the things *that really* ***make/makes*** *me angry is people who don't answer emails.*
We've got ***one of those Japanese cars*** *that never* ***break/breaks*** *down.*

2 *A serious problem is wasps.*

In English a verb normally agrees with the subject of a sentence, not with a following complement.



The biggest timewaster ***is*** *meetings.*
(NOT ~~*The biggest timewaster* ***are*** *meetings.*~~)



A serious problem in our garden ***is*** *wasps.*
(NOT ~~*A serious problem . . .* ***are*** *wasps.*~~)

However, if the subject is a long way from the verb, people sometimes make the verb agree with a complement. →



The most interesting thing on radio and television last



weekend, without any doubt, ***was/were*** *the tennis championships.*

This often happens, too, when the subject is a relative *what*-clause, especially when the complement is long.



What *I am most interested in* ***is/are*** *your immediate personal reactions.*



What *we need* ***is/are*** *a few bright young engineers.*

For singular and plural verbs after interrogative *what* and *who*, ► 130.5.

3 singular subject, plural continuation, plural verb

When a singular subject is modified by a following plural expression, people sometimes use a plural verb. This is not usually considered correct.

~~*Nobody except his best friends like him.*~~ (More correct: *Nobody . . .* ***likes*** *him.*)

~~*A good knowledge of three languages are necessary for this job.*~~ (More correct: *A good knowledge . . .* ***is*** *. . .*)

For singular or plural after *kind(s), sort(s), type(s),* etc, ► 592.

4 co-ordinated subjects: *A and B, A or B, A as well as B,* etc

When two singular subjects are joined by *and*, the verb is normally plural.

Alice and Joseph are *going to be late.*

But note that some phrases with *and* are treated like single ideas, and used with singular verbs (► 129.5).

Bacon and eggs is *a popular British breakfast.*

When two subjects are joined by *as well as, together with* or a similar expression, the verb is usually singular if the first subject is singular.

The Prime Minister, as well as *several Cabinet Ministers,* ***believes*** *in a tough financial policy.*

The Managing Director, together with *his heads of department,* ***is*** *preparing a new budget.*

When two subjects are joined by *or*, the verb is usually singular if the second subject is singular, and plural if it is plural. Compare:

There's no room – either two chairs ***or a table has*** *got to be moved.*

There's no room – either a table ***or two chairs have*** *got to be moved.*

When two singular subjects are joined by *neither . . . nor*, the verb is normally singular in a formal style, but can be plural in an informal style.

Neither *she* ***nor*** *her husband* ***has*** *arrived.* (formal)

Neither *she* ***nor*** *her husband* ***have*** *arrived.* (informal)

5 *who* and *what*

In a *who* or *what* question, if the answer is the subject of a clause, the verb with *who* or *what* is usually singular, even when the answer is plural.

'***Who is*** *working tomorrow?*' '*Jake, Lucy and Shareena (are working tomorrow).*' (More natural than *Who are working tomorrow?*)

Who was *at the party?* (More natural than *Who were at the party?*)

'***What lives*** *in those little holes?*' '*Rabbits (do).* (NOT ~~*What live . . .*~~)'

With verbs like *be*, where the answer to a *who* or *what* question is the complement of a clause, the verb with *who* or *what* can be plural.

'***Who are*** *your closest friends?*' '*(My closest friends are) Naomi and Bridget.*'

'***What are*** *your politics?*' '*(My politics are) extreme left-wing.*'

Relative *what*-clauses are normally the subject of a singular verb.

What she needs is *friends.* (More natural than *What she needs are friends.*)

However, plural verbs are often used before longer plural complements, especially if *what* is a long way from the verb.

What we need most of all are some really new ideas.

6 *here's, there's* and *where's*

In an informal style, *here's*, *there's* and *where's* are common with plural nouns.

Here's *your* ***keys.*** ***There's*** *some* ***children*** *at the door.*

Where's *those* ***books*** *I lent you?*

7 *another, a/an* + adjective

Plural expressions of quantity can be used with *another* (► 550) and with *a/an* + **adjective**.

I want to stay for ***another three weeks.***

We'll need ***an extra ten pounds.***

He's been waiting for ***a good two hours.***

She spent ***a happy ten minutes*** *looking through the photos.*

I've had ***a very busy three days.***

Note also the expression ***a good many/few*** + **plural** (informal).

I've lain awake ***a good many nights*** *worrying about you.*

I bet that house could tell ***a good few stories.***

8 *kind, sort* and *type*

In an informal style, we sometimes mix singular and plural forms when we use demonstratives with *kind*, *sort* or *type*. For details, ► 592.

I don't like ***those kind of boots.***

9 *every* (frequency)

Every (which is normally used with singular nouns) can be used before plural expressions in measurements of frequency.

I go to Ireland ***every six weeks.***

10 fractions

Fractions between 1 and 2 are normally used with plural nouns (► 322.2).

It weighs ***one and a half tons.*** (NOT . . . ~~*one and a half ton.*~~)

The tallest plants grow to about ***1.75 feet.***

131 distributive plural: *Tell them to bring raincoats.*

1 people doing the same thing

To talk about several people each doing the same thing, English usually prefers a plural noun for the repeated idea.

*Tell the kids to bring **raincoats** to school tomorrow.* (More natural than *Tell the kids to bring a raincoat . . .*)

Plural forms are almost always used in this case if there are possessives.

*Tell the children to blow **their noses**.* (NOT . . . ~~*to blow their nose.*~~)

*Six people lost **their lives** in the accident.*

Uncountable nouns cannot of course be used in the plural.

*They were all anxious to increase their **knowledge**.* (NOT . . . ~~*their knowledges.*~~)

2 repeated events

In descriptions of repeated single events, singular and plural nouns are both possible. When no details are given, plural nouns are more natural.

*I often get **headaches**.* (More natural than *I often get a headache.*)

*She sometimes goes for **rides** over the hills.*

When details of the time or situation are given, nouns are often singular.

*I often get **a headache** when I've been working on the computer.*

*She often goes for **a ride** over the hills before supper.*

Singular nouns may also be used to avoid misunderstanding.

*I sometimes throw **a stone** into the river and wish for good luck.* (clearer than *I sometimes throw stones . . .* – only one stone is thrown each time)

To refer to the time of repeated events, both singular and plural expressions are often possible with little difference of meaning.

*We usually go and see my mother on **Saturday(s)**.*

*He's not at his best in the **morning(s)**.*

3 generalisations and rules

In generalisations and rules, singular and plural nouns are both possible.

*We use **a past participle** in **a perfect verb form**.* (OR *We use **past participles** in **perfect verb forms**.*)

*All documents must be accompanied by **a translation** of the **original**.* (OR *All documents must be accompanied by **translations** of the **originals**.*)

Mixtures of singular and plural are possible.

***Subjects** agree with their **verb**.*

***Children** may resemble both their **father** and their **mother** in different ways.*

This often happens with fixed singular expressions like *at the beginning.*

*Discourse **markers** often come **at the beginning** of **sentences**.*

132 turning verbs into nouns: *a cough, a taste*

1 using nouns for actions

It is very common to refer to an action by using a noun instead of a verb. Nouns of this kind often have the same form as the related verbs. The structure is especially common in an informal style.

There was a loud ***crash****.* *Did I hear a* ***cough****?*
I need a ***rest****.* *Would you like a* ***taste****?*
What about a ***drink****?* *Come on – one more* ***try****!*

2 common structures

Nouns of this kind are often introduced by 'general-purpose' verbs such as *have, take, give, make, go for.*

I'll ***have a think*** *and let you know what I decide.* (informal BrE)
Let's ***have a talk*** *about your plans.*
Let your sister ***have a go*** *on the swing.* (BrE)
Just ***take a look*** *at yourself*
I like to ***have/take a bath*** *before I go to bed.*
If it won't start, let's ***give it a push****.*
I don't know the answer, but I'm going to ***make a guess****.*

Go for . . . is common with nouns for physical activity (► 475).

I try to ***go for a run*** *every day.* *Let's* ***go for a walk****.*

We can use *-ing* forms in a similar way after *do* (► 435.3).

She ***does a bit of painting****, but she doesn't like to show people.*

These structures are very common when we talk about casual, unplanned or unsystematic recreational activity.

Let's ***have a swim****.* (More natural than *Let's swim.*)

For details of 'action-nouns' with *have*, and a list of common expressions, ► 23.

Section 12 Determiners: *a/an* and *the*; *my*, *your*, etc; *this*, *that*, etc

INTRODUCTION

What are determiners?

Determiners are words that come at the beginning of noun phrases, before any adjectives. They mostly show **which** or **how much/many** we are talking about.

***the** manager*	***a** nice day*	***my** fat old cat*
***this** house*	***some** problems*	***either** arm*
***every** week*	***enough** oil*	***several** young students*

They fall into two main groups from a grammatical point of view.

1 **Articles** (*a/an* and *the*), **possessives** (*my*, *your*, etc) and **demonstratives** (*this*, *that*, etc).
These help to show which members or which part of a class or category we are talking about. Possessives and demonstratives are called 'adjectives' in older grammars and dictionaries, but they are quite different from adjectives.
2 **Quantifiers** (e.g. *all*, *some*, *each*, *much*, *most*, *several*) and one or two others.
These mostly show how much or how many we are talking about.
The first group are covered in this Section, and the others in Section 13.

articles

Article use is one of the most difficult points in English grammar, particularly for learners whose languages do not have article systems. Articles are difficult for several reasons:

- The two articles (and the use of **no article** or 'zero article') express several different meanings, and it is not always possible to draw clear lines between them.
- These meanings are relatively abstract and not easy to explain.
- Languages which have articles (e.g. French, Swedish, Portuguese) do not always use them in the same way as their English equivalents, especially when talking about things in general (► 140).
- Sometimes article use is more a matter of vocabulary than grammar: we happen to use *the* in one expression, and *a* or no article in another similar expression, for no very good reason.

  *on **the** radio* *on TV*
  *I've got **backache**.* (BrE) *I've got **a headache**.*
  *We took **a wrong turning** and went to **the wrong address**.*

However, much article use is regular; and the explanations in the following entries should help a good deal. Also, article mistakes do not usually matter very much for practical purposes: they rarely cause misunderstandings.

possessives: terminology

There are problems of terminology with possessives. *My*, *your*, etc (► 143) are sometimes called '**possessive adjectives**', while *mine*, *yours*, etc (► 176) are

generally called '**possessive pronouns**'. In fact, both types of possessive are pronouns, because they stand for noun phrases. *My* replaces the noun phrase *the speaker's*; *mine* replaces the more complex noun phrase *the speaker's possession*. The real difference is that *my*, etc function as determiners in noun phrases while *mine*, etc are free-standing, used instead of noun phrases. None of this matters much from a practical point of view: the important thing is to use possessives correctly, not to worry about what they are called.

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- Give it to cat. ▸ 135.2
- You shouldn't go out without coat. ▸ 137.4
- Annie is engineer. ▸ 137. 3 c
- I used my shoe as hammer. ▸ 137.3 c
- My uncle used to be a MP. ▸ 137.7
- The life is complicated. ▸ 140.1
- The most birds can fly. ▸ 140.1
- It's not always easy to fit in with the society. ▸ 140.1
- She's very interested in the nature. ▸ 140.1
- Lying by the road we saw a wheel of a car. ▸ 141.6
- He's a wrong man for me. ▸ 141.6
- The America's economic problems are becoming serious. ▸ 142.3
- I was surprised at the amount of the money collected. ▸ 142.7
- They appointed him the Head Librarian. ▸ 142.12
- What lovely dress! ▸ 142.14
- What a nonsense! ▸ 142.14
- Katy broke the arm climbing. ▸ 142.16
- They're walking in Himalayas. ▸ 142.18
- She studied at the Oxford University. ▸ 142.18
- Granny's lost the her keys again. ▸ 143.3
- The teacher told the children to open their book. ▸ 143.4
- He stood there, the eyes closed and the hands in the pockets. ▸ 143.5
- The dog's in a good mood. Its just had it's breakfast. ▸ 143.6
- I don't know what I'm doing in that country. ▸ 144.3
- Have you ever heard from this Scottish boy you used to go out with? ▸ 144.4

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133 articles: introduction

1 What are articles?

Articles are small words that are often used at the beginning of noun phrases. There are two: *the* (the **definite article**) and *a/an* (the **indefinite article**). They belong to a group of words called '**determiners**'.

2 What are articles used for?

Articles can show whether we are talking about identifiable things, which are known both to the speaker/writer and listener/hearer ('definite'), or not ('indefinite').

3 How much do articles matter?

The correct use of the articles is one of the most difficult points in English grammar. Fortunately, most article mistakes do not matter too much. Even if we leave all the articles out of a sentence, it can usually be understood.

Please can you lend me pound of butter till end of week?

However, it is better to use the articles correctly if possible. Entries 134–142 give the most important rules and exceptions.

4 speakers of Western European languages

Most languages of Western European origin, and one or two others, have article systems quite like English. However, there are some differences in the way articles are used in English and these other languages. The most important differences are explained in 134. Students should go to 134 first if they speak one of the following languages perfectly or very well: French, German, Dutch, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Icelandic, Spanish, Catalan, Italian, Portuguese, Greek, Romanian. There is more detailed information on difficult points in 136–142.

5 speakers of other languages

If a student's language is one (e.g. Russian or Japanese) that is not listed in 133.4, he or she may have more difficulty with the correct use of articles. The most important rules are explained in 135, and students should read this first. There is more detailed information on difficult points in 136–142.

134 articles: basic information (A)

(This entry is for students who speak a language that has articles: e.g. French, German, Swedish, Norwegian, Spanish, Italian, Greek. If you speak a language without articles – for example Russian or Japanese – read entry 135.)

Articles are often used in similar ways in English and other languages, but there are some differences. The most important are as follows.

1 talking in general: *Life is complicated.*

In English, when we are talking about people or things in general, we do not usually use *the* with uncountable or plural nouns.

***Life** is complicated.* (NOT ~~*The life is complicated.*~~)
*My sister loves **horses**.* (NOT . . . ~~*the horses.*~~)

2 talking about jobs, types, etc: *She's a dentist.*

In English, we normally put *a/an* with a singular noun that is used for classifying – saying what job somebody has, what class, group or type somebody or something belongs to, what we use something for, etc.

*She's **a dentist**.* (NOT ~~*She's dentist.*~~)
*I'm looking forward to being **a grandmother**.*
*I used my shoe as **a hammer**.*

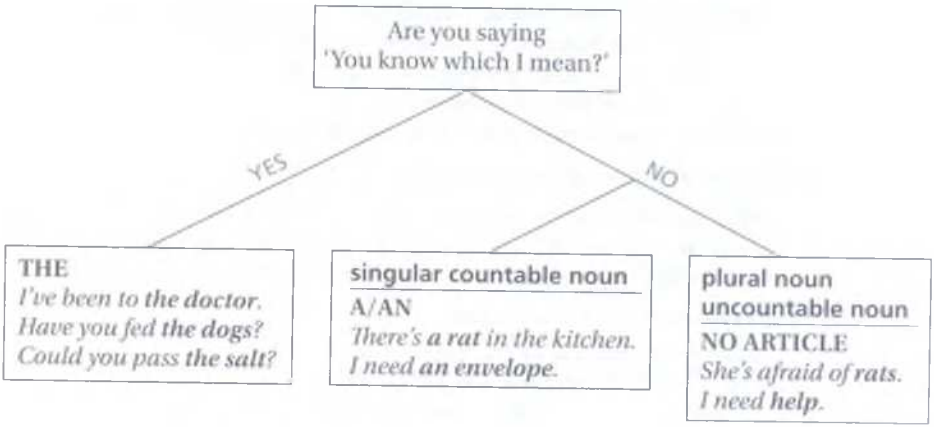
For more detailed information about articles, ► 136–142.

135 articles: basic information (B)

(This entry is for students who speak languages (e.g. Russian or Japanese) that do not have articles like English *a/an* and *the*. Students who speak languages which have articles (e.g. German or Portuguese) should read entry 134.)

1 two basic rules

- To say 'You know which I mean', we put *the* before a noun.
  *I've been to **the doctor**.* (You know which one: my doctor.)
  *Have you fed **the dogs**?* (You know which ones I mean.)
  *Could you pass **the salt**?* (You can see the salt that I want.)
- When we can't say 'You know which I mean', we:
  – put *a/an* before a singular countable noun (► 137).
  *There's **a rat** in the kitchen!* *I need **an envelope**.*
  – put no article with a plural or uncountable noun.
  *She's afraid of **rats**.* *I need **help**.*



2 four common mistakes to avoid

- Don't use *a/an* with plural or uncountable nouns.
  *Jack collects **stamps**.* (NOT . . . ~~*a stamps.*~~)
  *Our garden needs **water**.* (NOT . . . ~~*a water.*~~)

- Don't use *the* to talk about things in general. *The* does not mean 'all'. (For exceptions, ► 140.2.)
  Elephants can swim very well. (NOT ~~*The elephants can swim*~~ . . .)
  Gas is expensive. (NOT ~~*The gas*~~ . . .)
- Don't use articles together with *my, this,* or other determiners.
  my work (NOT ~~*the my work*~~)
  ***a friend** of mine* (NOT ~~*a my friend*~~)
  this problem (NOT ~~*the this problem*~~)
- Don't use singular countable nouns alone, without an article or other determiner. We can say *a cat, the cat, my cat, this cat, any cat, either cat* or *every cat,* but not just *cat.* (For exceptions, ► 142.)
  *Give it to **the cat**.* (NOT ~~*Give it to cat.*~~)
  *Annie is **a doctor**.* (NOT ~~*Annie is doctor.*~~)

For more detailed information about articles, see the following sections.

136 more about *the*

1 *the* = 'you know which one(s)'

The usually means something like 'you know which I mean'. We use *the* before a noun (singular, plural or uncountable) when our listener/reader knows (or can easily see) which particular person(s), thing(s), etc we are talking about. Compare:

- *I'm going to **the bank**.* (The listener knows which: the usual one.)
  *Is there **a bank** near here?* (any bank)
- *I didn't like **the film**.* (the one that the speaker and listener saw)
  *Let's go and see **a film**.* (The speaker doesn't say which one.)
- *She arrived on **the 8.15 train**.* (The speaker says which train.)
  *She arrived in **an old taxi**.* (The speaker doesn't say which old taxi.)
- *Did you wash **the clothes**?* (The listener knows which clothes.)
  *I need to buy **clothes**.* (No one knows exactly which clothes will be bought.)
- *What did you do with **the coffee** I bought?* (The speaker says which coffee.)
  *I don't drink **coffee**.* (any coffee)

Our listener/reader may know which one(s) we mean because:

a we have mentioned it/them before

*She's got two children: a boy and a girl. **The boy**'s fourteen and **the girl**'s eight.*
*'So what did you do then?' 'Gave **the money** right back to **the policeman**.'*
(The listener has already heard about the money and the policeman.)

b we say which one(s) we mean

*Who are **the girls over there with Tom**?*
*Tell Amy **the story about Jack and Susie**.*
*He's already lost **the phone he bought last week**.*

c it is clear from the situation which one(s) we mean

*Could you close **the door**?* (Only one door is open.)
*Anna's in **the kitchen**.* *I can't find **the car papers**.*
*Did you enjoy **the party**?* *What's **the time**?*

2 *the* = 'the only one(s) around'

The listener may know which one we mean because there is no choice – there is only one (e.g. *the sun, the moon, the earth, the world, the universe, the future*) or there is only one in our part of the world (e.g. *the government*).

I haven't seen ***the sun*** *for days.* *Do you trust* ***the government?***
People used to think ***the earth*** *was flat.*
Do you know ***the Aldersons?*** (It is clear to the listener that there can only be one family of that name around.)
Go straight over two sets of traffic lights and then turn right after ***the supermarket.*** (The listener doesn't know the supermarket, but has enough information to identify it.)

3 superlatives: *I'm the oldest.*

We usually use *the* with superlatives (► 208.6) because there is normally only one best, biggest, etc individual or group (so it is clear which one(s) we are talking about). For the same reason, we usually use *the* with *first, next, last, same* and *only*.

I'm ***the oldest*** *in my family.* *Can I have* ***the next*** *pancake?*
We went to ***the same*** *school.*

4 *the* meaning 'the well-known'

After a name, an identifying expression with *the* is often used to make it clear that the person referred to is 'the well-known one'.

She married Brad Pitt, ***the actor.***
I'd like you to meet Cathy Parker, ***the novelist.***

5 possessives and demonstratives

We do not use *the* with possessives or demonstratives.

This is ***my*** *uncle.* (NOT . . . ~~*the my uncle.*~~)
Is that ***Emily's*** *car?* (NOT . . . ~~*the Emily's car?*~~)
I like ***this*** *beer.* (NOT . . . ~~*the this beer.*~~)

6 proper nouns (names)

We do not usually use *the* with singular proper nouns (there are some exceptions, ► 142.18–142.19).

Emily *lives in* ***Switzerland.*** (NOT ~~*The Emily lives in the Switzerland.*~~)

But note the use of *the* (pronounced /ðiː/) with a person's name to mean 'the well-known'.

'My name's Emma Watson.' 'What, not ***the Emma Watson?'***

7 things in general

We usually use no article, not *the*, to talk about things in general – *the* does not mean 'all'. (For details and exceptions, ► 140.)

Books *are expensive.* (NOT ~~*The books are expensive.*~~)
Life *is hard.* (NOT ~~*The life is hard.*~~)

8 pronunciation

The is normally pronounced /ðiː/ before a vowel and /ðə/ before a consonant. →

Compare:

the ice /ðiː aɪs/ *the snow* /ðə snəʊ/

The choice between /ðiː/ and /ðə/ depends on pronunciation, not spelling.

We pronounce /ðiː/ before a vowel sound, even if it is written as a consonant.

the hour /ðiː 'aʊə(r)/ *the MP* /ðiː ˌem 'piː/

And we pronounce /ðə/ before a consonant sound, even if it is written as a vowel.

*the **university*** /ðə ˌjuːnɪ'vɜːsəti/

*the **one-pound coin*** /ðə ˌwʌn ˌpaʊnd 'kɔɪn/

We sometimes pronounce a stressed /ðiː/ before a hesitation, or when we want to stress the noun phrase, even if the noun begins with a consonant.

He's the /ðiː/ *– just a moment – deputy assistant vice-president.*

I've found the /ðiː/ *present for Angela!*

For *the town, the country, the sea, the mountains*, etc, ▸ 141.4.
For *on the bus, at the dentist's*, etc, ▸ 141.5. For other advanced points, ▸ 141.

137 more about *a/an*

1 countable and uncountable nouns

Countable nouns are the names of separate objects, people, ideas, etc which we can count.

a cat – three cats *a secretary – four secretaries*

a plan – two plans

Uncountable nouns are the names of materials, liquids and other things which we do not usually see as separate objects.

wool (BUT NOT ~~*a wool, two wools*~~) *water* (BUT NOT ~~*a water, three waters*~~)

weather (BUT NOT ~~*a weather, four weathers*~~)

energy (BUT NOT ~~*an energy, several energies*~~)

For more detailed information, ▸ 119–120.

2 *a/an* with singular countable nouns

We normally use *a/an* only with singular countable nouns.

a secretary ***an office***

BUT NOT ~~*a salt*~~ OR ~~*an offices*~~

For expressions like *a good two hours*, ▸ 130.7.

3 uses of *a/an*

A/an does not add much to the meaning of a noun – it is like a weak form of 'one'. It has several common uses.

a one person or thing

We can use *a/an* when we mention one person or thing for the first time.

*There's **a police car** outside.* *My brother's married to **a doctor**.*

*Andy lives in **an old house**.*

b any one member of a class.

We can use *a/an* when we talk about **any one member** of a class.
*A **doctor** must like people.* (= any doctor)
*I would like to live in **an old house**.* (= any old house)

c classifying and defining

We can use *a/an* when we classify or define people and things – when we say what they are, what job they do, or what they are used for.
*She's **a doctor**.* *I'm looking forward to being **a grandmother**.*
*A glider is **a plane** with no engine.* *Don't use your plate as **an ashtray**.*

d descriptions

A/an is common before nouns that are used in descriptions.
*She's **a nice person**.* *That was **a lovely evening**.*
*He's got **a friendly face**.* *It's **an extremely hot day**.*

4 when *a/an* cannot be left out

We do not normally leave out *a/an* in negative expressions, after prepositions or after fractions.
*'Lend me your pen.' 'I haven't got **a pen**.* (NOT ~~*I haven't got pen.*~~)'
*You shouldn't go out **without a coat**.* (NOT . . . ~~*without coat.*~~)
*three-quarters **of a pound*** (NOT ~~*three quarters of pound*~~)
And we do not leave out *a/an* when we say what jobs people have, or how things are used (see above).
*She's **an engineer**.* (NOT ~~*She's engineer.*~~)
*I used my shoe as **a hammer**.* (NOT . . . ~~*as hammer.*~~)

5 when *a/an* is not used: adjectives alone; possessives

A/an cannot normally be used with an adjective alone (without a noun). Compare:
*It's **a good** car.* *It's **good**.* (NOT ~~*It's a good.*~~)
A/an cannot be used together with a possessive. Instead, we can use the structure *a . . . of mine/yours*, etc (► 177).
*He's **a friend of mine**.* (NOT ~~*He's a my friend.*~~)

6 *a/an* and *the*

Instead of *a/an*, we use *the* when we want to say 'You and I both know which one I mean'. Compare:
*She lives in **a big house**.* (The hearer doesn't know which one.)
*She lives in **the big house** over there.* (The hearer knows which one.)
For details, ► 136.

7 *a* and *an*: the difference

We do not normally pronounce the sound /ə/ before a vowel. So before a vowel, the article *a* (/ə/) changes to *an* /ən/. Compare:
a rabbit *a lemon* *an elephant* *an orange*
The choice between *a* and *an* depends on pronunciation, not spelling. We use *an* before a vowel sound, even if it is written as a consonant.
an hour /ən 'aʊə(r)/ *an MP* /ən em 'pi:/
And we use *a* before a consonant sound, even if it is written as a vowel.
a university /ə ju:nɪ'vɜ:səti/ *a one-pound coin* /ə ˌwʌn ˌpaʊnd 'kɔɪn/ →

Some people say *an*, not *a*, before words beginning with *h* if the first syllable is unstressed.

an hotel (*a hotel* is more common)
an historic occasion (*a historic . . .* is more common)
an hypothesis (*a hypothesis* is more common)
BUT NOT ~~*an housewife*~~ – the first syllable is stressed.

A is sometimes pronounced /eɪ/ before a hesitation, when we want to emphasise the following word, or when we want to make a contrast with *the*.

I think I'll have a /eɪ/ *– chocolate ice cream.*
It's a /eɪ/ *reason – it's not the only reason.*

138 no article with plural and uncountable nouns

1 *a/an* not used

Plural and uncountable nouns (e.g. *cats, wool* ► 137.1) cannot normally be used with *a/an* (because *a/an* has a similar meaning to 'one'). Instead, we most often use no article.

There were ***cats*** *in every room.* (NOT . . . ~~*a cats*~~ . . .)
Doctors generally work long ***hours****.* *He's got very big* ***ears****.*
Her coat is made of pure ***wool****.* *'What's that?' 'I think it's* ***salt****.'*

2 confusing nouns

Some nouns that are countable in some other languages are uncountable in English (► 119.3 for a list).

I need ***information*** *and* ***advice****.* (NOT . . . ~~*an information and an advice*~~)
You've made very good ***progress****.* (NOT . . . ~~*a very good progress.*~~)

And note that we never use *a/an* with *weather* or *English*.

We're having terrible ***weather****.* (NOT . . . ~~*a terrible weather.*~~)
She speaks very good ***English****.* (NOT . . . ~~*a very good English.*~~)

3 *some* and *any*

Instead of no article, we can sometimes use *some* or *any*.

We met ***some*** *nice Danish girls in Scotland.* *Have you got* ***any*** *matches?*

For details, ► 139.

4 *the*

Instead of no article, we use *the* when we want to say 'You and I both know which I mean' (► 136). Compare:

– *I'm working with* ***children****.* (The hearer doesn't know which ones.)
How are ***the children?*** (= the hearer's children)
– *We need* ***salt****.* (= any salt)
Could you pass ***the salt?*** (The hearer can see the salt that is wanted.)

But we usually use no article, not *the*, to talk about people, things, etc in general (► 140).

Are ***dogs*** *more intelligent than cats?* (NOT . . . ~~*the dogs*~~ . . . ~~*the cats*~~)
Everybody likes ***music****.* (NOT . . . ~~*the music.*~~)

For expressions like *a coffee, a knowledge of Spanish*, ► 119.4, 119.6.

139 the difference between *some/any* and no article

1 use with uncountable and plural nouns

Uncountable and plural nouns can often be used either with *some/any* or with **no article**. There is not always a great difference of meaning.

*We need (**some**) **cheese**.* *I didn't buy (**any**) **eggs**.*

Some is used especially in affirmative sentences; *any* is more common in questions and negatives (for details, ► 161).

2 *some/any* or no article?

We prefer *some/any* when we are thinking about limited but rather indefinite numbers or quantities – when we don't know, care or say exactly how much/many. We prefer **no article** when we are thinking about unlimited numbers or quantities, or not thinking about numbers/quantities at all. Compare:

- *We've planted **some roses** in the garden.* (A limited number; the speaker doesn't say how many.)
  *I like **roses**.* (No idea of number.)
- *We got talking to **some students**.* (A limited number.)
  *Our next-door neighbours are **students**.* (The main idea is classification, not number.)
- *I've just bought **some books** on computing.* (A limited number.)
  *There were **books** on the desk, on the floor, on the chairs, . . .* (A large number.)
- *Would you like **some** more **rice**?* (An indefinite amount – as much as the listener wants.)
  *We need **rice**, sugar, eggs, butter, beer, and toilet paper.* (The speaker is thinking just of the things that need to be bought, not of the amounts.)
- *Is there **any water** in the fridge?* (The speaker wants a limited amount.)
  *Is there **water** on the moon?* (The interest is in the existence of water, not the amount.)
- *This heating system hardly uses **any** oil.* (The interest is in the amount.)
  *This heating system doesn't use **oil**.* (The interest is in the type of fuel, not the amount.)

We do not use *some/any* when it is clear exactly how much/many we are talking about. Compare:

*You've got **some great books**.*
*You've got **pretty toes**.* (A definite number – ten. *You've got some pretty toes* would suggest that the speaker is not making clear how many of them are pretty – perhaps six or seven!)

For full details of the uses of *some*, ► 158; for *any*, ► 159.

140 talking in general

1 *the* does not mean 'all'

We do not use *the* with uncountable or plural nouns to talk about things in general – to talk about all books, all people or all life, for example. *The* does not mean 'all'. Instead, we use **no article**. Compare:

- *Move* ***the books*** *off that chair and sit down.* (= particular books)
  Books *are expensive.* (NOT ~~*The books are expensive.*~~)
- *I'm studying* ***the life*** *of Beethoven.* (= one particular life)
  Life *is complicated.* (NOT ~~*The life*~~ . . .)
- *'Where's* ***the cheese?****' 'I ate it.'*
  I love ***cheese.***
- *I've joined* ***the*** *local Dramatic* ***Society.***
  It's not always easy to fit in with ***society.***
- *I never really understood* ***the nature*** *of my father's work.*
  She's very interested in ***nature****, especially animals and birds.*
- *Write your name in* ***the space*** *at the bottom of the page.*
  Would you like to travel into ***space****?*
- *Why has* ***the light*** *gone out?*
  Nothing can travel faster than ***light.***

Note that *most* (meaning 'the majority of') is used without *the.*

Most *birds can fly.* (NOT ~~*The most birds*~~ . . .)
Most *of the children got very tired.* (NOT ~~*The most of the children*~~ . . .)

2 generalisations with singular countable nouns

Sometimes we talk about things in general by using *the* with a singular countable noun.

Schools should concentrate more on ***the child*** *and less on exams.*

This is common with the names of scientific instruments and inventions, and musical instruments.

Life would be quieter without ***the telephone.***
The violin *is more difficult than* ***the piano.***

We can also generalise by talking about one example of a class, using *a/an* (meaning 'any') with a singular countable noun.

A baby deer *can stand as soon as it's born.* ***A child*** *needs plenty of love.*

Note that we cannot use *a/an* in this way when we are generalising about all of the members of a group together.

The tiger *is in danger of becoming extinct.* (NOT ~~*A tiger is in danger of becoming extinct.*~~ The sentence is about the whole tiger family, not about individuals.)
Do you like ***horses?*** (NOT ~~*Do you like a horse?*~~)

For the use of ***the*** **+ adjective** to generalise about groups (e.g. *the old, the blind*), ► 188.

141 *the*: difficult cases

When we generalise about **members** of a group, meaning 'any/every individual', we usually use no article. For example, we use no article to **generalise** with uncountable and plural words (► 140); but we use *the* to show that the listener/reader **knows which** people or things we are talking about (► 136). Sometimes both these meanings come together, and it is difficult to know which form is correct. The grammatical distinctions in this area are not very clear; often the same idea can be expressed both with *the* and with no article. The following notes may help.

1 groups: *nurses* or *the nurses*; *railways* or *the railways*?

When we generalise about **members** of a group, we usually use no article. But if we talk about the group **as a whole** – as if it was a well-known unit – we are more likely to use *the*. Compare:

- ***Nurses** mostly work very hard.* (nearly every individual)
  ***The nurses** have never gone on strike.* (the well-known professional body)
- ***Stars** vary greatly in size.* (every one is different)
  ***The stars** are really bright tonight.* (the whole of our familiar night sky)
- ***Farmers** often vote Conservative.* (individuals vote)
  *What has this government done for **the farmers**?* (the whole professional body)
- *It's difficult for **railways** to make a profit.* (any railways)
  ***The railways** are getting more and more unreliable.* (our well-known railways)

This often happens when we talk about nationalities. Compare:

*New Zealanders don't like to be mistaken for **Australians**.*
***The Australians** suffered heavy losses in the First World War.*

2 *French painters*; *the Impressionists*

We are more likely to use *the* if we are talking about a 'closed' group or class with a relatively definite, limited number of members. Compare:

- *French painters* (a large indefinite group)
  ***the** Impressionists* (a particular artistic movement; we know more or less who belonged to the group)
- *19th-century poets*
  ***the** Romantic poets* (Shelley, Keats, Byron, Wordsworth and a few others)

Specialists are likely to use *the* for groups or classes that they study or know about. Compare:

***Metals** are mostly shiny.*
*Next term we're going to study **the metals** in detail.*

3 *1960s music*; *the music of the 1960s*

Some expressions are 'half-general' – in the middle between general and particular. If we talk about *1960s music*, *eighteenth-century history* or *poverty in Britain*, we are not talking about all music, history or poverty, but these are still rather general ideas (compared *with the music we heard last night*, *the history I did at school* or *the poverty I grew up in*). In these 'half-general' expressions, →

we usually use no article. However, *the* is often used when the noun is followed by a limiting, defining phrase, especially one with *of*. Compare:

1960s ***music*** *the* ***music*** *of the 1960s*
African ***butterflies*** *the* ***butterflies*** *of Africa*

4 physical environment: *the town, the sea*

The is used with a number of rather general expressions referring to our physical environment – the world around us and its climate. *The* suggests that everybody is familiar with what we are talking about. Examples are:

the town, the country, the mountains, the sea, the seaside, the wind, the rain, the weather, the sunshine, the night.

My wife likes ***the seaside****, but I prefer* ***the mountains****.*
British people talk about ***the weather*** *a lot.* *I love listening to* ***the wind****.*

But note that no article is used with *nature, society* or *space* when these have a 'general' meaning (► 140).

5 *on the bus; at the gym*

We use *the* (with a singular countable noun) when we talk about some kinds of thing that are part of everybody's lives, like 'the bus' or 'the hairdresser'. In this case *the bus*, for example, does not mean 'one bus that you know about'; we use *the* to suggest that taking a bus is a common experience that we all share.

I have some of my best ideas when I'm on ***the bus****.*
Most of my friends go to ***the gym*** *two or three times a week.*
Do you sing in ***the bath****?*
I've stopped reading ***the newspaper*** *because it's too depressing.*

For similar expressions with no article (e.g. *in bed, in hospital*), ► 142.1.

6 *She kicked him on the knee.; He sat at the side.*

We sometimes use *the* even when it is not exactly clear which of several particular persons or things we are talking about. This can happen when there are several similar possibilities, and it is unnecessary to be more definite.

Lying by ***the side*** *of the road we saw* ***the wheel*** *of a car.*
(NOT . . . *~~a wheel of a car~~*.)
Jack Perkins is ***the son*** *of a rich banker.* (who may have more than one son)
She kicked him on ***the knee****.*

The is often used like this with *side* and *wrong*.

I usually sit at ***the side*** *in church.* *He's* ***the wrong*** *man for me.*
(on the phone) *I'm sorry. You've got* ***a/the wrong*** *number.*

142 special rules and exceptions

1 common expressions without articles: *in bed; at school*

In some common fixed expressions to do with place, time and movement, normally countable nouns are treated as uncountables, without articles. Examples are:

to/at/in/from school/university/college *to/at/in/into/from church*
to/in/into/out of bed/prison *to/in/into/out of hospital* (BrE)
to/at/from work *to/at sea* *to/in/from town*

at/from home *leave home*
leave/start/enter school/university/college
by day *at night*
by car/bus/bicycle/plane/train/tube/boat *on foot*
by radio/phone/letter/mail/email/text

With place nouns, expressions with or without articles may have different meanings. Compare:

– *I met her **at college**.* (when we were students)
*I'll meet you **at the college**.* (The college is just a meeting place.)
– *Megan's **in hospital**.* (as a patient)
*I left my coat **in the hospital** when I was visiting Megan.*

In American English, *university* and *hospital* are not used without articles.

*She was unhappy **at the university**.*
*Say that again and I'll put you **in the hospital**.*

2 double expressions: *with knife and fork*

Articles are often dropped in double expressions, particularly with prepositions.

with knife and fork *on land and sea* *day after day*
with hat and coat *arm in arm* *husband and wife*
from top to bottom *inch by inch*

For cases like *the bread and (the) butter*, ► 276.

3 possessive *'s*

Nouns lose their articles after possessive *'s*.

the coat** that belongs to Jack = **Jack's coat (NOT ~~*Jack's the coat*~~ OR ~~*the Jack's coat*~~)
the economic problems** of America = **America's economic problems (NOT ~~*the America's economic problems*~~)

But the possessive noun itself may have an article.

*the wife of **the boss** = **the boss's** wife*

4 noun modifiers

When a noun modifies another noun, the first noun's article is dropped.

*lessons in how to play **the guitar** = **guitar** lessons*
*a spot on **the sun** = a **sunspot***

5 *both* and *all*

We often leave out *the* after *both*.

***Both (the)** children are good at languages.*

And we generally leave out *the* between *all* and a number.

***All (the) three** brothers were arrested.*

We usually leave out *the* after *all* in *all day*, *all night*, *all week*, *all year*, *all winter* and *all summer*.

*He's been away **all week**.* *I haven't seen her **all day**.*

6 *kind of*, etc

We usually leave out *a/an* after *kind of*, *sort of*, *type of* and similar expressions (► 592).

*What **kind of (a) person** is she?* *Have you got a cheaper **sort of radio**?*
*They've developed a new **variety of sheep**.*

→

7 *amount* and *number*

The is dropped after *the amount/number of.*

I was surprised at ***the amount of money*** *collected.* (NOT . . . ~~*of the money*~~)

The ***number of unemployed*** *is rising steadily.*

8 *man* and *woman*

Unlike other singular countable nouns, *man* and *woman* can be used in a general sense without articles.

Man *and* ***woman*** *were created equal.*

But we more often use *a woman* and *a man*, or *men* and *women.*

A woman *without* ***a man*** *is like a fish without a bicycle.* (old feminist joke)

Men *and* ***women*** *have similar abilities and needs.*

Man is also commonly used to mean 'the human race', though many people regard this usage as sexist and prefer to avoid it (► 328.6).

How did ***man*** *first discover fire?*

9 days, months and seasons

We drop *the* when we mean 'the day/month before or after this one'.

Where were you ***last Saturday****?* *See you on* ***Thursday****.*

I was away in ***April****.* *We're moving* ***next September****.*

To talk about the seasons in general, we can say *spring* or *the spring, summer* or *the summer,* etc. There is little difference.

Rome is lovely in ***(the) spring****.* *I like* ***(the) winter*** *best.*

When we are talking about particular springs, summers, etc, we are more likely to use *the.*

I worked very hard in ***the summer*** *that year.*

10 musical instruments

We often use ***the*** + **singular** when we talk about musical instruments in general, or about playing musical instruments.

The violin *is really difficult.* *Who's that on* ***the piano****?*

But *the* is often dropped when talking about jazz or pop, and sometimes when talking about classical music.

This recording was made with Miles Davis ***on trumpet****.*

She studied ***oboe*** *and* ***saxophone*** *at the Royal Academy of Music.*

11 *(the) radio, (the) cinema, (the) theatre* and *television*

When we talk about our use of these forms of entertainment, we generally say *the radio, the cinema* (BrE), *the theatre,* but *television* or *TV.*

I always listen to ***the radio*** *while I'm driving.*

It was a great treat to go to ***the cinema*** *or* ***the theatre*** *when I was a child.* (BrE)

What's on ***TV****?*

The is often dropped in all four cases when we talk about these institutions as art forms or professions.

Cinema *is different from* ***theatre*** *in several ways.*

He's worked in ***radio*** *and* ***television*** *all his life.*

12 jobs and positions: *He was elected President.*

The is not used in titles like *Queen Elizabeth*, *President Obama*. Compare:

***Queen** Elizabeth had dinner with **President Obama**.*
***The Queen** had dinner with **the President**.*

And *the* is not usually used in the complement of a sentence, when we say that somebody has or gains a unique position (the only one in the organisation). Compare:

*They appointed him **Head Librarian**.* *Where's **the librarian**?*
*He was elected **President** in 1879.* *I want to see **the president**.*

13 addressing people: *Good morning, children.*

We don't address groups of people directly by using *the* with the name of the group.

*Good morning, **children**.* (NOT ~~*Good morning, the children.*~~)

14 exclamations: *What a . . .!*

We use *a/an* with singular countable nouns in exclamations after *What*.

***What a** lovely dress!* (NOT ~~*What lovely dress!*~~)

Note that *a/an* cannot be used in exclamations with uncountable nouns.

***What** nonsense!* (NOT ~~*What a nonsense!*~~) ***What** luck!*

15 illnesses

The names of illnesses and pains are usually uncountable, with no article, in standard British English (for more details, ► 119.7).

*Have you had **appendicitis**?* *I've got **toothache** again.*

A/an is used in a few cases such as *a cold*, *a headache*.

*I've got **a horrible cold**.* *Have you got **a headache**?*

The can be used informally with a few common illnesses.

*I think I've got **(the) flu**.* (AmE always *the flu*)
*She's never had **(the) measles**.*

American usage is different in some cases.

*I've got **a toothache** / **an earache** / **a backache** / **a stomach ache**.*
(BrE *I've got toothache/earache*, etc)

16 parts of the body, etc

When talking about someone's possessions, or parts of their body, we usually use possessives, not *the*.

*He stood in the doorway, **his coat** over **his arm**.* (NOT . . . ~~*the coat over the arm.*~~)

*Katy broke **her arm** climbing.* (NOT ~~*Katy broke the arm climbing.*~~)

But *the* is common after prepositions, especially when we are talking about blows, pains and other things that often happen to parts of people's bodies (► 143.5).

*She hit him **in the stomach**.* *He was shot **in the leg**.*
*Can't you look me **in the eye**?*

17 measurements: *by the hour; twice a week*

Note the use of *the* in measuring expressions beginning with *by*.

*Do you sell eggs **by the kilo** or **by the dozen**?*
*He sits watching TV **by the hour**.* *Can I pay **by the month**?* →

A/an is used to relate one measuring unit to another.

*sixty pence **a** kilo* *thirty miles **an** hour* *twice **a** week*

18 place names

We use *the* with these kinds of place names:

- seas (***the** Atlantic*)
- mountain groups (***the** Himalayas*)
- island groups (***the** West Indies*)
- rivers (***the** Rhine*)
- deserts (***the** Sahara*)
- most hotels (***the** Grand Hotel*)
- most cinemas and theatres (***the** Odeon*; ***the** Playhouse*)
- most museums and art galleries (***the** British Museum*; ***the** Frick*)

We usually use **no article** with:

- continents, countries, states, counties, departments, etc (*Africa, Brazil, Texas, Berkshire, Westphalia*)
- towns (*Oxford*)
- streets (*New Street, Willow Road*)
- lakes (*Lake Michigan*)

Exceptions: places whose name is (or contains) a common noun like *republic, state, union* (e.g. ***the** People's Republic of China*, ***the** United Kingdom*, ***the** United States*). Note also ***the** Netherlands*, and its seat of government ***The** Hague*. There are a few countries whose names used to have *the*, but are now normally used with no article: *(The) Ukraine, (The) Lebanon, (The) Gambia, (The) Sudan.*

The is unusual in the titles of the principal public buildings and organisations of a town, when the title begins with the town name.

Oxford University (NOT ~~*the Oxford University*~~)

Hull Station (NOT ~~*the Hull Station*~~)

Salisbury Cathedral *Manchester City Council*

Birmingham Airport *Cheltenham Football Club*

With the names of less important institutions, usage varies.

***(The)** East Oxford Community Centre.* ***(The)** Newbury School of English.*

Names of single mountains vary. Most have no article.

Everest *Kilimanjaro* *Snowdon* *Table Mountain*

But definite articles are usually translated in the English versions of European mountain names, except those beginning *Le Mont.*

***The** Meije* (= La Meije)

***The** Matterhorn* (= Das Matterhorn)

BUT ***Mont Blanc*** (NOT ~~*the Mont Blanc*~~)

19 newspapers and magazines

The names of newspapers usually have *the.*

***The** Times* ***The** Washington Post*

The names of magazines do not always have *the.*

New Scientist

20 abbreviated styles

We usually leave out articles in abbreviated styles (► 291).

newspaper headlines	*MAN KILLED ON MOUNTAIN*
headings	*Introduction* *Chapter 2* *Section B*
picture captions	*Mother and child*
notices, posters, etc	*SUPER CINEMA*
instructions	*Open packet at other end.*
numbering and labelling	*Go through door A*
	Control to Car 27: can you hear me?
	Turn to page 26. (NOT . . . ~~*the page 26.*~~)
(native-speaker) dictionary entries	***palm*** *inner surface of hand . . .*
lists	*take car to garage; pay phone bill; . . .*
notes	*J thinks company needs new office*

For articles with abbreviations (*NATO, the USA*), ► 336.2–336.3.
For *the* in double comparatives (*the more, the better*), ► 206.5. For *a* with *few* and *little*, ► 168.
For *a* with *hundred, thousand*, etc, ► 322.10. For *the blind*, etc, ► 188.1.
For *the Japanese*, etc, ► 188.2. For *next* and *the next*, ► 533; for *last* and *the last*, ► 505.
For *the* instead of *enough*, ► 450.6. For *another two days, a good three weeks*, etc, ► 130.7.

143 possessive determiners: *my, your*, etc

1 What kind of words are they?

My, your, his, her, its, our and *their* are **pronouns**, because they stand for possessive noun phrases: ***my younger brother*** means '**the speaker's** younger brother'; ***their plans*** means for example '**those people's** plans' or '**the children's** plans'.

They are used at the beginning of noun phrases, and function as **determiners**. They are not adjectives, though they are sometimes called 'possessive adjectives' in older grammars and dictionaries.

Like all 'possessive' words and structures, they can express various ideas besides possession.

Note that *mine, yours*, etc (► 176) are also pronouns (of a different kind), but they are not used as determiners.

2 *one's* and *whose*

One's (► 181.5) and *whose* (► 235, 628) are also possessive determiners/pronouns.

It's easy to lose ***one's*** *temper when one is criticised.*
An orphan is a child ***whose*** *parents are dead.* ***Whose*** *bicycle is that?*

3 not used with other determiners

My, your, etc are not used with other determiners like *the, a/an* or *this*.

She's lost ***her*** *keys.* (NOT . . . ~~*the her keys.*~~)

If we want to use *a/an* or *this, that*, etc with a possessive, we use the '. . . *of mine*' structure (► 177).

A friend of mine *has just invited me to Italy.* (NOT ~~*A my friend*~~ . . .)
How's ***that brother of yours?*** (NOT . . . ~~*that your brother?*~~) →

4 distributive use: *She told them to open their books*, etc

After a plural possessive, we do not normally use a singular noun in the sense of 'one each'. (For details, ► 131.)

The teacher told the children to open ***their books.*** (NOT . . . ~~*their book.*~~)

5 articles instead of possessives: *a pain in the head*

We sometimes use articles instead of *my*, *your*, etc. This happens in common prepositional phrases which refer to the subject or object, mostly when we are talking about blows, pains and other things that often happen to parts of people's bodies.

The ball hit him ***on the head.*** *She's got a pain* ***in the stomach.***

In other cases we do not normally use articles instead of possessives (► 142.16).

She's got a parrot ***on her shoulder.*** (NOT ~~*She's got a parrot on the shoulder.*~~)

Mia broke ***her leg*** *playing football.* (NOT ~~*Mia broke the leg*~~ . . .)

He stood there, ***his eyes*** *closed and* ***his hands*** *in* ***his pockets****, looking half asleep.* (NOT . . . ~~*the eyes closed and the hands in the pockets*~~ . . .)

6 spelling: *its*, *whose*

The possessives *its* and *whose* have no apostrophes. *It's* and *who's* are not possessives, but contractions (► 337): they mean 'it is' or 'it has'; 'who is' or 'who has'. Compare:

The dog's in a good mood. ***It's*** *just had* ***its*** *breakfast.*

'***Whose*** *little girl is that?' 'You mean the one* ***who's*** *making all that noise?'*

For structures like *Do you mind my smoking?*, ► 94.3. For *my own*, *your own*, etc, ► 552.
For the older English form *thy*, ► 318.10. For southern AmE *you all's*, ► 174.8.

144 *this* and *that*

1 determiners or pronouns

This/that/these/those are often called '**demonstratives**' in grammars. They can be used as determiners at the beginning of noun phrases. (They are not adjectives, though they are sometimes called 'demonstrative adjectives' in older grammars and dictionaries.)

Look at ***that butterfly.*** *Let me show you* ***these patterns.***

They can also be used without nouns, as '**demonstrative pronouns**'.

Look at ***this.*** ***That's*** *terrible!*

Determiner and pronoun uses are both covered in this entry for convenience.

2 people and things

This/that/these/those can be used as determiners with nouns that refer to either people or things.

this *child* ***that*** *house*

But when they are used without nouns ('pronoun' use), *this/that/these/those* normally only refer to things.

This *costs more than* ***that.*** (BUT NOT ~~*This says he's tired.*~~)

Put ***those*** *down – they're dirty.* (~~*This says he's tired.*~~ ~~*go away.*~~)

However, *this*, etc can be used without nouns for people when we say who the people are.

*Hello. **This** is Elisabeth. Is **that** Ruth?* *__That__ looks like Mrs Walker.*
*Who's **that**?* *__These__ are the Smiths.*

Note also ***Those who** . . .* (► 144.7 below).

For a similar use of *it* to refer to people, ► 173.9.

3 the difference

We use *this/these* for people and things which are close to the speaker.

__This__ is very nice – can I have some more?
*Get **this** cat off my shoulder.*
*I don't know what I'm doing in **this** country.* (NOT . . . ~~*in that country.*~~)
*Do you like **these** earrings? Joseph gave them to me.*

We use *that/those* for people and things which are more distant from the speaker, or not present.

__That__ smells nice – is it for lunch? *Get **that** cat off the piano.*
*All the time I was in **that** country I hated it.*
*I like **those** earrings. Where did you get them?*

4 time

This/these can refer to situations and events which are going on or just about to start.

*I like **this** music. What is it?*
*Listen to **this**. You'll like it.* (NOT ~~*Listen to that*~~ . . .)
*Watch **this**.* *__This__ is a police message.*

That/those can refer to situations and events which have just finished, or which are more distant in the past.

__That__ was nice. What was it? (NOT ~~*This was nice*~~ . . .)
*Did you see **that**?* *Who said **that**?*
*Have you ever heard from **that** Scottish boy you used to go out with?*
(NOT . . . ~~*this Scottish boy you used to go out with.*~~)

That can show that something has come to an end.

*. . . and **that's** how it happened.*
*'Anything else?' 'No, **that's** all, thanks.'* (in a shop)
*OK. **That's** it. I'm leaving. It was nice knowing you.*

5 acceptance and rejection

We sometimes use *this/these* to show acceptance or interest, and *that/those* to show dislike or rejection. Compare:

*Now tell me about **this** new boyfriend of yours.*
*I don't like **that** new boyfriend of yours.*

6 on the telephone

On the telephone, British people use *this* to identify themselves, and *that* to ask about the hearer's identity.

*Hello. **This** is Max. Is **that** Alex?*

Americans can also use *this* to ask about the hearer's identity.

*Who is **this**?*

→

7 *that, those* meaning 'the one(s)'

In a formal style, *that* and *those* can be used with a following description to mean 'the one(s)'. *Those who . . .* means 'the people who . . .'

A dog's intelligence is much greater than ***that*** *of a cat.*
Those *who can, do.* ***Those*** *who can't, teach.*

8 *this* and *that* meaning 'so'

In an informal style, *this* and *that* are often used with adjectives and adverbs in the same way as *so*.

I didn't realise it was going to be ***this*** *hot.*
If your boyfriend's ***that*** *clever, why isn't he rich?*

In standard English, only *so* is used before a following clause.

It was ***so*** *cold that I couldn't feel my fingers.* (NOT ~~*It was that cold that*~~ . . .)

Not all that can be used to mean 'not very'.

*'How was the play?' '****Not all that*** *good.'*

9 other uses

Note the special use of *this* (with no demonstrative meaning) in conversational story-telling.

There was ***this*** *travelling salesman, you see. And he wanted . . .*

That/those can suggest that an experience is familiar to everybody.

I can't stand ***that*** *perfume of hers.*

This use is common in advertisements.

When you get ***that*** *empty feeling – break for a snack.*
Earn more money during ***those*** *long winter evenings. Call . . .*

The differences between *this* and *that* are similar to the differences between *here* and *there* (► 484), *come* and *go* (► 424) and *bring* and *take* (► 409). For *this one, that one,* etc, ► 182. For *these* and *those* with singular *kind of, sort of,* ► 592. For *that which,* ► 237.21.

145 *this/that* and *it*: things that have just been mentioned

1 referring back

This, that and *it* can all be used to refer back to things or situations that have just been talked or written about. *It* does not give any special emphasis.

So she decided to paint her house pink. ***It*** *upset the neighbours a bit.*

This and *that* are more emphatic; they 'shine a light', so to speak, on the things or situations, suggesting 'an interesting new fact has been mentioned'.

So she decided to paint her house pink. ***This/That*** *really upset the neighbours, as you can imagine.*

This is preferred when there is more to say about the new subject of discussion.

So she decided to paint her house pink. ***This*** *upset the neighbours so much that they took her to court, believe it or not. The case came up last week . . .*

Then in 1917 he met Andrew Lewis. ***This*** *was a turning point in his career: the two men entered into a partnership which lasted until 1946, and . . .*
(More natural than . . . *That was a turning point . . .*)

2 more than one thing

When more than one thing has been mentioned, *it* generally refers to the main subject of discussion; *this* and *that* generally refer to a new subject that has been introduced (often the last thing mentioned). Compare:

– *We keep the ice-cream machine in the spare room. **It** is mainly used by the children, incidentally.* (The machine is used by the children.)
*We keep the ice-cream machine in the spare room. **This/That** is mainly used by the children, incidentally.* (The spare room is used by the children.)

– *I was carrying the statue to my office when I dropped it on the kitchen table. **It** was badly damaged.* (The statue was damaged.)
*I was carrying the statue to my office when I dropped it on the kitchen table. **This** was badly damaged.* (The table was damaged.)

3 focus

It is only used to refer to things which are 'in focus' – which have already been talked about. *This* is preferred when we 'bring things into focus' before anything has been said about them. Compare:

*I enjoyed 'Vampires' Picnic'. **It/This** is a film for all the family . . .*
*VAMPIRES' PICNIC: **This** is a film for all the family . . .* (NOT ~~*VAMPIRES' PICNIC: It is a film for all the family . . .*~~)

4 referring forward

Only *this* can refer forward to something that has not yet been mentioned.

*Now what do you think about **this**? I thought I'd get a job in Spain for six months, and then . . .* (NOT ~~*Now what do you think about that/it . . .*~~)

For more about *it*, ► 173.

Section 13 Determiners: Quantifiers

INTRODUCTION

Determiners in this group are mainly **quantifiers**: they show how much of a class or category we are talking about (*all, most, some, none, . . .*).

other uses

Besides their use as determiners in noun phrases, these words can generally be used without following nouns if the meaning is clear. Compare:

*He doesn't eat **any meat**, and not **much fish**.*
*Fish? He eats **some**, but not **much**.*

This 'pronoun' use of quantifiers is dealt with here, and not in Section 14, for convenience, along with some other uses of these words. For uses not included here, see the Index.

A few words which can have determiner and non-determiner uses (e.g. *other, only, such, which, what* and numbers) are covered elsewhere – see the Index.

putting determiners together: use of *of*

Quantifiers can be put together if the combination makes sense.

*We meet **every few** days.*
*Have you got **any more** coffee?*

When a quantifier is put together with a 'group 1' determiner (article, possessive or demonstrative, ► Section 12), we use a structure with *of*. Compare:

– ***some** people*
  ***some of the** people*
– ***each** child*
  ***each of my** children*
– ***neither** door*
  ***neither of these** doors*

The same thing happens before a pronoun. Compare:

***most** horses*
most of them

A quantifier with *of* can be used directly before a noun in a few cases. This happens with proper nouns such as place names, and sometimes with uncountable nouns that refer to the whole of a subject or activity.

***Most of Wales** was without electricity last night.*
***Much of philosophy** is concerned with questions that have no answers.*

Many, most, little, least, few and *fewest* can follow 'group 1' determiners directly in some cases.

– ***his many** friends*
  ***the most** money*
– ***a little** time*
  ***the least** difficulty*
– ***these few** poems*
  ***the fewest** problems*

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- All of children can be difficult. ▶ 147.1
- We all can swim. ▶ 147.2–148
- All stood up. ▶ 149.1
- All what I have is yours. ▶ 149.2
- She lost all. ▶ 149.2
- The every plate was broken. ▶ 152.2
- I've written to my every friend. ▶ 152.2
- I see her every days. ▶ 151.1
- Every room are being used. ▶ 151.1
- Each new day are different. ▶ 153.1
- He's lost nearly each friend he had. ▶ 154.3
- Both my brothers carried the piano upstairs. ▶ 155.1
- The both children have fair hair. ▶ 155.3
- Come on Tuesday or Wednesday. Either days are OK. ▶ 156.1
- Please be quiet. Some of people want to get to sleep. ▶ 158.6
- She's unhappy because she's got any friends. ▶ 159.3
- I can write with any hand. ▶ 160
- 'Which newspaper would you like?' 'It doesn't matter. Every one.' ▶ 162
- Not any tourists ever came to our village. ▶ 163.4
- None of my parents could be there. ▶ 163.5
- No one of my friends wished me a happy birthday. ▶ 164.1
- He's got much money. ▶ 165.4
- The most children like ice cream. ▶ 167.1
- Most of cheese is made from cow's milk. ▶ 167.1
- A lot of my friends wants to emigrate. ▶ 172.2
- The majority of criminals is non-violent. ▶ 172.5

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146 *all*: introduction

1 three or more items

All refers to three or more items. Compare:

*I'll take **all** three shirts, please.*
*I'll take **both** shirts.* (NOT . . . ~~*all two shirts*~~.)

2 *all (of)* with noun phrases and pronouns

All modifies noun phrases or pronouns.

***All (of) the people** were singing.* *I haven't read **all of it**.*
*Give my love to **them all**.*

For details of word order, and the use of *all of*, ► 147.

3 with the subject or the verb

When *all* modifies the subject, it can go either with the subject or with the verb.

***All the people** were singing.* *The people **were all singing**.*

For more examples, ► 147–148.

4 *all* without a noun

All can sometimes be used without a noun to mean 'everything' but only in certain structures (► 149).

All that matters is to be happy. *That's all.*

5 *all* with adjectives, adverbs, etc: *all alone*

All can be used to emphasise some adjectives, prepositions and adverbs.

*You're **all wet**.* *She **walked all round** the town.*
*I was **all alone**.* *Tell me **all about** your plans.*
*It's **all because of** you.* *I looked **all round**, but I couldn't see anything.*

All, *both* and *half* follow similar grammar rules. For *both*, ► 155; for *half*, ► 478.

147 *all (of)* with noun phrases and pronouns

1 *all* and *all of*

All (of) can modify noun phrases and pronouns, especially in American English. Before a noun with a determiner (for example *the*, *my*, *this*), *all* and *all of* are both possible. *All* is more common than *all of* in British English.

*She's eaten **all (of) the cake**.* ***All (of) my friends** like riding.*

Before a noun with no determiner, we do not normally use *of*.

***All children** can be difficult.* (NOT ~~*All of children*~~ . . .)

2 *all of* + personal pronoun

With personal pronouns, we use ***all of** + **us**/**you**/**them***.
All of us/you/them can be a subject or object.

***All of us** can come tomorrow.* (NOT ~~*All we*~~ . . .)
*She's invited **all of you**.* *Emily sent **all of them** her love.*

3 pronoun + *all*

We can put *all* after pronouns used as objects.

*She's invited **you all**.* *Emily sent her love to **them all**.*
*I've made **us all** something to eat.*

This does not generally happen with complement pronouns (after *be*) or in short answers.

*I think that's **all of them**.* (NOT ~~*I think that's them all.*~~)
*'Who did she invite?' '**All of us**.* (NOT ~~***Us all.***~~)'

All can follow a subject pronoun (e.g. ***They all** went home*), but in this case it is positioned with the verb (► 148) and may be separated from the pronoun (e.g. ***They** have **all** gone home*).

For the American plural pronoun *you all*, ► 174.8.

4 types of noun

All is used mostly before uncountable and plural noun phrases.

*all the **water*** *all my **friends***

However, *all* can be used before some singular countable nouns referring to things that can naturally be divided into parts.

*all that **week*** *all my **family*** *all the **way***

We can also use *all (of)* before proper nouns (e.g. the names of places or writers), especially in BrE.

***All (of) London** knew about her affairs.*
*I've read **all (of) Shakespeare**.*

With other singular countable nouns, it is more natural to use *whole* (e.g. *the whole story*). For details, ► 150.

5 leaving out *the*

After *all*, we sometimes leave out *the* before numbers.

*all (the) **three** brothers*

And we usually leave out *the* in *all day*, ~~*all night*~~, *all week*, *all year*, *all winter* and *all summer*.

*She stayed here **all day**.* (NOT . . . ~~*all the day*~~).

6 *not all . . .*

It is not very common to use ***all** + **noun*** as the subject of a negative verb (e.g. *All Americans **don't like** hamburgers*). We more often use ***not all** + **noun** + **affirmative verb***.

***Not all** Americans **like** hamburgers.*

Note the difference between *not all* and *no*. Compare:

***Not all** birds can fly.* ***No** birds can play chess.*

148 *all* with the verb: *We can all swim.*

When *all* refers to the subject of a clause, it can go with the verb, in 'mid-position' (for details of word order, ► 200).

*We **can all** swim.* *Those apples **were all** bad.*
*The guests **have all arrived**.* *My family **all work** in education.*

→

Note that these meanings can also be expressed by using ***all (of)*** with the subject (► 147).

All of us *can swim.* ***All (of) the guests*** *have arrived.*

149 *all, everybody/everyone* and *everything*

1 *all* and *everybody/everyone*

We do not normally use *all* without a noun phrase to mean 'everybody'. Compare:

All the people *stood up.*
Everybody/Everyone *stood up.* (NOT ~~*All stood up.*~~)

2 *all* and *everything*

All (without a noun phrase) can mean 'everything', but usually only in the structure ***all*** + **relative clause** (*all that . . .*). Compare:

– ***All (that) I have*** *is yours.* (NOT ~~*All what I have . . .*~~)
Everything *is yours.* (NOT ~~*All is yours.*~~)
– *She lost* ***all (that) she owned.***
She lost ***everything.*** (NOT ~~*She lost all.*~~)

This structure often has a rather negative meaning, expressing ideas like 'nothing more' or 'the only thing(s)'.

This is ***all I've got.*** ***All I want*** *is a place to sit down.*
All that happened *was that he went to sleep.*

Note also *That's all* (= It's finished; There's no more).

3 older English

In older English, *all* could be used alone to mean 'everybody' or 'everything' (e.g. *Tell me* ***all***; ***All is lost***; ***All are dead***). This only happens regularly in modern English in dramatic contexts like newspaper headlines (e.g. *SPY TELLS ALL*).

150 *all* and *whole*

1 pronunciation

all /ɔːl/ whole /həʊl/

2 word order

All (of) (especially BrE) and *whole* can be used with singular noun phrases to mean 'complete', 'every part of'. The word order is different.

all (of) + determiner + noun
determiner + *whole* + noun

– *Julie spent* ***all (of) the*** *summer at home.*
Julie spent ***the whole*** *summer at home.*
– ***all (of) my*** *life*
my whole *life*

3 indefinite reference

All is not generally used before indefinite articles.

*She's eaten **a whole loaf.*** (NOT . . . ~~*all a loaf.*~~)

4 uncountable nouns

With most uncountable nouns we prefer *all (of).*

*I've drunk **all (of) the milk.*** (NOT . . . ~~*the whole milk.*~~)

5 *the whole of* (mainly BrE)

Instead of *whole, the whole of* is also possible, especially in British English.

*Julie spent **the whole of** the summer at home.*

***the whole of** my life*

Before proper nouns (names) and pronouns we always use *the whole of,* not *whole. All (of)* is also possible.

***The whole of / All of** Venice was under water.* (NOT ~~*Whole Venice*~~ . . .)

*I've just **read the whole of / all of** 'War and Peace'.*

*I've read **the whole of / all of** it.*

6 plural nouns

With plural nouns, *all* and *whole* have different meanings. *All* is like *every; whole* means 'complete', 'entire'. Compare:

***All Indian tribes** suffered from white settlement in America.* (= Every Indian tribe suffered . . .)

***Whole Indian tribes** were killed off.* (= Complete tribes were killed off; nobody was left alive in these tribes.)

151 *every (one)*

1 *every* + singular

Every is a determiner. We normally use it before a singular noun (but ► 151.5 below). If the noun is a subject, its verb is also singular.

every + singular noun (+ singular verb)

*I see her **every day.*** (NOT . . . ~~*every days.*~~)

***Every room is** being used.* (NOT ~~*Every room are*~~ . . .)

2 *every one of*

We use *every one of* before a pronoun or a determiner (for example *the, my, these*). The pronoun or noun is plural, but a following verb is singular.

every one of us/you/them (+ singular verb)
every one of + determiner + plural noun (+ singular verb)

*His books are wonderful. I've read **every one of them.***

***Every one of the children was** crying.*

3 *every one* without a noun

We can drop a noun and use *every one* alone, if the meaning is clear.

*His books are great. **Every one**'s worth reading.* →

4 negative structures

To negate *every*, we normally use *not every*.

***Not every** kind of bird can fly.* (More natural than *Every kind of bird cannot fly.*)

5 *every* + plural noun

Every is used before a plural noun in expressions that refer to intervals.

*I see her **every few days**.* *There's a meeting **every six weeks**.*

*She had to stop and rest **every two or three steps**.*

6 *everybody*, etc

Everybody, everyone, everything and *everywhere* are used with singular verbs, like *every*.

***Everybody has** gone home.* (NOT ~~*Everybody have* . . .~~)

***Everything** I like **is** either illegal, immoral or fattening.*

*I found that **everywhere was** closed.*

When possessives and pronouns refer back to *everybody/everyone*, they can usually be either singular (more formal) or plural (less formal). Sometimes only a plural word makes sense. Compare:

*Has **everybody** got **his or her** ticket?* (more formal)

*Has **everybody** got **their** tickets?* (less formal)

*When **everybody** had finished eating, the waiters took away **their** plates.*
(NOT . . . ~~*his or her plate.*~~)

Note that *everyone* (= 'everybody') does not mean the same as *every one* (which can refer to things as well as people).

7 *everyday*

Everyday is an adjective meaning 'ordinary', 'usual', 'routine'. It is not the same as the adverbial expression *every day*. Compare:

*In **everyday** life, you don't often find an elephant in a supermarket.*

*You don't see elephants **every day**.*

8 common expressions

Note the following common expressions with *every*.

every single

*She visits her mother **every single** day.*

every other

*We meet **every other** Tuesday.* (= . . . every second Tuesday.)

every so often; every now and then

*We go out for a drink together **every so often** / **every now and then**.*

For the difference between *every* and *each*, ► 154. For *every* and *all*, ► 152. For *every* and *any*, ► 162.
For more information about *everybody/everyone*, ► 180.

152 *every* and *all*

Every and *all* can both be used to talk about people or things in general, or about all the members of a group. There is little difference of meaning; *every* often suggests 'without exception'. The two words are used in different structures.

1 *every* with singular nouns; *all* with plurals

Every is used with a singular noun. To give the same meaning, *all* is used with a plural noun. Compare:

- ***Every child** needs love.* (NOT ~~*All child needs love.*~~)
  ***All children** need love.*
- ***Every light** was out.*
  ***All (of) the lights** were out.*

2 *every* not used with determiners

We can use *all (of)*, but not normally *every*, with certain determiners (articles, possessives or demonstratives). Compare:

- ***All (of) the plates** were broken.*
  ***Every plate** was broken.* (NOT ~~*Every the plate / The every plate*~~ . . .)
- *I've written to **all (of) my friends**.*
  *I've written to **every friend I have**.* (NOT . . . ~~*every my friend / my every friend.*~~)

3 *all* with uncountables

We can use *all*, but not *every*, with uncountable nouns.

*I like **all music**.* (NOT . . . ~~*every music.*~~)

4 *all day* and *every day*, etc

Note the difference between *all day/week*, etc and *every day/week*, etc.

*She was here **all day**.* (= from morning to night)
*She was here **every day**.* (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, . . .)

For the difference between *every* and *each*, ▸ 154.

153 *each*

1 *each* + singular

Each is a determiner. We use it before a singular noun.

*I enjoy **each moment**.* (NOT . . . ~~*each moments.*~~)

A following verb is also singular.

*Each new day **is** different.* (NOT . . . ~~*are different.*~~)

2 *each of*

We use *each of* before a plural pronoun, or before a determiner (for example *the, my, these*) with a plural noun.

***Each of us** sees the world differently.*
*I phone **each of my children** once a week.*

→

A following verb is normally singular.
Each of them ***has*** *problems.*

3 position with object

Each can follow an object (direct or indirect), but does not normally come at the end of a clause.
She kissed ***them each*** *on the forehead.* (BUT NOT ~~*She kissed them each.*~~)
I want ***them each*** *to make their own decision.*
I sent ***the secretaries each*** *a Christmas card.*
However, *each* can come at the end of a clause in expressions referring to exact amounts and quantities.
They cost ***£3.50 each.*** *I bought the girls* ***two pairs of trainers each.***

4 without a noun

We can drop a noun after *each*, if the meaning is clear. However, *each one* or *each of them* is more common in an informal style.
I've got five brothers, and ***each (one/of them)*** *lives in a different city.*

5 with the verb

When *each* refers to the subject, it can also go with a verb in mid-position, like *all* and some adverbs (for details of word order, ► 200). In this case plural nouns, pronouns and verbs are used.
They ***have each been*** *told.*
We ***can each apply*** *for our own membership card.*
You ***are each right*** *in a different way.*
The plans ***each have*** *certain advantages and disadvantages.*

For the difference between *each* and *every*, ► 154.

154 *each* and *every*: the difference

1 *each* with two or more; *every* with three or more

Each and *every* are both normally used with singular nouns. *Each* can be used to talk about two or more people or things; *every* is normally used to talk about three or more.
The business makes less money ***each/every year.*** (NOT . . . ~~*each/every years.*~~)
She had a child holding on to ***each hand.*** (NOT . . . ~~*every hand.*~~)

For expressions like *every two years, every three steps*, ► 130.9.

2 meaning

Each and *every* can often be used without much difference of meaning.
You look more beautiful ***each/every*** *time I see you.*
But we prefer *each* when we are thinking of people or things separately, one at a time. And *every* is more common when we are thinking of people or things together, in a group. (*Every* is closer to *all*.) So we are more likely to say:
Each person *in turn went to see the doctor.*
BUT
Every patient *came from the same small village.*

3 structures

We do not use *each* with words and expressions like *almost, practically, nearly* or *without exception*, which stress the idea of a whole group.

She's lost nearly ***every friend*** *she had.* (NOT . . . ~~*nearly each friend*~~ . . .)

Each can be used in some structures where *every* is impossible.

They ***each*** *said what they thought.* (BUT NOT ~~*They every*~~ . . .)

Each of them *spoke for five minutes.* (BUT NOT ~~*Every of them*~~ . . .)

For more details, ► 153 (*each*) and ► 151 (*every*).

155 *both*

1 meaning

Both means 'each of two'.

Both *my parents were born in Scotland.*

When the meaning is not 'each of two', we normally use a different expression.

My two *brothers carried the piano upstairs.* (More natural than *Both my brothers carried the piano upstairs* – they didn't each carry it separately.)

2 *both* and *both of*

Before a noun with a determiner (e.g. *the, my, these*), *both* and *both of* are equally possible.

She's eaten ***both (of) the*** *chops.* ***Both (of) these*** *oranges are bad.*

He lost ***both (of) his*** *parents when he was a child.*

We often drop *the* or a possessive after *both*; *of* is not used in this case.

She's eaten ***both chops.*** (NOT . . . ~~*both of chops*~~)

He lost ***both parents*** *when he was a child.*

3 *the* not used before *both*

Note that we do not put *the* before *both*.

both (the) *children* (NOT ~~*the both children*~~)

4 personal pronouns: *both of*

With personal pronouns, we use ***both of*** + ***us/you/them***. *Both of us/you/them* can be a subject or object.

Both of them *can come tomorrow.* *She's invited* ***both of us.***

Emily sends ***both of you*** *her love.*

We can put *both* after pronouns used as objects.

She's invited ***us both.*** *Emily sends* ***you both*** *her love.*

But this structure is not used in complements (after *be*) or in short answers.

'*Who broke the window – Sarah or Alice?*' '*It was* ***both of them***'.
(NOT . . . ~~*them both.*~~)

'*Who did she invite?*' '***Both of us.***' (NOT ~~*Us both.*~~)

5 position with verb

When *both* refers to the subject of a clause, it can go with the verb, in 'mid-position', like *all* and *each* (for details of word order, ► 200).

We ***can both swim.*** *Those oranges* ***were both*** *bad.*

The children ***have both gone*** *to bed.* *My sisters* ***both work*** *in education.* →

Note that these meanings can also be expressed by using *both (of)* with a subject (see above).

***Both of us** can swim.* ***Both (of) the children** have gone to bed.*

6 negative structures

Instead of *both . . . not*, we normally use *neither* (► 157).

***Neither of them** is here.* (NOT ~~*Both of them are not here.*~~)

156 *either*

1 *either* + singular

We use *either* with a singular noun to mean 'one or the other' of two.

Come on Tuesday or Thursday. ***Either day** is OK.* (NOT ~~*Either days*~~ . . .)

She didn't get on with ***either parent**.* (NOT . . . ~~*either parents*~~)

2 *either of*

We use *either of* before a determiner (for example *the, my, these*) or a pronoun. A following noun is plural.

You can use ***either of the bathrooms**.*

I don't like ***either of my history teachers**.*

I don't like ***either of them**.*

A verb after *either of* is more often singular, but it can sometimes be plural in an informal style.

Either of the children ***is** perfectly capable of looking after the baby.*

She just doesn't care what either of her parents ***say(s)**.*

3 without a noun

We can use *either* alone if the meaning is clear.

'Would you like tea or coffee?' 'I don't mind. ***Either**.'*

4 pronouns

When a pronoun is used later in a clause to refer back to ***either** + **noun/pronoun***, the later pronoun can be singular (more formal) or plural (more informal).

If either of the boys phones, tell ***him/them** I'll be in this evening.*

5 *either side/end*

In these expressions, *either* sometimes means 'each'.

There are roses on ***either side** of the door.*

6 pronunciation

Either is pronounced /ˈaɪðə(r)/ or /ˈiːðə(r)/ (in American English usually /ˈiːðər/).

For *either . . . or*, ► 228. For *not . . . either, neither* and *nor*, ► 227–228.

157 *neither*

1 *neither* + singular noun

We use *neither* before a singular noun to mean 'not one and not the other (of two)'.

'Can you come on Monday or Tuesday?' 'I'm afraid ***neither day*** *is possible.'*

2 *neither of* + plural

We use *neither of* before a determiner (for example *the, my, these*), and before a pronoun. The noun or pronoun is plural.

Neither of my *brothers can sing.* (NOT ~~*Neither my brothers can sing.*~~)
Neither of us *saw it happen.*

After ***neither of*** + **noun/pronoun**, we use a singular verb in a formal style.

Neither of my sisters ***is*** *married.*

In an informal style, a plural verb is possible.

Neither of my sisters ***are*** *married.*

3 *neither* used alone

We can use *neither* without a noun or pronoun, if the meaning is clear.

*'Which one do you want?' '****Neither****.'*

4 pronunciation

In British English, *neither* can be pronounced both /ˈnaɪðə(r)/ and /ˈniːðə(r)/. In American English, the usual pronunciation is /ˈniːðər/.

For *neither . . . nor*, ► 228.

158 *some*

1 meaning: indefinite quantity/number

Some is a determiner. It often suggests an indefinite quantity or number, and is used when it is not important to say exactly how much/many we are thinking of.

I need ***some*** *new clothes.*
Would you like ***some*** *tea?*

2 pronunciation

When *some* has this indefinite meaning, it usually has a 'weak' pronunciation /s(ə)m/ before **(adjective +) noun**.

some /s(ə)m/ *new clothes*
some /s(ə)m/ *tea*

For more about 'strong' and 'weak' pronunciations, ► 315.

3 *some* and *any*

With this meaning, *some* is most common in affirmative clauses, and in questions which expect or encourage the answer 'Yes'. In other cases, *any* is generally used. For details, ► 161. →

Compare:

– *There are **some** children at the front door.*
*Do you mind if I put **some** music on?*
– *Did you meet **any** interesting people on the trip?*
*She hasn't got **any** manners.*

4 *some* and *a/an*

Some (in this sense) is used in similar ways to the indefinite article *a/an* (► 137). However, it is not normally used with the same kind of nouns. Compare:

*I need **a new coat**.* (singular countable noun) (NOT . . . ~~*some new coat*~~.)
*I need **some new shirts**.* (plural countable noun)
*I need **some help**.* (uncountable noun)

5 when *some* is not used

With an uncountable or plural noun, *some* usually suggests the idea of an indefinite (but not very large) quantity or number. When there is no idea of a limited quantity or number, we do not usually use *some*. For details, ► 139. Compare:

– *We've planted **some roses** in the garden.* (a limited number)
*I like **roses**.* (no idea of number)
– *Bring **some food** in case we get hungry.*
*The President has appealed for **food** for the earthquake victims.*

6 *some* and *some of*; *some* with no following noun

Before another determiner (article, demonstrative or possessive word) or a pronoun, we use *some of*. Compare:

– *I've got tickets for **some** concerts next month.* (NOT . . . ~~*some of concerts*~~ . . .)
*Dan's coming to **some of the** concerts.* (NOT . . . ~~*some the concerts*~~ . . .)
– ***Some** people want to get to sleep.* (NOT . . . ~~*some of people*~~ . . .)
***Some of us** want to get to sleep.* (NOT ~~*Some us*~~ . . .)

Nouns can be dropped after *some*, if the meaning is clear.

*I've got too many strawberries. Would you like **some**?*

Before *of*, or with no following noun, *some* is pronounced /sʌm/.

some /sʌm/ *of us* *Would you like some* /sʌm/*?*

7 contrast with *others*, etc

Some (pronounced /sʌm/) can have a more emphatic meaning, contrasting with *others*, *all* or *enough*.

***Some** people like the sea; **others** prefer the mountains.*
***Some** of us were late, but we were **all** there by ten o'clock.*
*I've got **some** money, but not **enough**.*

8 an unknown person or thing

Some (/sʌm/) can refer to an unknown person or thing (usually with a singular countable noun).

***Some** idiot has taken the bath plug.*
*There must be **some** job I could do.*
*She's living in **some** village in Yorkshire.*

We can use this structure to suggest that we are not interested in somebody or something, or that we do not think much of him/her/it.

*Emily's gone to America to marry **some** sheep farmer or other.*
*I don't want to spend my life doing **some** boring little office job.*

9 *some party!*

In informal speech, *some* can show enthusiastic appreciation.
*It was **some** party!*

10 with numbers

Some (/sʌm/) with a number suggests that the number is high or impressive.
*We have exported **some four thousand** tons of bootlaces this year.*

For *somebody* and *anybody*, *something* and *anything*, etc, ► 180.
For *some time*, *sometime* and *sometimes*, ► 590.

159 *any*

1 meaning: indefinite amount or number

Any is a determiner. It generally suggests an indefinite amount or number, and is used when it is not important to say how much/many we are thinking of. Because of its 'open', non-specific meaning, *any* is often used in questions and negative clauses, and in other cases where there is an idea of doubt or negation.
*Is there **any** more coffee?*
*We didn't have **any** problems going through customs.*
*You never give me **any** help.*
*The noise of the party prevented me from getting **any** sleep.*
*I suddenly realised I'd come out without **any** money.*

Any is common after *if*.
*If you find **any** blackberries, keep some for me.*

Sometimes *any* means 'if there is/are any' or 'whatever there is/are'.
***Any** fog will clear by noon.* (= If there is any fog, it will clear by noon.)
*Perhaps you could correct **any** mistakes I've made.*

Any can be used to emphasise the idea of open choice: 'it doesn't matter who/what/which'.
*You can borrow **any** book you want.*

For details of this use, ► 160.

2 *any* and *some*

Any often contrasts with *some*, which is most common in affirmative clauses. Compare:
*I need **some** razor blades.* *Do you have **any** razor blades?*
*Sorry, I don't have **any** razor blades.*

For details of the difference, ► 161.

3 *any* and *not any*

Any alone does not have a negative meaning. It is only negative when used with *not*.
*She's unhappy because she has**n't** got **any** friends.* (NOT . . . ~~*because she has got any friends.*~~)

No (► 163) means the same as *not any*, but is more emphatic.
*She's got **no** friends.*

Not any cannot begin a sentence; *no* is used instead.

No cigarette is harmless. (NOT ~~*Not any cigarette*~~ . . .)

No tourists came to the town that year.

We do not usually use *not any* with singular countable nouns (but ► 160).

She hasn't got ***a job.*** (NOT ~~*She hasn't got any job.*~~)

4 when *any* is not used

With an uncountable or plural noun, *any* usually suggests the idea of an indefinite but limited amount or number. When there is no idea of a limited quantity or number, we do not usually use *any*. Compare:

– *Is there* ***any water*** *in that can?*
  Is there ***water*** *on the moon?* (The interest is in the existence of water, not its amount.)
– *Dad hasn't got* ***any hair.*** (He has lost the amount he had.)
  Birds have feathers, not ***hair.*** (No idea of amount.)
– *None of her children have got* ***any sense.*** (Not even a small amount.)
  Anna looks like her mother, but she hasn't got ***blue eyes.*** (NOT . . . ~~*she hasn't got any blue eyes*~~ – people have a definite number of eyes: two.)

5 *any* and *any of*

Before a determiner (definite article, demonstrative or possessive word) or a pronoun, we use *any of*. Compare:

– *I didn't go to* ***any*** *lectures last term.* (NOT . . . ~~*any of lectures*~~ . . .)
  I wasn't interested in ***any of the*** *lectures.* (NOT . . . ~~*any the lectures.*~~)
– *Do* ***any*** *books here belong to you?*
  Do ***any of these*** *books belong to you?*
– *I don't think* ***any staff*** *want to work tomorrow.*
  I don't think ***any of us*** *want to work tomorrow.*

Note that when *any of* is followed by a plural subject, the verb can be singular or plural. A singular verb is more common in a formal style.

If ***any*** *of your* ***friends is/are*** *interested, let me know.*

6 without a noun

A noun can be dropped after *any*, if the meaning is clear.

'Did you get the oil?' 'No, there wasn't ***any*** *left.'*

Instead of *not any* without a noun, *none* (► 163) can be used. This is often more emphatic.

There was ***none*** *left.*

We don't use *any* or *not any* alone as answers.

'What day should I come?' '***Any day.*** (NOT ~~*Any.*~~)'

'How much money do you have?' '***None.*** (NOT ~~*Not any.*~~)'

7 compounds

Many of the rules given above also apply to the compounds *anybody, anyone, anything* and *anywhere*. For more information about these, ► 180.

For the use of *any* and *no* as adverbs, ► 373. For *any . . . but*, ► 413. For *any* and *every*, ► 162.

160 *any* = 'it doesn't matter who/which/what'

Any can be used to emphasise the idea of free choice, with the meaning of 'it doesn't matter who/which/what'. With this meaning, *any* is common in affirmative clauses as well as questions and negatives, and is often used with singular countable nouns as well as uncountables and plurals. In speech, it is stressed.

*Ask **any** doctor – they'll all tell you that alcohol is a poison.*
*My brother's looking for work. He'll take **any** job he can get.*
'When should I come?' 'Any time.'

We can use *just any* if necessary to make the meaning clear.

*I don't do **just any** work – I choose jobs that interest me.* (*I don't do any work . . .* could be misunderstood.)

Note that we use *either* (► 156), not *any*, to talk about a choice between two alternatives.

*I can write with **either** hand.* (NOT . . . ~~*any hand.*~~)

At all (► 387) is often used to emphasise the meaning of *(not) any*.

*I'll do **any** job **at all** – even road-sweeping.*
*She doesn't speak **any** English **at all**.* (NOT ~~*any hand.*~~)

161 *some* and *any*: the main differences

1 indefinite quantities

Both *some* (► 158) and *any* (► 159) can refer to an indefinite quantity or number. They are used when it is not easy, or not important, to say exactly how much/many we are thinking of.

*I need **some** new clothes.* *Is there **any** milk left?*

Used in this sense, *some* is most common in affirmative clauses; *any* is a 'non-affirmative' word (► 222) and is common in questions and negatives. Compare:

*I need **some** flour.* *Do you have **any** flour?*
*Sorry, I don't have **any** flour.* (NOT ~~*Sorry, I don't have some flour.*~~)

2 *some* in questions

We use *some* in questions if we expect people to answer 'Yes', or want to encourage them to say 'Yes' – for example in offers and requests.

*Have you brought **some** paper and a pen?* (The hearer is expected to bring them.)
*Shouldn't there be **some** instructions with it?*
*Would you like **some** more meat?*
*Could I have **some** brown rice, please?*
*Have you got **some** glasses that I could borrow?* →

3 *any* in affirmative clauses

We use *any* in affirmative clauses after words that have a negative or limiting meaning: for example *never, hardly, without, little.*

*You **never** give me **any** help.* *I **forgot** to get **any** bread.*
*There's **hardly any** tea left.* *We got there **without any** trouble.*
*There is **little** point in doing **any** more work now.*
*The guards **prevented** us from asking **any** questions.*

4 *if*-clauses

Both *some* and *any* are common in *if*-clauses.

*If you want **some/any** help, let me know.*

Sometimes *any* is used to suggest 'if there is/are any'.

__Any__ cars parked in this road will be towed away. (= If there are any cars parked in this road, they will . . .)

For the 'free choice' use of *any* (e.g. *Any child could do this*), ► 160.

162 *any* and *every*: the difference

Any and *every* can both be used to talk in general about all the members of a class or group.

__Any/Every__ child can learn to swim.

The meaning is not quite the same. *Any* looks at things one at a time: it means 'whichever one you choose'. *Every* looks at things together: its meaning is closer to 'all'. Compare:

'*Which newspaper would you like?*' '*It doesn't matter. __Any one__.*' (= one or another or another) (NOT . . . ~~*Every one.*~~)

*On the stand there were newspapers and magazines of **every** kind.* (= one and another and another) (NOT . . . ~~*magazines of any kind.*~~)

For more information about *any*, ► 159. For *every*, ► 151.

163 *no, none* and *not a/any*

1 *no*: emphatic

No can be used instead of *not a* or *not any* when we want to emphasise a negative idea.

*Would you believe it? There's **no** mirror in the bathroom!* (More emphatic than . . . *There isn't a mirror* . . .)

*Sorry I can't stop. I've got **no** time.* (More emphatic than . . . *I haven't got any time.*)

*There were **no** messages for you this morning, I'm afraid.* (More emphatic than *There weren't any messages* . . .)

2 *none of*

Before a determiner (e.g. *the, my, this*) or a pronoun, we use *none of.*

*She's done **none of the** work.* (NOT . . . ~~*no of the work.*~~)

*We understood **none of his** arguments.* *I've been to **none of those** places.*

***None of us** speaks Greek.*

When we use *none of* with a plural noun or pronoun, the verb can be singular (a little more formal) or plural (a little more informal).

None of my friends ***is*** *interested.* (more formal)

None of my friends ***are*** *interested.* (more informal)

We can use *none* alone if the meaning is clear.

'*How many of the books have you read?*' '***None.***'

3 *not a/any*

We prefer *not a/any* in objects and complements when the sense is not emphatic. Compare:

He's ***no*** *fool.* (= He's not a fool at all. – emphatic negative)

A whale is ***not a*** *fish.* (NOT ~~*A whale is no fish*~~ – the sense is not emphatic.)

4 subjects

Not any cannot normally be used in subjects. *No* and *none of* are used instead.

No *brand of cigarette is completely harmless.* (NOT ~~*Not any brand*~~ . . .)

No *tourists ever came to our village.* (NOT ~~*Not any tourists*~~ . . .)

None of *my friends lives near me.* (NOT ~~*Not any of my friends*~~ . . .)

5 *not* used to talk about two

We use *neither*, not *no* or *none*, to talk about two people or things (► 157).

Neither *of my parents could be there.* (NOT ~~*None of my parents*~~ . . .)

6 *nobody*, etc

Nobody, nothing, no one and *nowhere* are used in similar ways to *no.*

I saw ***nobody.*** (More emphatic than *I didn't see anybody.*)

Nobody *spoke.* (NOT ~~*Not anybody spoke.*~~)

For *no* and *not*, ► 536. For more about *any*, ► 159. For *none* and *no one*, ► 164.
For *no* as a modifying adverb (e.g. *no better*), ► 373.

164 *no one* and *none*

1 *no one*

No one (also written *no-one* in British English) means the same as *nobody.* It cannot be followed by *of.*

No one *wished me a happy birthday.* (NOT ~~*No one of my friends*~~ . . .)

I stayed in all evening waiting, but ***no one*** *came.*

2 *none*

To express the idea 'not a single one (of)', we can use *none (of), not any (of)* or *not one (of)* (more emphatic). *No one* is not used in this way.

None of *my friends wished me a happy birthday.*

I haven't read ***any of*** *his books.*

Not one of *my shirts is clean.* (NOT ~~*No one of my shirts*~~ . . .)

'*Have you found any blackberries?*' '***Not one.***'

For more about *none*, ► 163.

165 *much* and *many*

1 the difference

Much is used with singular (uncountable) nouns; *many* is used with plurals.

I haven't got ***much time****.* *I don't know* ***many*** *of your* ***friends****.*

2 *much/many of*

We use *much/many of* before another determiner (article, possessive, etc) or a pronoun. Compare:

– *She didn't eat* ***much*** *breakfast.* (NOT . . . ~~*much of breakfast.*~~)
She didn't eat ***much of her*** *breakfast.*
She didn't eat ***much of*** *it.*

– *There aren't* ***many*** *large glasses left.*
There aren't ***many of the*** *large glasses left.*
There aren't ***many of them*** *left.*

However, *much of* can be used directly before personal and geographical names.

I've seen too ***much of*** *Howard recently.*
Not ***much of*** *Denmark is hilly.*

3 *much/many* without a noun

We can drop a noun after *much* or *many*, if the meaning is clear.

You haven't eaten ***much****.*
'Did you find any mushrooms?' 'Not ***many****.'*

Note that *much* and *many* are only used like this when a noun has been dropped.

There wasn't ***much*** ***(food)****.* (BUT NOT ~~*The food wasn't much.*~~ No noun has been dropped. You couldn't say ~~*The food wasn't much food.*~~)

Many is not usually used alone to mean 'many people'.

Many people *think it's time for a change.* (More natural than *Many think . . .*)

4 not used in affirmative clauses

In an informal style, we use *much* and *many* mostly in questions and negative clauses. In most informal affirmative clauses they are unusual (especially *much*); other words and expressions are used instead.

'How ***much*** *money have you got?' 'I've got* ***plenty****.'* (NOT ~~*I've got much.*~~)
He's got ***lots of*** *men friends, but he doesn't know* ***many*** *women.*
(More natural than *He's got many men friends . . .*)
'Did you buy any clothes?' 'Yes, ***lots****.'* (NOT ~~*Yes, many.*~~)

In a formal style, *much* and *many* are more common in affirmative clauses.

Much *has been written about unemployment. In the opinion of* ***many*** *economists, . . .*

Far and *long* (= a long time) are also used mostly in questions and negative clauses. ► 461, 517

5 after *so, as* and *too*

So much/many, as much/many and *too much/many* are quite natural in affirmative clauses.

*There was **so much** traffic that it took me an hour to get home.*
*I play **as much** tennis as I can.* *You make **too many** mistakes.*

6 *my many friends*, etc

Note that *many* can follow possessives in expressions like *my many friends, her many prizes.* This is rather formal.

7 *much* as adverb

We can use *much* as an adverb in questions and negative clauses.

*Do you work **much** at weekends?* *I don't travel **much** these days.*

We can also use *much* before comparative adjectives and adverbs, in affirmative clauses as well as questions and negatives.

*She's **much older** than her brother.* *I don't drive **much faster** than you.*

Much can be used before some verbs expressing enjoyment, preference and similar ideas, in affirmative clauses as well as questions and negatives, especially in a formal style.

*I **much appreciate** your help.* *We **much prefer** the country to the town.*
*I didn't **much enjoy** the concert.*

Very much can be used in affirmative clauses as an adverb.

*I **very much** like your new hairstyle.* *Thank you **very much**.*

For *much* and *very* with past participles (e.g. *much/very amused*), ► 96.8

166 *more*

1 *more (of)*

We can use *more* as a determiner before uncountable or plural nouns. Before another determiner (article, possessive, etc) or a pronoun, we use *more of.* Compare:

- *We need **more** butter.*
  *We need **more of that** salted butter.*
  *We need **more of it**.*
- ***More** climbers have been found.*
  ***More of the** missing climbers have been found.*
  ***More of them** have been found.*

However, *more of* can be used directly before personal and geographical names.

*It would be nice to see **more of Ray and Barbara**.*
*Five hundred years ago, much **more of Britain** was covered with trees.*

2 *more* without a noun

We can drop a noun after *more* if the meaning is clear.

*I'd like some **more**, please.*

3 *one more*, etc

Note the structure ***one more, two more***, etc. In this case *more* can be used before a countable noun.

*There's just **one more river** to cross.*

4 *more* as an adverb

More can also be used as an adverb.

I couldn't agree ***more.***

More and more is used to talk about continual increase.

I hate this job ***more and more*** *as the years go by.*

For *more* in comparatives (e.g. *more comfortable*), ▸ Section 17.
For *no more, not any more/longer*, ▸ 535. For *far more, much more, many more*, etc, ▸ 207.

167 *most*

1 *most (of)*

We can use *most* as a determiner before uncountable or plural nouns. Note that we do not use *the* before *most* in this case.

Most children *like ice cream.* (NOT ~~*The most children*~~ . . .)

Before another determiner (article, possessive, etc) or a pronoun, we use *most of*. Compare:

– ***Most*** *fruit is imported.*
Most of our *fruit is imported.*
Most of it *is imported.*

– ***Most*** *people can sing a little.*
Most of these people *can sing a little.*
Most of them *can sing a little.*

However, *most of* can be used directly before personal and geographical names.

I've read ***most of Shakespeare.*** *The Romans conquered* ***most of England.***

2 *most* without a noun

We can drop a noun after *most* if the meaning is clear.

Some people had difficulty with the lecture, but ***most*** *understood.*

3 *the most* (= 'more than any other/others') with nouns

In comparisons (when *most* means 'more than any other/others') it is normally used with *the* before nouns.

Susan found ***the most blackberries.***

The is sometimes dropped in an informal style.

Who earns ***(the) most money*** *in your family?*

4 *the most* as an adverb

(The) most can also be used as an adverb.*The* is often dropped in an informal style.

They all talk a lot, but your little girl talks ***(the) most.*** *The truth hurts* ***most.***

For *most* in superlatives (e.g. *the most beautiful*), ▸ Section 17.

168 *(a) little* and *(a) few*

1 uncountable and plural

We use the determiner *(a) little* with singular (usually uncountable) words, and we use *(a) few* with plurals. Compare:

I have ***little*** *interest in politics.* ***Few*** *politicians are really honest.*

We've got ***a little*** *bacon and* ***a few*** *eggs.*

Before another determiner (article, possessive, etc) or a pronoun, we use *(a) little of* and *(a) few of*. Compare:

– *Could I have* ***a little*** *butter?*
Could I have ***a little of that*** *butter?*
Could I have ***a little of that****?*
– ***Few*** *people always tell the truth.*
Few of the *people questioned told the truth.*
Few of them *told the truth.*

2 use of *a*

There is a difference between *little* and *a little*, and between *few* and *a few*. Without *a*, *little* and *few* usually have rather negative meanings, close to *no* or *none*. They may suggest 'not as much/many as one would like', 'not as much/many as expected', and similar ideas.

The average MP has ***little*** *real power.*
Few *people can speak a foreign language perfectly.*

A little and *a few* are more positive: their meaning is generally closer to *some*. They may suggest ideas like 'better than nothing' or 'more than expected'.

Would you like ***a little*** *soup?*
You don't need to go shopping. We've got ***a few*** *potatoes and some steak.*

Compare:

– *Cactuses need* ***little*** *water.* (not much water)
Give the roses ***a little*** *water every day.* (not a lot, but some)
– *His ideas are difficult, and* ***few*** *people understand them.*
His ideas are difficult, but ***a few*** *people understand them.*

Quite a few (informal) means 'a considerable number'.

We've got ***quite a few*** *friends in the village.*

3 formal and informal language

Little and *few* (with no article) are rather formal. In an informal style (e.g. ordinary conversation), we generally prefer *not much/many*, or *only a little/few*.

Come on! We haven't got ***much*** *time!*
Only a few *people remembered my birthday.*

However, *very little* and *very few* are possible in an informal style.

He's got ***very little*** *patience and* ***very few*** *friends.*

4 *(a) little* and *(a) few* without nouns

We can drop a noun and use *(a) little/few* alone, if the meaning is clear.

'Some more soup?' 'Just ***a little****, please.'*

5 not used after *be*

(A) little and *(a) few* are determiners. They are normally used before nouns, but not after *be*.

They had ***little hope****.* (BUT NOT ~~*Their hope was little.*~~)

6 *his few friends*, etc

Note that *few* can follow possessives in expressions like *his few friends*, *my few visits to Scotland*. This is rather formal.

For *a little* with comparatives (e.g. *a little better*), ▸ 207.1. For the adjective *little*, ▸ 580.

169 *less* and *fewer*

1 the difference

Less is the comparative of *little* (used especially before uncountable nouns). *Fewer* is the comparative of *few* (used before plural nouns). Compare:

I earn ***less money*** *than a cleaner.* *I've got* ***fewer problems*** *than I used to have.*

In an informal style, *less* is quite common before plural nouns. Some people consider this incorrect.

I've got ***less problems*** *than I used to have.*

2 *less*/*fewer* with and without *of*

Before another determiner (article, possessive, etc) or a pronoun, we use *less of* and *fewer of*. Compare:

– *If you want to lose weight, eat* ***less food.*** (NOT . . . ~~*less of food.*~~)
Fewer people make their own bread these days. (NOT ~~*Fewer of people*~~ . . .)
– *I'd like to spend* ***less of my*** *time answering emails.*
At the college reunions, there are ***fewer of us*** *each year.*

3 *less* and *fewer* without nouns

Nouns can be dropped after *less* and *fewer* if the meaning is clear.

Some people go to church, but ***less***/***fewer*** *than 20 years ago.*

Less can be used as an adverb (the opposite of the adverb *more*).

I worry ***less*** *than I used to.*

For *lesser*, ► 510.

170 *least* and *fewest*

1 *the least* as determiner: superlative of *little*

The least can be used as a determiner before uncountable nouns; it is the superlative of *little* (= not much, ► 168), and the opposite of *the most.*

I think I probably do ***the least work*** *in this office.*

The least can be used without a noun if the meaning is clear.

Jess earns the most money in our family; Dan earns ***the least.***

We use *the least of* before plural abstract nouns to mean 'the smallest of'.

'What will your mother think?' 'That's ***the least of*** *my worries.'*

2 'any . . . at all'

With singular abstract nouns, *the least* can mean 'any . . . at all'.

Do you think there's ***the least chance*** *of Smith winning the election?*
'What's the time?' 'I haven't got ***the least*** *idea.'*

3 *the fewest* as determiner: superlative of *few*

The fewest can be used before plural nouns as the superlative of *few* (► 168).

The translation with ***the fewest mistakes*** *isn't always the best.*

Least is often used instead of *fewest* before plural nouns (. . . *the* ***least*** *mistakes*), especially in an informal style. Some people feel this is incorrect.

For other uses of *least*, see the Index.

4 *(the) least* with adjectives: the opposite of *(the) most* or *(the) . . .est*

(The) least is used before adjectives in the same way as *(the) most* or *(the) . . .est* (► 204), but with the opposite meaning.

***The least expensive** trips are often the most interesting.*
*I'm **least happy** when I have to work at weekends.*

For the use of *the* with superlatives, ► 208.

5 *least* as adverb

Least can be used as an adverb (the opposite of *most*).

*She always arrives when you **least** expect it.*
*I don't much like housework, and I like cooking **least** of all.*

6 *at least*

At least means 'not less than (but perhaps more than)'.

*'How old do you think he is?' '**At least** thirty.'*
*He's been in love **at least** eight times this year.*

We can also use *at least* as a discourse marker (► 284.3) to suggest that one thing is certain or all right, even if everything else is unsatisfactory.

*We lost everything in the fire. But **at least** nobody was hurt.*

7 *not in the least*

We can use *not in the least* in a formal style to mean 'not at all', especially when talking about personal feelings and reactions.

*I was **not in the least** upset by her bad temper.*

For *less* and *fewer*, ► 169.

171 *enough*

1 *enough* + noun

Enough can be used before a noun as a determiner.

*Have you got **enough milk?*** *There aren't **enough glasses**.*

Enough is occasionally used after a noun, but this is rare in modern English except in a few expressions.

*If only we had **time enough** . . .* *I was **fool enough** to believe him.*

Before another determiner (article, possessive, etc) or a pronoun, we use *enough of*. Compare:

- *I don't know **enough** Spanish to read this.* (NOT . . . ~~*enough of Spanish*~~ . . .)
  *I don't understand **enough of the** words in the notice.*
- *We haven't got **enough** blue paint.* (NOT . . . ~~*enough of blue paint*~~.)
  *We haven't got **enough of that** blue paint.*
- *You didn't buy **enough** cards.* (NOT . . . ~~*enough of cards*~~)
  *You didn't buy **enough of them**.* →

Note the idiomatic structure *I've had enough of* . . . This can be followed by a noun without a determiner.

I've had enough of *mathematics; I'm going to give it up.*
She's had enough of *England; she's going back home.*

2 without a noun

Enough can be used alone without a noun to refer to an amount, if the meaning is clear.

Half a pound of carrots will be ***enough.***
That's ***enough,*** *thank you.* *Enough is* ***enough.***
BUT NOT ~~*The meat is enough.*~~ (The meat is not an amount.)

For other uses of *enough*, and word order with nouns and adjectives, ▸ 450.

172 quantifying expressions: *a lot, lots, a great deal, the majority,* etc

1 introduction; use of *of*

Expressions of this kind have similar meanings to the determiners *much, many* and *most,* but the grammar is not quite the same. In particular, *of* is used after these expressions even before nouns with no determiner. Compare:

– *There's not* ***a lot of*** *meat left.* (NOT ~~*There's not a lot meat left.*~~)
There's not ***much*** *meat left.* (NOT ~~*There's not much of meat left.*~~)
– ***Plenty of*** *shops open on Sunday mornings.* (NOT ~~*Plenty shops*~~ . . .)
Many *shops open on Sunday mornings.* (NOT ~~*Many of shops*~~ . . .)

2 *a lot of* and *lots of*

These are rather informal. In a more formal style, we prefer *a great deal of, a large number of, much* or *many*. There is not much difference between *a lot of* and *lots of*: they are both used mainly before singular uncountable and plural nouns, and before pronouns. It is the subject, and not the form *lot/lots*, that makes a following verb singular or plural. So when *a lot of* is used before a plural subject, the verb is plural; when *lots of* is used before a singular subject, the verb is singular.

A lot of time is *needed to learn a language.*
Lots of patience *is needed, too.* (NOT ~~*Lots of patience are needed, too.*~~)
A lot of my friends want *to emigrate.* (NOT ~~*A lot of my friends wants*~~ . . .)
Lots of us *think it's time for an election.*

3 *plenty of*

Plenty of is usually rather informal. It is used mostly before singular uncountables and plurals. It suggests 'enough and more'.

Don't rush. There's ***plenty of time.*** ***Plenty of shops*** *sell batteries.*

4 *a great deal of, a large amount of* and *a large number of*

These are used in similar ways to *a lot of* and *lots of,* but are more formal.
A great deal of and *a large amount of* are generally used with uncountable nouns.

Mr Lucas has spent ***a great deal of time*** *in the Far East.*
I've thrown out ***a large amount of old clothing.***

A large number of is used before plurals, and a following verb is plural.

***A large number of problems** still **have** to be solved.* (More common than *A large amount of problems . . .* or *A great deal of problems . . .*)

Some people think it is a mistake to use a plural noun after *a large amount* or *a great deal*, but the usage is quite common in standard English speech.

5 *the majority of*

The majority of (= 'most' or 'most of') is mostly used with plural nouns and verbs.

***The majority of criminals are** non-violent.*

However, if it is used with a singular noun, any following verb is singular.

*The majority of his **work is** concerned with children's artistic development.*

6 not used with measurement nouns

These expressions are not generally used before words for units of measure, like *pounds, years* or *miles*. Other words have to be used.

*It cost **several** pounds.* (NOT ~~*It cost a lot of pounds.*~~)

*They lived **many** miles from the town.* (NOT ~~*They lived plenty of miles from the town.*~~)

7 use without following nouns

These expressions can be used without nouns if the meaning is clear. In this case, *of* is not used.

*'How much money did it cost?' '**A lot**.'* (NOT ~~*A lot of.*~~)

*We should be all right for cheese – I've bought **plenty**.*

*He does not often speak, but when he does he says **a great deal**.*

For *a couple of*, ► 128.2.

Section 14 **Pronouns**

INTRODUCTION

Pronouns are words that are used instead of noun phrases, when it is unnecessary or impossible to use a more precise expression. Examples:

I – meaning 'the speaker'
it – referring to a thing that has already been mentioned
your – meaning 'belonging to or associated with the hearer(s)'
somebody – referring to an unknown or undefined person
one – meaning for example 'people in general'

Most pronouns are covered in this Section. For **relative pronouns**, ► Section 21. For the **interrogative pronouns** *who, what, which,* ► 625–627. For *whoever, whatever, whichever,* ► 252.

Some **determiners** (e.g. *this, both, most*) can be used alone without following nouns, like pronouns, when the determiner alone makes the meaning clear.

*Look at **this**.* (= 'this thing that you can see')
*'Which scarf would you like?' 'I'll take **both**.'* (= 'both scarves')
*Not all bears can climb trees, but **most** can.* (= 'most bears')

These pronoun-like uses of determiners are covered in ► Sections 12–13, along with their other uses.

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- ✗ She loved the picture because reminded her of home. ▶ 173.4
- ✗ The forecast it was reasonably accurate. ▶ 173.5
- ✗ 'Who's that over there?' 'He's John Cook.' ▶ 173.9
- ✗ Everybody except he can come. ▶ 174.2
- ✗ It's for he to decide. ▶ 174.4
- ✗ He who leaves last should lock the door. ▶ 174.9
- ✗ Why don't I and you go away for the weekend? ▶ 174.10
- ✗ Can I borrow your keys? I can't find the mine. ▶ 176
- ✗ I met another Lucy's boyfriend yesterday. ▶ 177
- ✗ We got out of the water and dried us. ▶ 178.2
- ✗ She took her dog with herself. ▶ 178.4
- ✗ Do you shave yourself on Sundays? ▶ 178.10
- ✗ His book's selling itself well. ▶ 178.10
- ✗ Try to concentrate yourself. ▶ 178.10
- ✗ Susan and Daniel talk to themselves on the phone every day. ▶ 179.4
- ✗ One speaks English in this shop. ▶ 181.3
- ✗ One speaks a strange dialect where I come from. ▶ 181.3
- ✗ In the 16th century one believed in witches. ▶ 181.4
- ✗ We're looking for a house. We'd like a one with a garden. ▶ 182.2
- ✗ If you haven't got fresh juice I'll take canned one. ▶ 182.4
- ✗ I'll take both ones. ▶ 182.6
- ✗ A grandparent's job is easier than a parent's one. ▶ 182.7
- ✗ Do you need coffee cups or tea ones? ▶ 182.8
- ✗ Let's go and ask the old one for advice. ▶ 182.9

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173 personal pronouns: basic information

1 terminology and use

The words *I, me, you, he, him, she, her, it, we, us, they* and *them* are usually called 'personal pronouns'. (This is a misleading name: *it, they* and *them* refer to things as well as people.)

Personal pronouns are used when more exact noun phrases are not necessary.

I'm tired. (*I* replaces the name of any speaker.)

Jack's ill. ***He'll be away for a few days.*** (NOT . . . ~~*Jack'll be away*~~ . . .)

Tell Emily I miss ***her.*** (NOT ~~*Tell Emily I miss Emily.*~~)

2 subject and object (NOT ~~*Tell Emily I miss Emily.*~~) *I* and *him*, etc

Personal pronouns (except *you* and *it*) have one form when they are used as subjects, and a different form for other uses – for example, when they are the objects of verbs or prepositions.

Subject:	I	he	she	we	they
Object:	me	him	her	us	them

Compare:

– *I like dogs.* – *We sent* ***her*** *some flowers.*

Dogs don't like ***me.*** ***She*** *sent* ***us*** *some flowers.*

3 other uses of object forms: *It was her.*

Me, him, her, us and *them* are used not only as objects, but also as complements after *be*, and in short answers, especially in an informal style.

'Who said that?' '(It was) ***her.***' *'Who's there?' '****Me.***'

In a more formal style, we use **subject form + verb** where possible.

*'Who said that?' '****She did.***' (BUT NOT ~~*She.*~~)

It is possible to use a subject form alone after *be* (e.g. *It is* ***I****; It was* ***he***), but this is extremely formal, and is usually considered over-correct.

Object forms are also common in coordinated subjects in informal speech.

Jack and me *are going skiing this weekend.*

This is considered incorrect in more formal usage (► 174.1).

For sentences like *It's me that needs help*, ► 174.3.

4 Personal pronouns cannot be left out.

We cannot normally leave out personal pronouns, even if the meaning is clear without them (for some exceptions ► 174.11).

It's raining. (NOT ~~*Is raining.*~~)

She loved the picture because ***it*** *reminded her of home.* (NOT . . . ~~*because reminded her of home.*~~)

They arrested Alex and put ***him*** *in prison.* (NOT . . . ~~*and put in prison.*~~)

'Have some chocolate.' 'No, I don't like ***it.***' (NOT . . . ~~*I don't like.*~~)

5 One subject is enough.

One subject is enough. We do not usually use a personal pronoun to repeat a subject that comes in the same clause.

My car *is parked outside.* (NOT ~~*My car it is parked outside.*~~)

The budget forecast *was reasonably accurate.* (NOT ~~*The budget forecast it was reasonably accurate.*~~)
The situation *is terrible.* (NOT ~~*It is terrible the situation.*~~)
There are exceptions in very informal speech (► 299).
He*'s not a bad bloke,* ***Jeff****.* ***It****'s a horrible place,* ***London****.*

For *it* as a **preparatory subject or object**, ► 268–269.

6 personal and relative pronouns: one or the other, not both

We do not use personal pronouns to repeat the meaning of relative pronouns (► 233.6).
That's the girl ***who*** *lives in the next room.* (NOT . . . ~~*who she lives*~~ . . .)
Here's the money ***(that)*** *you lent me.* (NOT . . . ~~*(that) you lent me it.*~~)

7 *it* referring to *nothing*, the situation, etc

It not only refers to particular things. *It* can also refer to a whole fact, event or situation.
Our passports were stolen. ***It*** *completely ruined our trip.*
I did all I could, but ***it*** *wasn't enough.*
It*'s terrible – everybody's got colds, and the central heating isn't working.*
Wasn't ***it*** *lovely there!*
Nothing *happened, did* ***it****?*
Everything*'s all right, isn't* ***it****?*

8 *it* as 'empty' subject: *It's ten o'clock.*

We use *it* as a meaningless subject with expressions that refer to time, weather, temperature or distances.
It*'s ten o'clock.* (NOT ~~*Is ten o'clock.*~~) *It's Monday again.*
It *rained for three days.* *It's thirty degrees.*
It*'s ten miles to the nearest garage.*

9 *it* used to identify

We use *it* for a person when we are identifying him or her.
*'Who's that over there?' '****It****'s Jack Cook.'* (NOT ~~*He's Jack Cook.*~~)
'Is that our waiter?' 'No, ***it*** *isn't.'* (NOT ~~*No, he isn't.*~~)
(on the phone) *Hello.* ***It****'s Luke Williams.* (NOT . . . ~~*I'm Luke Williams.*~~)
It*'s your sister who plays the piano, isn't* ***it****?*

10 *we women, you men*

We and plural *you* (but not other personal pronouns) can be put directly before nouns.
We women *know things that* ***you men*** *will never understand.*
(BUT NOT ~~*I woman know*~~ . . . OR . . . ~~*they men will never understand.*~~)

For *you* used for people in general, ► 181. For the personal pronoun *one*, ► 181.
For the use of *he* and *she* to refer to animals, ships, etc, ► 328.
For *he, him, his* referring to both sexes (and attitudes to this), ► 328.2.
For *they, them, their* with singular reference, ► 175.
For the interrogative personal pronoun *who(m)*, ► 626.1.

174 personal pronouns: advanced points

1 *Jack and me went; between you and I; us women understand*

We often use object forms in coordinated subjects in informal speech and writing. And *I* is often used informally in coordinated objects. Some authentic examples from speakers of standard British English:

***Jack and them** are going skiing this weekend.*
***Me and Clio** will be coming to see you and Mum on Sunday.*
*Between **you and I**, I think his marriage is in trouble.*
*Really nice picture of **Josh and I** taken at the weekend by my friend Joe.*
*Thanks, Andrew – Feb. 23rd is good for both **Jack and I**.*
*I often think of the old days and how you helped **Bertie and I**.* (letter from Elizabeth, wife of the future King George VI, to King Edward VIII).

Us is sometimes used as a subject together with a noun.

***Us women** understand these things better than you men.*

These structures are often condemned as 'incorrect', but they have been common in educated speech for centuries. (There are examples of *me* in coordinated subjects in Jane Austen's novels, written around 1800.) They are, however, restricted to an informal style. They are not considered correct in formal speech or writing.

2 *as, than, but* and *except* + *me* or *I*

After *as* and *than*, object forms are generally used in an informal style.

*My sister's nearly as tall **as me**.* *I can run faster **than her**.*

In a more formal style, subject forms are used, usually followed by verbs.

*My sister's nearly as tall **as I am**.* *I can run faster **than she can**.*

But (meaning 'except') and *except* are normally followed by object forms (► 413, 456).

*Everybody **except him** can come.* (NOT ~~*Everybody except he can come.*~~)
*Nobody **but me** knew the answer.*

3 *It is/was me that . . . / I who . . .*

When a relative clause comes after an expression like *It is/was me/I*, there are two possibilities:

object form + *that* (very informal)

***It's me that** needs your help.* ***It was him that** told the police.*

subject form + *who* (very formal)

***It is I who** need your help.* ***It was he who** told the police.*

We can avoid being too formal or too informal by using a different structure.

He was the person / the one who told the police.

4 mixed subject and object: *It's for him to decide.*

Sometimes a pronoun can be seen as the object of a verb or preposition, but the subject of a following infinitive or clause. Normally an object form is used in this case.

*It's for **him** to decide.* (NOT ~~*It's for he to decide.*~~)

I think it's a good idea for ***you and me*** *to meet soon.* (Considered more correct than . . . *for you and I to meet soon.*)

Everything comes to ***him*** *who waits.* (Considered more correct than . . . *to he who waits.*)

5 inclusive and exclusive *we*

Note that *we* and *us* can include or exclude the listener or reader. Compare:

Shall ***we*** *go and have a drink?* (*We* includes the listener.)

We*'re going for a drink. Would you like to come with* ***us****?* (*We* and *us* exclude the listener.)

6 *us* meaning 'me'

In very informal British speech, *us* is quite often used instead of *me* (especially as an indirect object).

Give ***us*** *a kiss, love.*

7 *Poor you!*

You can be modified by adjectives in a few informal expressions such as *Poor/Clever/Lucky (old) you!* (This occasionally happens also with *me.*)

8 *you*: different singular and plural forms

Although standard modern English uses *you* for both singular and plural, separate forms exist in certain varieties of English. Some speakers in Yorkshire use *thu* or *tha* as a singular subject form and *thee* as a singular object form. Some British dialects have a separate plural form *ye*, *youse* or *yiz*. Many Americans (and increasingly, British people) use *you folks* or *you guys* (to both men and women) as an informal second person plural.

Hi, ***you guys****. Listen to this.*

In southern US speech there is a second person plural form *you all* (pronounced *y'all*), used instead of *you* when people wish to sound friendly or intimate; there is also a possessive *you all's* (pronounced *y'all's*).

Hi, everybody. How're ***you all*** *doing? What are* ***you all's*** *plans for Thanksgiving?*

For the older English forms *thee* and *thou*, ▸ 318.10.

9 *he/she who . . .*

The structure *he/she who . . .* (meaning 'the person who . . .') is found in older literature.

He who *hesitates is sometimes lost.*

But this is very unusual in modern English.

The person who *leaves last should lock the door.* OR ***Whoever*** *leaves last . . .* (NOT ~~*He/She who leaves last . . .*~~)

10 politeness

It is considered polite to use names or noun phrases, rather than *he*, *she* or *they*, to refer to people who are present.

'***Dad*** *said I could go out.' 'No, I didn't.'* (More polite than *He said I could go out.*)

This lady *needs an ambulance.* →

However, pronouns need to be used to avoid repetition (► 287).

Dad said ***he*** *didn't mind . . .* (NOT ~~*Dad said Dad didn't mind . . .*~~)

It is considered polite to mention oneself last in double subjects or objects.

Why don't ***you and I*** *go away for the weekend?* (NOT ~~*Why don't I and you . . .?*~~)

The invitation was for ***Tracy and me.*** (More polite than . . . *for me and Tracy.*)

11 leaving out personal pronouns

Personal pronouns cannot usually be left out (► 173.4).

She loved the picture because ***it*** *reminded her of home.* (NOT . . . ~~*because reminded her of home.*~~)

However, in informal speech, subject pronouns and/or auxiliary verbs are sometimes left out at the beginning of a sentence. For details of this, ► 277.

Can't *help you, I'm afraid.* (= I can't . . .)

Seen *Oliver?* (= Have you seen Oliver?)

We seldom put *it* after *know* (► 504.6 for details).

'It's getting late.' 'I ***know****.'* (NOT ~~*I know it*~~)

After certain verbs (e.g. *believe, think, suppose*), we use *so* rather than *it.* (For details, ► 585.)

'Is that the manager?' 'I ***believe so****.'* (NOT . . . ~~*I believe (it).*~~)

And in British English, personal pronouns can be dropped after prepositions in descriptive structures with *have* and *with.*

All the trees have got blossom ***on (them).***

He was carrying a box with cups ***in (it).***

Object pronouns are not normally used in infinitive clauses if the object of the infinitive has just been mentioned (► 101.4).

She's easy ***to please.*** (NOT ~~*She's easy to please her.*~~)

The pie looked too nice ***to eat.*** (NOT . . . ~~*too nice to eat it.*~~)

The bridge wasn't strong enough ***to drive over.*** (NOT . . . ~~*to drive over it.*~~)

This dish takes two hours ***to prepare.***

175 singular *they*

1 *Somebody left their umbrella.*

They/them/their is often used to refer to a singular indefinite person. This is common after *a person, anybody/one, somebody/one, nobody/one, whoever, each, every, either, neither* and *no. They* has a plural verb in this case.

If a person doesn't want to go on living, ***they are*** *often very difficult to help.*

If anybody calls, take ***their*** *name and ask* ***them*** *to call again later.*

Somebody left ***their*** *umbrella in the office. Would* ***they*** *please collect it?*

Nobody was late, ***were they?*** *Whoever comes, tell* ***them*** *I'm not in.*

Tell each person to help ***themselves*** *to what they want.*

Every individual thinks ***they're*** *different from everybody else.*

This singular use of *they/them/their* is convenient when the person referred to could be either male or female (as in the examples above). *He or she, him or her* and *his or her* are clumsy, especially when repeated, and many people dislike the traditional use of *he/him/his* in this situation (► 328).

However, *they/them/their* can also be used when the person's sex is known. Two examples from interviews:

I swear more when I'm talking to a boy, because I'm not afraid of shocking ***them****.*

No girl should have to wear school uniform, because it makes ***them*** *look like a sack of potatoes.*

They/them/their is sometimes used for a definite person who is not identified.

I had a friend in Paris, and ***they*** *disappeared for a month.*

2 correctness

This use of *they/them/their* has existed for centuries, and is perfectly correct. It is most common in an informal style, but can also be found in formal written English. Here is an example from an old British passport application form:

Dual nationality: if the child possesses the nationality or citizenship of another country ***they*** *may lose this when* ***they*** *get a British Passport.*

176 possessive pronouns: *mine, yours,* etc

Like all 'possessive' words and structures, *mine, yours, his, hers, ours* and *theirs* can express various ideas besides possession. They are similar to *my, your,* etc, but they are not determiners, and are used without following nouns. Compare:

– *That's* ***my coat****.*
  That coat is ***mine****.*
– *Which is* ***your car****?*
  Which car is ***yours****?*

Whose can be used with or without a following noun (► 143, 628).

Whose car *is that?* ***Whose*** *is that car?*

We do not use articles with *mine,* etc.

Can I borrow your keys? I can't find ***mine****.* (NOT ~~*I can't find the mine.*~~)

One's cannot be used without a following noun; instead, we use *one's own.*

It's nice to have a room of ***one's own****.* (NOT . . . ~~*of one's*~~)

Its is not normally used without a following noun.

I've had my breakfast, and the dog's had ***its breakfast*** *too.* (NOT . . . ~~*and the dog's had its.*~~)

For the older English form *thine,* ► 318.10.

177 *a friend of mine,* etc

We cannot usually put a possessive between another determiner and a noun. We can say *my friend, Anna's friend, a friend* or *that friend,* but not ~~*a my friend*~~ or ~~*that Anna's friend*~~. Instead, we use a structure with ***of*** + possessive.

determiner + noun + *of* + possessive

That policeman is ***a friend of mine****.* *How's* ***that brother of yours****?*
He's ***a cousin of the Queen's****.* *She's* ***a friend of my father's****.*
Have you heard ***this new idea of the boss's****?*
My work is ***no business of yours****.*
I met ***another boyfriend of Lucy's*** *yesterday.*

The structure has a variant in which a noun does not have possessive *'s*: this is sometimes used when talking about relationships.

He's ***a cousin of the Queen.*** *She's* ***a friend of my father.***

The word *own* is used in a similar structure (► 552).

I wish I had ***a room of my own.***

178 reflexive pronouns: *myself*, etc

1 What are reflexive pronouns?

Reflexive pronouns are *myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, oneself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves.*

2 use: *I cut myself shaving.*

Reflexive pronouns are used as objects, in cases when the object refers to the same person(s) or thing(s) as the subject.

I cut ***myself*** *shaving this morning.* (NOT ~~*I cut me*~~ . . .)

We got out of the water and dried ***ourselves.*** (NOT . . . ~~*dried us.*~~)

I need to get ***myself*** *some new shoes.*

Reflexive pronouns can refer back not only to subjects, but also to possessives or objects.

His *conversations are all about* ***himself.***

I'm going to tell ***her*** *a few facts about* ***herself.***

I love ***you*** *for* ***yourself****. not for your money.*

3 same clause

A reflexive only refers to a noun in the same clause. Compare:

Jack says that ***James*** *talks to* ***himself*** *a lot.* (James talks to James, not to Jack.)

Jack *says that James talks to* ***him*** *a lot.* (James talks to Jack, not to James.)

4 after prepositions: *She took her dog with her.*

After prepositions of place, we often use a personal pronoun (*me, you,* etc) if the meaning is clear without using a reflexive. Compare:

She took her dog ***with her.*** (NOT . . . ~~*with herself.*~~ She could hardly take her dog with somebody else.)

She's very pleased ***with herself.*** (She could be pleased with somebody else.)

Other examples:

Close the door ***after you.*** *He was pulling a small cart* ***behind him.***

5 emphatic use: *Do it yourself.*

We can use reflexives as emphasisers, to mean 'that person/thing and nobody/nothing else'.

It's quicker if you do it ***yourself.*** *The manageress spoke to me* ***herself.***

The house ***itself*** *is nice, but the garden's very small.*

I'll go and see the President ***himself*** *if I have to.*

6 reflexives used instead of personal pronouns

Reflexives are sometimes used instead of personal pronouns after *as, like, but (for)* and *except (for).*

These shoes are designed for heavy runners ***like yourself.*** (OR . . . ***like you.***)
Everybody was early ***except myself.*** (OR . . . ***except me.***)
Reflexives can also be used instead of personal pronouns in co-ordinated noun phrases.
There will be four of us at dinner: Robert, Alison, Jenny ***and myself.***
(OR . . . *and I/****me.***)

7 *by oneself*

By myself/yourself, etc means 'alone, without company' or 'without help'.
I often like to spend time ***by myself.***
'Do you need help?' 'No, thanks. I can do it ***by myself.'***

8 *-selves* and *each other / one another*

Note the difference between *-selves* and *each other / one another* (► 179).
They talk to ***themselves*** *a lot.* (Each of them talks to him/herself.)
They talk to ***each other*** *a lot.* (Each of them talks to the other.)

9 *own*

There are no possessive reflexives. Instead, we use *my own, your own,* etc.
I always wash ***my own*** *clothes.* (NOT . . . ~~*myself's clothes.*~~)
The children have both got ***their own*** *rooms.*

10 reflexives not used

Certain verbs (e.g. *wash, dress, shave*) have reflexive pronouns in some languages but not in English.
Do you ***shave*** *on Sundays?* (NOT ~~*Do you shave yourself on Sundays?*~~)
However, reflexives can be used if it is necessary to make it clear who does the action.
She's old enough to ***dress herself*** *now.*
The barber shaves all the men in the town who don't ***shave themselves.***
So does he ***shave himself*** *or not?*
Some other verbs which do not normally have reflexive pronouns:
Suddenly the door ***opened.*** (NOT ~~*Suddenly the door opened itself.*~~)
His book's ***selling*** *well.* (NOT ~~*His book's selling itself well.*~~)
Try to ***concentrate.*** (NOT ~~*Try to concentrate yourself.*~~)
I ***feel*** *strange.* (NOT ~~*I feel myself strange.*~~)
Hurry! (NOT ~~***Hurry yourself!***~~)

For more about structures like *The door opened* and *His book's selling well,* ► 9.

179 reciprocal pronouns: *each other* and *one another*

1 no difference

Each other and *one another* mean the same.
Anna and I write to ***each other / one another*** *every week.*
Each other is more common than *one another,* especially in an informal style. →

2 not used as subject

Each other and *one another* are not normally used as subjects (though this occasionally happens in subordinate clauses in very informal speech).

They ***each*** *listened carefully to what* ***the other*** *said.* (NOT USUALLY *They listened carefully to what each other said.*)

3 *each other's / one another's*

Both expressions have possessive forms.

They'll sit for hours looking into ***each other's / one another's*** *eyes.*

4 *-selves*, possessives and *each other / one another*

Note the difference between *-selves* and *each other / one another*. Compare:

Jack and Emily are strange: they talk to ***themselves*** *a lot.* (Jack talks to Jack; Emily talks to Emily.)

Susan and Daniel talk to ***each other*** *on the phone every day.* (Susan talks to Daniel; Daniel talks to Susan.)

There is a similar difference between possessives and *each other / one another*. Compare:

My girlfriend and I are both very interested in ***our*** *work.* (I'm interested in mine; she's interested in hers.)

My girlfriend and I are both very interested in ***each other's*** *work.* (I'm interested in hers; she's interested in mine.)

5 words used without *each other / one another*

We do not normally use *each other / one another* after words like *meet* or *marry*, where the verb itself makes the meaning clear.

They ***met*** *in 1992 and* ***married*** *in 1994.*

180 *somebody, someone, anybody, anyone*, etc

These indefinite pronouns and adverbials replace more definite noun/adverbial phrases when it is not necessary, or not possible, to be more precise.

1 *-body* and *-one*

There is no significant difference between *somebody* and *someone*, *anybody* and *anyone*, *everybody* and *everyone*, or *nobody* and *no one*. The *-one* forms are more common in writing; the *-body* forms are more frequent in speech in British English.

2 *some-* and *any-*

The differences between *somebody* and *anybody*, *something* and *anything*, *somewhere* and *anywhere*, etc are the same as the differences between *some* and *any* (► 161 for details). Compare:

- *There's* ***somebody*** *at the door.*
  Did ***anybody*** *telephone?*
- *Can I get you* ***something*** *to drink?*
  If you need ***something/anything****, just shout.*
- *Let's go* ***somewhere*** *nice for dinner.*
  I don't want to go ***anywhere*** *too expensive.*

3 singular

When these words are subjects they are used with singular verbs.

Everybody likes her. (NOT ~~*Everybody like her.*~~)
Is everything ready? (NOT ~~*Are everything ready?*~~)

Somebody normally refers to only one person. Compare:

*There's **somebody** outside who wants to talk to you.*
*There are **some people** outside who want to talk to you.*

4 use of *they*

They, them and *their* are often used with a singular meaning to refer back to *somebody*, etc (► 175).

*If **anybody** wants a ticket for the concert, **they** can get it from my office.*
*'There's **somebody** at the door.' 'Tell **them** I'm busy.'*
__Someone__ left __their__ umbrella on the bus. *__Nobody__ phoned, did __they__?*

5 complementation: *somebody nice*, etc

Somebody, etc can be followed by adjectives or adverbial expressions.

*I hope he marries **somebody nice**.*
*She's going to meet **someone in the Ministry**.*
*I feel like eating **something hot**.* *Let's go **somewhere quiet** this weekend.*

They can also be followed by *else* (► 447).

*Emily – are you in love with **somebody else**?*
*I don't like this place – let's go **somewhere else**.*

Note also the informal use of *much* after *any-* and *no-*.

*We didn't do **anything much** yesterday.*
*There's **nothing much** on TV tonight.*

6 *someplace*

In informal American English, *someplace, anyplace, everyplace* and *no place* are common.

*Let's go **someplace** quiet.*

7 *anyone* and *any one*; *everyone* and *every one*

Anyone means the same as *anybody*; *any one* means 'any single one (person or thing)'. Compare:

*Does **anyone** know where Celia lives?*
*You can borrow **any one** book at a time.*

There is a similar difference between *everyone* and *every one*. Compare:

__Everyone__ had a good time at the party.
*There aren't any cakes left – they've eaten **every one**.*

8 *sometime*

Sometime (► 590) is not exactly part of this group. There are no words ~~*everytime*~~ or ~~*notime*~~, and *any time* is written as two words. We say *some other time*, not ~~*sometime else*~~.

For the difference between *no one* and *none*, ► 164.
For question tags after *everything* and *nothing*, ► 306.5. For *some time, sometime* and *sometimes*, ► 590.

181 *one, you* and *they*: used for people in general

1 *one* and *you*: meaning

We can use *one* or *you* to talk about people in general, including the speaker and hearer.

***One/You** cannot learn a language in six weeks.*
***One/You** should never give people advice.*

2 *one* and *you*: formality and class

One is more formal than *you* (and more common in writing than in speech). Compare:

*If **you** want to make people angry, **you** just have to tell them the truth.*
*If **one** wishes to make oneself thoroughly unpopular, **one** has merely to tell people the truth.*

One is often considered typical of more upper-class and intellectual usage, and is avoided by many people for this reason. It is less common in American English than in British English.

3 *one* and *you*: only used in generalisations

One and *you* are only used in this way in very general statements, when we are talking about 'anyone, at any time'. Compare:

- ***One/You** can usually find people who speak English in Sweden.*
  English is spoken in this shop. OR *They speak English in this shop.*
  (NOT ~~*One speaks English*~~ . . . – the meaning is not 'people in general')
- ***One/You** should knock before going into somebody's room.*
  Somebody's knocking at the door. (NOT ~~*One is knocking*~~ . . .)
- *It can take **you/one** ages to get served in this pub.*
  Thanks, I'm being served. (NOT ~~*Thanks, one is serving me.*~~)

One generally has a singular meaning: 'any individual'; it is not used to refer to whole groups.

We speak a strange dialect where I come from. (NOT ~~*One speaks a strange dialect where I come from.*~~)

4 people including the speaker/hearer

One is not used for people who could not include the speaker; *you* is not used for people who could not include the hearer. Compare:

***One/You** must believe in something.*
*In the sixteenth century **people** believed in witches.* (NOT . . . ~~*one/you believed in witches*~~ – this could not include the speaker or hearer.)

5 *one/you* as subject, object, etc

One can be a subject or object; there is a possessive *one's* and a reflexive pronoun *oneself*.

*He talks to **one** like a teacher.* ***One's** family can be very difficult.*
***One** should always give **oneself** plenty of time to pack.*

You/your/yourself can be used in similar ways.

British English uses *one/one's* for a reference back.
*One should always try to keep **one's** temper.*
American English generally avoids this, traditionally preferring *he/him/his.*
*One should always try to keep **his** temper.*
However, the use of *he/him/his* for people in general is now seen as sexist and also avoided (► 328.2).

6 *they*

They has a rather different, less general kind of meaning than *one* and *you.* It usually refers to a particular but rather vague group (for example the neighbours, the people around, the authorities).
__They__ don't like strangers round here.
__They__'re going to widen the road soon.
I bet __they__ put taxes up next year.
Note also the common expression *they say* (= people say).
__They say__ her husband's been seeing that Smith woman again.
(NOT ~~*One says*~~. . .)

182 *one* (substitute word): *a big one*

1 use

We often use *one* instead of repeating a singular countable noun.
'Which is your boy?' 'The __one__ in the blue coat.'
I'd like a cake. A big __one__ with lots of cream.
'Can you lend me a pen?' 'Sorry, I haven't got __one__.'

2 *a . . . one*

We drop *a* if there is no adjective. Compare:
We're looking for a house. We'd like a small __one__ with a garden.
We'd like __one__ with a garden. (NOT . . . ~~*a one with a garden*~~.)

3 *ones*

One has a plural *ones.*
'I'd like to try on those shoes.' 'Which __ones?__' 'The __ones__ in the window.'
Green apples often taste better than red __ones__.
'What sort of sweets do you like?' '__Ones__ with chocolate inside.'

4 uncountable nouns

We do not use *one(s)* for uncountable nouns. Compare:
If you haven't got a fresh __chicken__ I'll take a frozen __one__.
If you haven't got fresh __juice__, I'll take canned (juice). (NOT . . . ~~*canned one*~~.)

5 *which (one), this (one),* etc

We can leave out *one(s)* immediately after *which, this, that, another, either, neither* and superlatives.
'__Which (one)__ would you like?' '__This (one)__ looks the nicest.'
Let's have __another (one)__. *__Either (one)__ will suit me.*
I think my dog's the __fastest (one)__.
But we cannot leave out *one(s)* if there is an adjective. →

This small one looks the nicest. (NOT ~~*This small looks* . . .~~)

We nearly always leave out *ones* after *these* and *those*.

I don't think much of ***these****.* (More natural than . . . *these ones*.)

6 not used after *my*, etc, *some, several, a few, both* or a number

We do not use *one(s)* immediately after *my, your,* etc, *some, several, (a) few, both* or a number.

Take your coat and pass me ***mine****.* (NOT . . . ~~*pass me my one.*~~)

'Are there any grapes?' 'Yes, I bought ***some*** *today.'*
(NOT . . . ~~*I bought some ones today.*~~)

I'll take ***both****.* (NOT . . . ~~*both ones.*~~)

She bought ***six****.* (NOT . . . ~~*six ones.*~~)

But *one(s)* is used if there is an adjective.

I'll wear ***my old one****.* (NOT . . . ~~*my old.*~~)

I bought ***some sweet ones*** *today.* (NOT ~~*I bought some sweet today.*~~)

'Has the cat had her kittens?' 'Yes, she's had ***four white ones****.'*
(NOT . . . ~~*four white.*~~)

7 *that of*

One(s) is not normally used after a noun with possessive *'s*. Instead, we can either just drop *one(s)*, or use a structure with *that/those of* (more formal).

A grandparent's job is easier than ***a parent's****.* (NOT . . . ~~*than a parent's one.*~~)

A grandparent's job is easier than ***that of a parent****.* (NOT . . . ~~*than the one of a parent.*~~)

Trollope's novels are more entertaining than ***those of Dickens****.*
(NOT . . . ~~*than Dickens' ones / the ones of Dickens.*~~)

8 noun modifiers

One(s) is not generally used after noun modifiers.

Do you need coffee cups or ***tea cups?*** (NOT . . . ~~*or tea ones?*~~)

9 *One(s)* always refers back.

We use *one(s)* to avoid repeating a noun which has been mentioned before. It cannot normally be used in other cases.

Let's go and ask ***the old man*** *for advice.* (NOT . . . ~~*ask the old one* . . .~~)

Section 15 **Adjectives**

INTRODUCTION

English has a large class of adjectives which can express a variety of meanings: classification, description, evaluation and many other ideas. Most European languages, and many others, have similar classes of adjectives. Some of the world's languages, however, have few if any adjectives. In such languages the relevant ideas might be expressed by using nouns or verbs; so the equivalent of, for example, *She's angry* could be something corresponding to 'She has anger' or 'She rages'.

English adjectives are relatively easy to use, since (except for comparatives and superlatives, ► Section 17) an adjective can only have one possible form. There are some complications of position and word order: these and a few other points are covered in the following entries.

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- ✗ He lives in a palace grand. ► 183.1
- ✗ She's three years elder than me. ► 183.2
- ✗ an asleep baby ► 183.3
- ✗ It's a political old idea. ► 184.1
- ✗ Look at the green beautiful mountains. ► 184.2
- ✗ an attractive, traditional, woollen dress ► 184.6
- ✗ an angry and young man ► 185.3
- ✗ After two days crossing the foothills, they reached the proper mountain. ► 186.3
- ✗ The tree is high thirty feet. ► 186.4
- ✗ They're advertising for skilled in design people. ► 186.5
- ✗ It's a difficult to solve problem. ► 186.5
- ✗ I like your so beautiful country. ► 187
- ✗ The most important is to be happy. ► 188.4
- ✗ The blind next door is getting a new job. ► 188.1
- ✗ This government isn't interested in the poor's problems. ► 188.1
- ✗ My sister's marrying a Welsh. ► 188.2

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183 adjectives: normal position

1 two positions

Most adjectives can go in two main places in a sentence.

a with a noun, usually before it. This is called 'attributive position'.
*The **new secretary** doesn't like me.*
*He's going out with a **rich businesswoman**.*

In older English (► 318.10), it was quite common to put adjectives after nouns, especially in poetry and songs.
*He came from his **palace grand**.*
In modern English, this only happens in a few cases.

For adjectives before personal pronouns (e.g. *Poor you!*), ► 174.7.

b after *be, seem, look, become* and other linking verbs (► 11). This is called 'predicative position'.
*That dress **is new**, isn't it?* *She **looks rich**.* *I **feel unhappy**.*

2 adjectives used only before nouns

Some adjectives are used only (or mostly) before nouns. After verbs, other words must be used. Common examples:

elder and **eldest** Compare:
*My **elder** sister is a pilot.* *She's three years **older** than me.*
live /laɪv/ (meaning 'not dead') Compare:
*a **live** fish* *It's still **alive**.*
old (referring to relationships that have lasted a long time)
*an **old** friend* (not the same as *a friend who is **old***)
little (in BrE: ► 580) Compare:
*a nice **little** house* *The house is quite **small**.*
Some others:
*He's a **mere** child.* (BUT NOT ~~*That child is mere.*~~)
*It's **sheer** madness.* (BUT NOT ~~*That madness is sheer.*~~)
*I was studying for my **future** career as a lawyer.* (BUT NOT ~~*My career as a lawyer was future.*~~)
*This is the **main** problem!* (BUT NOT ~~*This problem is main.*~~)

3 adjectives used only after verbs

Some adjectives beginning with *a-*, and a few others, are used mainly after linking verbs, especially *be*. Common examples: *ablaze, afloat, afraid, alight, alike, alive, alone, asleep, awake.* Compare:

– *The baby's **asleep**.*
*a **sleeping** baby* (NOT ~~*an asleep baby*~~)
– *The ship's still **afloat**.*
*a **floating** leaf*
– *He was **afraid**.*
*a **frightened** man*

The adjectives *ill* (► 494) and *well* (► 622) are most common after verbs. Before nouns, many people prefer other words.

Compare:

– *He's very* ***well.*** – *You look* ***ill.***
a ***healthy/fit man*** *Nurses take care of* ***sick*** *people.*

4 verb + object + adjective

Another possible position for adjectives is after the object, in the structure **verb + object + adjective**.

I'll ***get the car ready.*** *Do I* ***make you happy?*** *Let's* ***paint the kitchen yellow.***

184 order of adjectives

When several adjectives come before a noun (or when nouns are used as modifiers before another noun), they are usually put in a more or less fixed order. However, this is a complicated grammatical area, and it is not possible to give simple reliable rules for adjective order. The following guidelines will help.

1 description before classification: *an old political idea*

Words which describe come before words which classify (say what type of thing we are talking about).

	description	classification	noun	
an	*old*	*political*	*idea*	(NOT ~~*a political old idea*~~)
the	*latest*	*educational*	*reform*	(NOT ~~*the educational latest reform*~~)
a	*green*	*wine*	*bottle*	(NOT ~~*a wine green bottle*~~)
	leather	*dancing*	*shoes*	(NOT ~~*dancing leather shoes*~~)

2 opinion before description: *a wonderful old house*

Words which express opinions, attitudes and judgements usually come before words that simply describe. Examples are *lovely, definite, pure, absolute, extreme, perfect, wonderful, silly.*

	opinion	description	noun	
a	*lovely*	*cool*	*drink*	(NOT ~~*a cool lovely drink*~~)
a	*wonderful*	*old*	*house*	(NOT ~~*an old wonderful house*~~)
	beautiful	*green*	*mountains*	(NOT ~~*green beautiful mountains*~~)
that	*silly*	*fat*	*cat*	(NOT ~~*that fat silly cat*~~)

3 order of descriptive words

The order of descriptive words is not completely fixed. Words for origin and material usually come last. Words for size, age, shape and colour often come in that order.

	size	age	shape	colour	origin	material	noun
a	*fat*	*old*		*white*			*horse*
a	*big*			*grey*		*woollen*	*sweater*
		new			*Italian*		*boots*
a	*small*		*round*	*black*		*leather*	*handbag*
an	*enormous*			*brown*	*German*	*glass*	*mug*
a	*little*	*modern*	*square*			*brick*	*house*

→

4 numbers

Numbers usually go before adjectives.

six large eggs *the second big shock*

First, next and *last* most often go before *one, two, three,* etc.

the first three days (More common than *the three first days*)

my last two jobs

5 noun modifiers after adjectives

Note that noun modifiers (which often classify, or refer to material) usually follow adjectives.

a big new car factory *enormous black iron gates*

6 commas

Before nouns, we generally use commas between adjectives (especially in longer sequences) which give similar kinds of information, as in physical descriptions.

a steep, slippery, grassy slope

an expensive, ill-planned, wasteful project

But commas can be dropped before short common adjectives.

a tall(,) dark(,) handsome cowboy

We do not use commas between adjectives which give different kinds of information.

an attractive traditional woollen dress

Commas are not used after numbers or other determiners.

ten green bottles (NOT ~~*ten, green bottles*~~)

these new ideas (NOT ~~*these, new ideas*~~)

For more details, ► 296.9.

7 after a verb

The order of adjectives in predicative position (after *be, seem* and similar verbs, ► 11) is similar to the order before nouns. Note that noun modifiers are not used in this position.

a big, green wine bottle BUT NOT ~~*The bottle is big, green and wine.*~~

For *and* with adjectives before nouns and after verbs, ► 185.

185 adjectives with *and*

When two or more adjectives (or other modifiers) come together, we sometimes put *and* before the last one, and sometimes not. It depends partly on their position in the sentence, and partly the kinds of information they give.

1 after a verb

When adjectives come in predicative position (after *be, seem* and similar verbs, ► 11), we usually put *and* before the last one.

He was tall, dark and handsome.

You're like a winter's day: short, dark and dirty.

In a very literary style, *and* is sometimes left out.

My soul is exotic, mysterious, incomprehensible.

2 before a noun

In attributive position (before a noun), *and* is less common.

*a **big beautiful** garden*

However, *and* is possible when the adjectives give similar kinds of information, especially when we are 'piling up' favourable or unfavourable descriptions.

*a **cruel (and) vicious** tyrant* *a **warm (and) generous** personality*

*an **ill-planned, expensive (and) wasteful** project*

And is necessary when two or more adjectives (or other modifiers) refer to different parts of something, or distinguish different types of thing.

*a **yellow and black** sports car* *a **concrete and glass** factory*

__hot and cold__ drinks (= hot drinks and cold drinks)

We also use *and* when we say that something belongs to two or more different classes.

*It's a **social and political** problem.*

*She's a **musical and artistic** genius.*

3 *and* not used

We do not use *and* between adjectives that give different kinds of information.

*an **angry young** man* (NOT ~~*an angry and young man*~~)

*a **ridiculous economic** policy* (NOT ~~*a ridiculous and economic policy*~~)

4 *nice and . . .*

In an informal style, the expression *nice and* is often used before another adjective or an adverb. It means something like 'pleasantly' or 'suitably'.

*It's **nice and warm** in front of the fire.* (= pleasantly warm)

*The work was **nice and easy**.*

*Now just put your gun down **nice and slow**.*

For more information about *and*, ► 226.

186 adjectives after nouns and pronouns

Adjectives come immediately after nouns in a few special cases.

1 fixed phrases: *Secretary General; court martial*

Adjectives come after nouns in some fixed phrases.

*Secretary **General*** *President **elect***

*court **martial*** (= military court) *Attorney **General***

*Poet **Laureate***

2 *available, possible,* etc

Some adjectives can be used after nouns in a similar way to relative clauses. This is common with adjectives ending in *-able/-ible*.

*Send all the **tickets available** / available tickets.* (= . . . tickets which are available.)

*It's the only **solution possible** / possible solution.*

Some adverbs can also be used like this.

*the woman **upstairs*** *the people **outside***

→

3 *present, proper*

Before a noun, *present* refers to time; after a noun it means 'here/there', 'not absent'. Compare:

the ***present members*** (= those who are members now)
the ***members present*** (= those who are/were at the meeting)

Before a noun, *proper* (especially in British English) means 'real', 'genuine'. After a noun it refers to the central or main part of something. Compare:

Snowdon's a ***proper mountain****, not a hill.*
After two days crossing the foothills, they reached the ***mountain proper****.*

For the position and meaning of *opposite*, ► 548.

4 expressions of measurement: *two metres high*

Adjectives usually follow measurement nouns.

two metres ***high*** *ten years* ***older*** *two miles* ***long*** *six feet* ***deep***

Exception: *worth* (e.g. ***worth*** *100 euros*). ► 634

5 adjectives with complements: *people skilled in design*

When an adjective has its own complement (e.g. *skilled in design*), the whole expression normally comes after a noun.

We are looking for ***people skilled in design****.* (NOT . . . ~~*skilled in design people.*~~)

A relative clause is often more natural.

We are looking for ***people who are skilled in design****.*

In some cases an adjective can be put before a noun and its complement after it. This happens with *different, similar, the same, next, last, first, second*, etc; comparatives and superlatives; and a few other adjectives like *difficult* and *easy*.

a ***different*** *life* ***from this one*** *the* ***second*** *train* ***from this platform***
the ***next*** *house* ***to the Royal Hotel*** *the* ***best*** *mother* ***in the world***
(OR *the house next to the Royal Hotel*) *a* ***difficult*** *problem* ***to solve***

6 *something, everything*, etc

Adjectives come after *something, everything, anything, nothing, somebody, anywhere* and similar words.

Have you read ***anything interesting*** *lately?* *Let's go* ***somewhere quiet****.*

187 adjectives: position after *as, how, so, too*

After *as, how, so, too* and *this/that* meaning *so*, adjectives go before *a/an*. This structure is common in a formal style.

as/how/so/too/this/that + adjective + *a/an* + noun

I have ***as good a voice*** *as you.* *She is* ***too polite a person*** *to refuse.*
How good a pianist *is he?* *I couldn't afford* ***that big a car****.*
It was ***so warm a day*** *that I could hardly work.*

The structure is not possible without *a/an*.

I like your country – it's so beautiful. (NOT ~~*I like your so beautiful country.*~~)
Those girls are too kind to refuse. (NOT ~~*They are too kind girls to refuse.*~~)

For the structure with **adjective + *as*** in expressions like *tired as I was . . .*, ► 255.

188 adjectives without nouns

We cannot usually leave out a noun after an adjective.

*Poor **little boy**!* (NOT ~~*Poor little!*~~)

*The most **important thing** is to be happy.* (NOT ~~*The most important is . . .*~~)

But there are some exceptions.

1 well-known groups: *the old; the poor*

***The* + adjective** is used to talk about certain well-known groups of people who are in a particular physical or social condition. Common expressions:

the blind	*the disabled*	*the mentally ill*	*the rich*
the dead	*the handicapped*	*the old*	*the unemployed*
the deaf	*the jobless*	*the poor*	*the young*

The term *handicapped* is now often considered offensive; people with physical disabilities generally prefer the adjective *disabled*.

*He's collecting money for **the blind**.*

***The unemployed** are losing hope.*

The meaning is usually general; occasionally a limited group is referred to.

*After the accident, **the injured** were taken to hospital.*

These expressions are normally plural: *the dead* means 'all dead people' or 'the dead people', but not 'the dead person'.

***The dead have** no further worries.* (BUT NOT ~~*The dead has . . .*~~)

Note that these expressions cannot be used with a possessive *'s*.

*the problems of **the poor*** OR ***poor people's** problems* (NOT ~~*the poor's problems*~~)

Adjectives are normally only used in this way with *the* or a determiner.

*This government doesn't care about **the poor**.* (NOT . . . ~~*about poor.*~~)

*There are **more unemployed** than ever before.*

However, adjectives without *the* are sometimes used in paired structures with *both . . . and . . .*

*opportunities for **both rich and poor***

2 adjectives of nationality: *the Irish; the Dutch*

A few adjectives of nationality ending in *-sh* or *-ch* (► 321.3) are used after *the* without nouns. They include *Irish, Welsh, English, British, Spanish, Dutch, French.*

***The Irish** are very proud of their sense of humour.*

These expressions are plural; singular equivalents are for example *an Irishwoman, a Welshman* (NOT ~~*a Welsh*~~).

Where nouns exist, these are preferred to expressions with *the . . .ish*: we say ***the Danes*** or ***the Turks*** (NOT ~~*the Danish*~~ OR ~~*the Turkish*~~).

3 singular examples: *the accused*

In a few formal fixed phrases, ***the* + adjective** can have a singular meaning. These include *the accused, the undersigned, the deceased, the former* and *the latter*.

***The accused** was released on bail.*

*. . . Stephen Gray and Susan Cook; **the latter** is a well-known designer.* →

4 abstract ideas: *the supernatural*

Adjectives are sometimes used after *the* to refer to general abstract ideas, especially in philosophical writing. (Examples: *the beautiful, the supernatural, the unreal.*) These expressions are singular.

She's interested in ***the supernatural.***

The difficult *we do immediately;* ***the impossible takes*** *a little longer.*

5 choices: *White or brown?*

We sometimes leave out a noun that has already been mentioned, or which does not need to be mentioned, when thinking about a choice between two or more different kinds of thing.

'Have you got any bread?' 'Do you want ***white*** *or* ***brown****?'*

I'd like two large packets and one ***small.***

Colour adjectives can sometimes have a plural *-s* in this situation, effectively becoming nouns.

Wash ***the reds*** *and* ***blues*** *separately.* (= red and blue clothes)

6 superlatives: *We bought the cheapest.*

Nouns are often left out after superlative adjectives.

I'm ***the tallest*** *in my family.* *We bought* ***the cheapest.***

For other structures in which nouns can be left out, ► 278.

189 gradable and non-gradable adjectives

Adjectives can be divided into **gradable** and **non-gradable**. Gradable adjectives (e.g. *difficult, important, happy, tired*) are words for qualities that exist in different degrees. Things can be **more or less** difficult or important; people can be more or less happy or tired. Non-gradable adjectives (e.g. *impossible, essential, alive, exhausted*) are words for **'either-or'** qualities. We don't generally say that some things are more impossible than others, or that somebody is not very exhausted: things are either impossible or not, and people are either exhausted or not.

Degree adverbs like *very* or *more* are mostly used with gradable adjectives, and it is mainly gradable adjectives that have comparative and superlative forms.

Note that *quite* has different meanings in British English with gradable and non-gradable adjectives (► 564).

190 measurements: 'marked' and 'unmarked' forms

Many adjectives that are used in measurements come in pairs (e.g. *tall/short, old/young, heavy/light, fast/slow*). The word that is used for the 'top' end of the measurement scale can usually be used in another sense, to talk about the quality in general. For instance, one can ask how *long* something is even if it is relatively short. Grammarians call these uses 'unmarked'. Compare:

– *She's very* ***tall*** *and he's very short.* (marked)

Exactly how ***tall*** *are they both?* (unmarked) (NOT ~~*Exactly how short*~~ . . .)

– *Will you still love me when I'm* ***old?*** (marked)
He's only twenty-three years ***old.*** (unmarked) (NOT . . . ~~*years young.*~~)
– *Lead is one of the* ***heaviest*** *metals.* (marked)
Scales measure how ***heavy*** *things are.* (unmarked) (NOT . . . ~~*how light*~~. . .)

Some nouns are used in similar 'unmarked' ways. Compare:

– *Age brings wisdom but I'd rather have youth and stupidity.* (marked)
What is her exact ***age?*** (unmarked) (NOT ~~*What is her exact youth?*~~)
– *The worst thing about the film was its* ***length.*** (marked)
What's the ***length*** *of the runway?* (unmarked) (NOT ~~*What's the shortness . . .?*~~)

191 pronunciation of *aged, naked,* etc

A few adjectives ending in *-ed* have a special pronunciation: the last syllable is pronounced /ɪd/ instead of /d/ or /t/ (► 44.2).

aged /ˈeɪdʒɪd/ (= very old)	*blessed* /ˈblesɪd/
beloved /bɪˈlʌvɪd/	*dogged* /ˈdɒgɪd/
crooked /ˈkrʊkɪd/	*learned* /ˈlɜːnɪd/
cursed /ˈkɜːsɪd/	*sacred* /ˈseɪkrɪd/
naked /ˈneɪkɪd/	*wicked* /ˈwɪkɪd/
ragged /ˈrægɪd/	*wretched* /ˈretʃɪd/
rugged /ˈrʌgɪd/	*one/three/four-legged* /ˈlegɪd/

Note that *aged* is pronounced /eɪdʒd/ when it means 'years old' (as in *He has a daughter aged ten*), or when it is a verb.

192 What can follow an adjective?

Many adjectives can be followed by 'complements' – words and expressions that 'complete' their meaning. Not all adjectives are followed by the same kind of complement. Some can be followed by **preposition + noun/*-ing*** (► 103).

I'm ***interested in cookery.*** *I'm* ***interested in learning*** *to cook.*

Some can be followed by infinitives (► 101).

You don't look ***happy to see*** *me.* *The soup is* ***ready to eat.***

An infinitive may have its own subject, introduced by *for* (► 113).

I'm anxious ***for her to get*** *a good education.* (= I'm anxious that she should get . . .)

Some adjectives can be followed by clauses (► 264).

I'm ***glad that you were able to come.***
It's ***important that everybody should feel comfortable.***

And many adjectives can have more than one kind of complement.

I'm ***pleased about*** *her promotion.* *I'm* ***pleased to see*** *you here.*
I'm ***pleased that we seem to agree.***

We rarely put **adjective + complement** before a noun (► 186.5).

He's a ***difficult person to understand.*** (NOT ~~*He's a difficult to understand person.*~~)

For the structures that are possible with a particular adjective, see a good dictionary.

Section 16 **Adverbs and Adverbials**

INTRODUCTION

The term **adverb** is used for a wide variety of words with different kinds of use: for example *frankly, now, very, right, regularly*. Their general function is to modify (add meaning to) sentences, clauses or various parts of clauses (but not nouns).

__Frankly__, I think she's crazy.
You did that __very__ well.
Please answer __now__.
She went __right__ up the stairs.
When I was a student, I went to the gym __regularly__.

Other longer expressions can modify sentences, clauses, verbs, etc in the same way as adverbs.*__To be honest__, I think she's crazy.*
You did that __quite remarkably__ well.
Please answer __right away__.
She went __all the way__ up the stairs.
When I was a student, I went to the gym __every day__.

It can be convenient to use a single word to talk about modifiers of this kind, whether they are adverbs, or longer expressions functioning like adverbs. In this Section they are called '**adverbials**' when necessary. For adverbial clauses (e.g. *When I was a student*), ► Sections 20, 22–23.

Note that not all languages make a grammatical distinction between adverbs and adjectives. This can cause problems for some learners.

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- ✗ She danced happy into the room. ► 193.1
- ✗ I don't remember him very good. ► 193.1
- ✗ It's terrible cold today. ► 193.2
- ✗ They smiled friendly at us. ► 194.1
- ✗ You're doing finely. ► 194.2
- ✗ I worked very hardly for the exam. ► 194.2
- ✗ The door was widely open. ► 194.2
- ✗ I get often headaches. ► 196.1
- ✗ She speaks very well English. ► 196.1
- ✗ Never I get up early. ► 198.1
- ✗ Here your bus comes. ► 201.2
- ✗ Put the butter at once in the fridge. ► 201.4
- ✗ I play always tennis on Saturdays. ► 200.1
- ✗ I never have seen a whale. ► 200.1
- ✗ He does probably not know. ► 200.2
- ✗ I often am late for work. ► 200.1
- ✗ I will completely have finished by next year. ► 198.3

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193 adverbs of manner and adjectives

1 adverbs of manner with verbs: *He sang badly.*

Adverbs of manner typically say how something happens or is done.
Examples: *happily, terribly, fast, badly, well*
Adverbs of manner can modify verbs. They should not be confused with adjectives (*happy, terrible,* etc). Adjectives are not used to modify verbs.

verb + adverb

*She **danced happily** into the room.* (NOT ~~*She danced happy*~~ . . .)
*She **sang badly**.* (NOT ~~*She sang bad.*~~)
*I don't **remember** him very **well**.* (NOT . . . ~~*very good.*~~)

But note that some adjective forms are sometimes used as adverbs in an informal style, especially in American English (► 194.4).

*She talks **funny**.*

For the use of adjectives after linking verbs like *look* or *seem*, ► 11.

2 other uses: *terribly cold*

These adverbs can also modify adjectives, past participles, other adverbs and prepositional phrases.

adverb + adjective

*It's **terribly cold** today.* (NOT . . . ~~*terrible cold.*~~)

adverb + past participle

*This steak is very **badly cooked**.* (NOT . . . ~~*bad cooked.*~~)

adverb + adverb

*They're playing **unusually fast**.* (NOT . . . ~~*unusual fast.*~~)

adverb + prepositional phrase

*He was **madly in love** with her.* (NOT . . . ~~*mad in love*~~ . . .)

For adjectives ending in *-ly*, ► 194.1. For adverbs and adjectives with the same form, ► 194.2.
For the adjective *well*, ► 622. For the position of adverbs of manner, ► 201.1.
For spelling rules, ► 345.

194 adverbs or adjectives: confusing cases

1 adjectives ending in *-ly*: *friendly, lively*

Some words ending in *-ly* are adjectives, and not normally adverbs. Common examples: *costly, cowardly, deadly, friendly, likely, lively, lonely, lovely, silly, ugly, unlikely.*

She gave me a ***friendly*** *smile.* *Her singing was* ***lovely****.*

There are no adverbs *friendly/friendlily, lovely/lovelily,* etc.

She smiled ***in a friendly way****.* (NOT ~~*She smiled friendly.*~~)

He ***gave a silly laugh****.* (NOT ~~*He laughed silly.*~~)

Daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, early and *leisurely* are both adjectives and adverbs. (NOT ~~*He laughed silly.*~~)

It's a ***daily*** *paper.* *It comes out* ***daily****.* *an* ***early*** *train* *I got up* ***early****.*

2 adjectives and adverbs with the same form; adverbs with two forms

Some adjectives and adverbs have the same form: for example, a *fast* car goes *fast*; if you do *hard* work, you work *hard.* In other cases, the adverb may have two forms (e.g. *late* and *lately*), one like the adjective and the other with *-ly.* There is usually a difference of meaning or use. Some examples follow; for more detailed information, check in a good dictionary.

clean The adverb *clean* means 'completely' before *forget* (informal) and some expressions of movement.

Sorry I didn't turn up – I ***clean*** *forgot.*

The explosion blew the cooker ***clean*** *through the wall.*

dead The adverb *dead* is used in certain expressions to mean 'exactly', 'completely' or 'very'. Examples: *dead ahead, dead certain, dead drunk, dead right, dead slow, dead straight, dead sure, dead tired.*

Note that *deadly* is an adjective, meaning 'fatal', 'causing death'. The adverb for this meaning is *fatally.* Compare:

Cyanide is a ***deadly*** *poison.* *She was* ***fatally*** *injured in the crash.*

direct *Direct* is often used informally as an adverb.

The plane goes ***direct*** *from London to Houston without stopping.*

50% cheaper – order ***direct*** *from the factory!*

easy *Easy* is used as an adverb in some informal expressions.

Go ***easy****!* (= Not too fast!) *Take it* ***easy****!* (= Relax!)

Easy *come,* ***easy*** *go.* ***Easier*** *said than done.*

fair *Fair* is used as an adverb after a verb in some expressions.

to play ***fair*** *to fight* ***fair*** *to hit/win something* ***fair*** *and square*

For the adverb of degree *fairly,* ► 460. →

fast *Fast* can mean both 'quick' and 'quickly' (a *fast* car goes *fast*). *Fast* means 'completely' in the expression ***fast** asleep*, and it means 'tight', 'impossible to remove' in expressions like *hold **fast**, stick **fast**, **fast** colours.*

fine The adverb *fine* (= well) is used in some informal expressions.
*That suits me **fine**.* *You're doing **fine**.*
The adverb *finely* is used to talk about small careful adjustments and similar ideas.
*a **finely** tuned engine* ***finely** chopped onions* (= cut up very small)

flat *Flat* can be used as an adverb in a musical sense (*to sing **flat*** means 'to sing on a note that is too low'). In most other cases, the adverb is *flatly*.

free The adverb *free* (used after a verb) means 'without payment'; *freely* means 'without limit or restriction'. Compare:
*You can eat **free** in my restaurant whenever you like.*
*You can speak **freely** – I won't tell anyone what you say.*

hard The adverb *hard* means 'with a lot of force, energetically'.
*Hit it **hard**.* *I trained really **hard** for the marathon.*
Hardly means 'almost not'.
*I've **hardly** got any clean clothes left.*
Compare:
*Anna works **hard**.* *Her brother **hardly** works.*

For *hardly . . . when* in clauses of time, ► 480. For *hardly any, ever,* etc, ► 366.3.

high *High* refers to height; *highly* (rather formal) expresses an extreme degree (it often means 'very much'). Compare:
– *He can jump really **high**.* – *It's **highly** amusing.*
*Throw it as **high** as you can.* *I can **highly** recommend it.*

just *Just* is an adverb with several meanings (► 503). There is also an adjective *just*, meaning 'in accordance with justice or the law'; the adverb is *justly*.
*He was **justly** punished for his crimes.*

late The adverb *late* has a similar meaning to the adjective *late*; *lately* means 'recently'. Compare:
*I hate arriving **late**.* *I haven't been to the theatre much **lately**.*

loud *Loud* is often used informally as an adverb after a verb.
*Don't talk so **loud(ly)** – you'll wake the whole street.*

low *Low* is an adjective and adverb (*a **low** bridge, a **low** voice, bend **low***).

most *Most* is the superlative of *much*, and is used to form superlative adjectives and adverbs (► 204).
*Which part of the concert did you like **most**?*
*This is the **most** extraordinary day of my life.*
In a formal style, *most* can be used to mean 'very'.
*You're a **most** unusual person.*
Mostly means 'mainly', 'most often' or 'in most cases'.
*My friends are **mostly** non-smokers.*

pretty The informal adverb of degree *pretty* is similar to *rather* (► 460). *Prettily* means 'in a pretty way'. Compare:

*I'm getting **pretty** fed up.* *Isn't your little girl dressed **prettily**?*

quick In an informal style, *quick* is often used instead of *quickly*, especially after verbs of movement.

*I'll get back as **quick(ly)** as I can.*

real In informal American English, *real* is often used instead of *really* before adjectives and adverbs.

*That was **real** nice.* *He cooks **real** well.*

right *Right* with adverbials means 'just', 'exactly' or 'all the way'.

*She arrived **right** after breakfast.*
*The snowball hit me **right** on the nose.*
*Turn the gas **right** down.*

Right and *rightly* can both be used to mean 'correctly'. *Right* is only used after verbs, and is usually informal. Compare:

*I **rightly** assumed that Henry was not coming.* *You guessed **right**.*
*It serves you **right**.* (. . . *rightly* is not possible.)

sharp *Sharp* can be used as an adverb to mean 'punctually'.

*Can you be there at six o'clock **sharp**?*

It also has a musical sense (*to sing **sharp*** means 'to sing on a note that is too high'), and is used in the expressions *turn **sharp** left* and *turn **sharp** right* (meaning 'with a big change of direction').
In other senses the adverb is *sharply*.

*She looked at him **sharply**.*
*I thought you spoke to her rather **sharply**.*

short *Short* is used as an adverb in the expressions *stop **short*** (= 'stop suddenly') and *cut **short*** (= 'interrupt'). *Shortly* means 'soon'; it can also describe an impatient way of speaking.

slow *Slow* is used as an adverb in road signs (e.g. *SLOW – DANGEROUS BEND*), and informally after *go* and some other verbs. Examples: *go **slow**, drive **slow**.*

sound *Sound* is used as an adverb in the expression ***sound** asleep*. In other cases, *soundly* is used (e.g. *She's sleeping **soundly***).

straight The adverb and the adjective are the same. A ***straight*** road goes ***straight*** from one place to another.

sure *Sure* is often used to mean 'certainly' in an informal style, especially in American English.

*'Can I borrow your tennis racket?' **'Sure.'***

Surely (not) is used to express opinions or surprise (► 600 for details).

***Surely** house prices will stop rising soon!*
***Surely** you're **not** going out in that old coat?*

tight After a verb, *tight* can be used instead of *tightly*, especially in an informal style. Typical expressions: *hold **tight**, packed **tight*** (compare ***tightly** packed*).

→

well *Well* is an adverb corresponding to the adjective *good* (*a **good** singer sings **well***). *Well* is also an adjective meaning 'in good health' (the opposite of *ill*). For details, ► 622.

wide The normal adverb is *wide*; *widely* suggests distance or separation. Compare:

*The door was **wide** open.* *She's travelled **widely**.*
*They have **widely** differing opinions.*

Note also the expression *wide awake* (the opposite of *fast asleep*).

wrong *Wrong* can be used informally instead of *wrongly* after a verb. Compare:

*I **wrongly** believed that you wanted to help me.*
*You guessed **wrong**.*

3 comparatives and superlatives

Informal uses of adjective forms as adverbs are especially common with comparatives and superlatives.

*Can you drive a bit **slower**?* *Let's see who can do it **quickest**.*

4 American English

In informal American English, many other adjective forms can also be used as adverbs of manner.

*He looked at me real **strange**.* *Think **positive**.*

195 adverb particles: *up, down, back, away,* etc

1 adverb particles and prepositions

Words like *down, in, up* are not always prepositions. Compare:

– *I ran **down** the road.*
*Please sit **down**.*
– *Something's climbing **up** my leg.*
*She's not **up** yet.*
– *He's **in** his office.*
*You can go **in**.*

In the expressions *down the road, in his office* and *up my leg*, the words *down, in* and *up* are prepositions: they have objects (*the road, his office* and *my leg*).
In *sit down, go in* and *She's not up*, the words *down, in* and *up* have no objects. They are adverbs, not prepositions.
Small adverbs like these are usually called 'adverb(ial) particles'. They include *above, about, across, ahead, along, (a)round, aside, away, back, before, behind, below, by, down, forward, in, home, near, off, on, out, over, past, through, under, up*. Many words of this kind can be used as both adverb particles and prepositions, but there are some exceptions: for example *back, away* (only adverb particles); *from, during* (only prepositions).

2 phrasal verbs: *give up, break down*

Adverb particles often join together with verbs to make two-word verbs, sometimes with completely new meanings (e.g. *break down, put off, work out, give up*). These are often called 'phrasal verbs'. For details of their use, ► 12.

3 adverb particles with *be*: *I'm off!*

Adverb particles are often used, rather like adjectives, as complements of the verb *be*.

Why are all the lights ***on****?* *Hello! You're* ***back****!*
The match will be ***over*** *by 4.30.* *I'm* ***off*** *– see you later!*

For inverted word order in sentences beginning with an adverb particle (e.g. *Out walked Sarah*), ► 271.

196 position of adverbials: introduction

Different kinds of adverbials typically go in different positions in a clause. The very simple explanations below show the commonest patterns; entries ► 197–202 give some more detail. However, this is a very complicated area of grammar, and it is impossible to give reliable rules that apply all the time to all adverbials.

1 verb and object: *She speaks English well.*

We do not usually put adverbials between a verb and its object.

adverbial + verb + object

I ***often get headaches****.* (NOT ~~*I get often headaches.*~~)

verb + object + adverbial

She ***speaks English well****.* (NOT ~~*She speaks well English.*~~)

But an adverb particle like *on, off, out* can go between a verb and a noun object.

Could you ***switch off the light****?*

2 front, mid- and end position

There are three normal positions for adverbials:

a front position (at the beginning of a clause)

Yesterday morning *something very strange happened.*

b mid-position (with the verb – for exact details ► 200)

My brother ***completely*** *forgot my birthday.*
I have ***never*** *understood her.*

c end position (at the end of a clause)

What are you doing ***tomorrow****?*

3 What goes where?

Connecting adverbials (which join a clause to what came before) and **comment adverbials** (which show a speaker's or writer's opinion of what he/she is talking about) usually go in front position.

However*, not everybody agreed.* ***Fortunately****, nobody was hurt.* →

Adverbials of **indefinite frequency** (e.g. *always, often*), **certainty** (e.g. *probably, definitely*) and **completeness** (e.g. *completely, almost*) usually go in **mid-position**.

*My boss **often** travels to America.*
*I've **definitely** decided to change my job.*
*The builder said he had **almost** finished, but it wasn't true.*

Focusing adverbials (e.g. *also, just, even*) can go in **mid-position**; other positions are possible, depending on the particular adverbial.

*He's **even** been to Antarctica.*

Adverbials of manner (how), place (where) and time (when) most often go in end position.

*She brushed her hair **slowly**.* *The children are playing **upstairs**.*
*I phoned Alex **this morning**.*

Time adverbials can also go in front position.

***Tomorrow** I've got a meeting in Cardiff.*

Emphasising adverbials (e.g. *terribly, really*) usually go with the words they emphasise.

*I'm **terribly** sorry about last night.*

Degree adverbials (e.g. *more, very much, most, a lot, so*) go in various places, depending on their function in the sentence. Details are given in other entries.

For more details about the position of these and other kinds of adverbial, see the next four sections.

197 connecting and comment adverbials

Examples of connecting adverbials: *then, next, after that, besides, anyway, suddenly, however, as a result, on the other hand*

These words and expressions show how a clause connects with what came before. Naturally, they generally go in **front position**.

*I worked until five o'clock. **Then** I went home.*
***Next**, I want to say something about the future.*
***Suddenly** the door opened.*
*Some of us want a new system. **However**, not everybody agrees.*
*It was hard work; **on the other hand**, we really enjoyed the experience.*

Examples of comment adverbials: *fortunately, surprisingly, in my opinion, arguably, as you might expect*

These adverbials show a speaker's or writer's opinion of what he/she is talking about. They, too, most often go in **front position**.

***Fortunately**, several people have decided to help us.*
***Stupidly**, I did not read the contract before signing it.*
***Arguably**, this is her finest novel since 'Flowers of Doom'.*
***As you might expect**, his remarks have attracted widespread criticism.*

Other positions are possible, especially with shorter adverbials.

*Not everybody, **however**, agrees.*
*I **stupidly** did not read the contract before signing it.*

For the use of some of these adverbials as discourse markers, ► 284, 301.

198 indefinite frequency, certainty and completeness

Adverbials in this group most often go in mid-position (before a one-part verb and after an auxiliary verb – for more exact details, ► 200).

1 adverbials of indefinite frequency: *usually, often,* etc

Examples: *usually, normally, often, frequently, sometimes, occasionally, always, rarely, ever, hardly ever, seldom, never*

*We **usually** go to Scotland in August.*
*It **sometimes** gets very windy here.* *I have **never** seen a whale.*
*You can **always** come and stay with us if you want to.*
*Have you **ever** played American football?*
*My boss is **often** bad-tempered.* *I'm **seldom** late for work.*
*We have **never** been invited to one of their parties.*
*She must **sometimes** have wanted to run away.*

Other positions are possible for most of them.

***Sometimes** I think I'd like to live somewhere else.*
*I see her **occasionally**.*

Always, ever, rarely, seldom and *never* cannot normally go in front position.

*I **always/never** get up early.* (NOT ~~*Always/Never I get up early.*~~)

However, *always* and *never* can begin imperative clauses.

***Always** look in the mirror before starting to drive.*
***Never** ask her about her marriage.*

For *rarely, seldom, never, hardly* and *scarcely* in front position before **verb + subject** ('inversion'), ► 270.7.

2 adverbials of certainty: *probably, certainly,* etc

Examples: *probably, certainly, definitely, clearly, obviously*

*He **probably** thinks you don't like him.*
*It will **certainly** rain this evening.* *There is **clearly** something wrong.*
*I **definitely** feel better today.* *The train has **obviously** been delayed.*

Maybe and *perhaps* usually come at the beginning of a clause.

***Maybe** I'm right and **maybe** I'm wrong.* ***Perhaps** her train is late.*

3 adverbials of completeness: *practically, partly,* etc

Examples: *completely, practically, almost, nearly, quite, rather, partly, sort of, kind of, more or less, hardly, scarcely*

*I have **completely** forgotten your name.*
*Sophie can **practically** read.* *I **kind of** hope she wins.*
*It was **almost** dark.* *It **hardly** matters.*

Adverbials of completeness usually follow all auxiliary verbs.

*I will have **completely** finished by next June.* (NOT ~~*I will completely have finished*~~. . .)
(NOT ~~*I will completely have*~~

*Do you think the repair **has been properly** done?* →

4 longer adverbials: *from time to time*, etc

Longer adverbials do not usually go in mid-position. Compare:

*I **sometimes** visit my old school.*
*I visit my old school **from time to time**.* (NOT ~~*I from time to time visit . . .*~~)

199 focusing adverbials

These adverbials 'point to' one part of a clause.

Examples: *also, just, even, only, mainly, mostly, either, or, neither, nor*

They often go in **mid-position**.

*Your bicycle **just** needs some oil – that's all.*
*She **neither** said 'Thank you' **nor** looked at me.*
*He's been everywhere – he's **even** been to Antarctica.*
*We're **only** going for two days.*
*She's my teacher, but she's **also** my friend.*
*The people at the meeting were **mainly** scientists.*

Some of these adverbials can also go in other places in a clause, directly before the words they modify. For details, see the entries on each adverbial.

***Only you** could do a thing like that.* *I feel **really tired**.*

200 mid-position: details

1 What exactly is mid-position?

Mid-position adverbials usually go before one-word verbs (e.g. *play, won*). If a verb has more than one part (e.g. *has written, was trying*), they normally go after the auxiliary. And they go after *am/are/is/was/were*.

a before one-word verbs

*I **always play** tennis on Saturdays.* (NOT ~~*I play always tennis . . .*~~)
*It **certainly looks** like rain.* *We **nearly won** the match.*

b after auxiliary verbs

*She **has never** written to me.* (NOT USUALLY *She never has written to me.*)
*He **was definitely** trying to get into the house.*
*The train **will probably** be late.* *You **can almost** see the sea from here.*

c after *am/are/is/was/were*

*She **was always** kind to me.* (NOT USUALLY ~~*She always was kind to me.*~~)
*It **is probably** too late now.* *I **am obviously** not welcome here.*

When there are two or more auxiliaries, the adverbial usually goes after the first.

*You **have definitely been** working too hard.*
*She **would never have been** promoted if she hadn't changed jobs.*

When an auxiliary verb is used alone instead of a complete verb phrase (► 279), a mid-position adverbial comes before it.

*'Are you working?' 'I **certainly am**.'*

*I don't trust politicians. I **never have**, and I **never will**.*

2 mid-position (details): adverbials with negative verbs

In negative sentences, adverbials generally come before *not* if they emphasise the negative; otherwise they come after. Compare:

*I **certainly do not** agree.* *I **do not often** have headaches.*

Both positions are possible with some adverbials, often with a difference of meaning. Compare:

*I **don't really** like her.* (mild dislike)

*I **really don't** like her.* (strong dislike)

When adverbials come before *not*, they may also come before the first auxiliary verb; they always come before *do*.

*I **probably will not** be there.* (OR *I **will probably not** be there.*)

*He **probably does not** know.* (NOT ~~*He does probably not know.*~~)

Only one position is possible before a contracted negative.

*I **probably won't** be there.*

3 mid-position (details): adverbials with emphatic verbs

When we emphasise auxiliary verbs or *am/are/is/was/were*, we put most mid-position adverbials before them instead of after. Compare:

– *She **has certainly** made him angry.*
*She **certainly HAS** made him angry!*
– *Polite people **always say** thank-you.*
*Yes, well, I **always DO** say thank-you.*
– *I'm **really sorry**.*
*I **really AM** sorry.*

4 mid-position (details): American English

In American English (► 319), mid-position adverbials are often put before auxiliary verbs and *am/are/is/was/were*, even when the verb is not emphasised, especially in an informal style. Compare:

*He **has probably** arrived by now.* (normal in both AmE and BrE)

*He **probably has** arrived by now.* (also normal in AmE; emphatic in BrE)

As an extreme example, here are four sentences in a journalistic style taken from an American newspaper article on crime in Britain. The most normal British equivalents are given in brackets.

*'Britain **long has been** known as a land of law and order.'* (BrE *Britain **has long been** known . . .*)

*'. . . but it **probably will** lead to a vote . . .'* (BrE . . . *but it **will probably** lead . . .*)

*'. . . the Labor Party **often has** criticized police actions.'* (BrE . . . *the Labour Party **has often** criticised . . .*)

*'. . . he **ultimately was** responsible for the treatment . . .'* (BrE . . . *he **was ultimately** responsible . . .*)

201 manner, place and time

Adverbials of manner, place and time usually go in end position, often in that order.

1 manner

Adverbials of manner say how something happens or is done.

Examples: *angrily, happily, fast, slowly, well, badly, nicely, noisily, quietly, hard, softly*

He drove off ***angrily****.* *You speak English* ***well****.*
She read the notice ***slowly****.* *Jack works really* ***hard****.*

Adverbials in *-ly* can also go in mid-position if the adverb is not the main focus of the message.

She ***angrily*** *tore up the letter.* *I* ***slowly*** *began to feel better again.*

Mid-position (after all auxiliary verbs) is especially common with passive verbs.

The driver ***has been seriously injured***

2 place

Examples: *upstairs, around, here, to bed, in London, out of the window*

The children are playing ***upstairs****.* *Come and sit* ***here****.*
Don't throw orange peel ***out of the window****.*
She's sitting ***at the end of the garden****.*

Front position is also possible, especially in literary writing and if the adverbial is not the main focus of the message. In this case the verb often comes before the subject (► 271.1).

On the grass sat *an enormous frog.* ***Down came*** *the rain.*

Here and *there* often begin clauses. Note the word order in *Here/There is, Here comes* and *There goes.*

Here comes *your bus.* (NOT ~~*Here your bus comes.*~~)
There's Alice*.* ***There goes*** *our train!*

Pronoun subjects come directly after *here* and *there.*

Here it comes. (NOT ~~*Here comes it.*~~) ***There she is.*** (NOT ~~*There is she.*~~)

Adverbials of direction (movement) come before adverbials of position.

The children are running ***around upstairs****.*

3 time and definite frequency

Examples: *today, afterwards, in June, last year, finally, before, eventually, already, soon, still, last, daily, weekly, every year*

I'm going to London ***today****.* *What did you do* ***afterwards****?*
She has a new hairstyle ***every week****.*

Front position is also common if the adverbial is not the main focus of the message.

Today *I'm going to London.* ***Every week she has a new hairstyle.***

Finally, eventually, already, soon and *last* can also go in mid-position.

4 order

Most often, adverbials of manner, place and time go in that order.

Put the butter ***in the fridge at once.*** (NOT . . . ~~*at once in the fridge.*~~)
Let's go ***to bed early.*** (NOT . . . ~~*early to bed.*~~)
I worked ***hard yesterday.*** *She sang* ***beautifully in the town hall last night.***

202 adverbials modifying adverbials: *terribly sorry; right past me*

Examples: *very, extremely, terribly, just* (meaning 'exactly' or 'a short time'), *almost, really, right*

These adverbials go directly before the words that they modify.

We all thought she sang ***very well.***
Everybody was ***extremely annoyed*** *with Julian.*
I'm ***terribly sorry*** *about last night.*
I'll see you in the pub ***just before*** *eight o'clock.*
He threw the ball ***almost over*** *the house.*
I'm ***really tired*** *today.* *She walked* ***right past me.***

Almost can also go in mid-position (► 198.3).

Section 17 **Comparison**

INTRODUCTION

Various words and structures can be used for comparing. This Section deals particularly with structures used for expressing **equality** and **inequality**.

equality: *as . . . as*

To say that people, things, etc are equal in a particular way, we often use the structure *as (much/many) . . . as* (► 203).

*My hands were **as** cold **as** ice.* *I earn **as much** money **as** you.*

inequality: *older than, more attractive than, laziest, most annoying,* etc

To say that people, things, etc are unequal in a particular way, we can use comparative adjectives and adverbs, or ***more* + adjective/adverb** (► 204–208).

*He's much **older** than her.* *The baby's **more attractive** than you.*

To say which one of a group is outstanding in a particular way, we can use a superlative or ***most* + adjective/adverb** (► 204–208).

*You're the **laziest** and **most annoying** person in the whole office.*

inequality: *less, least; not so/as . . . as*

We can also talk about inequality by looking at the 'lower' end of the scale. One possibility is to use *less (than)* (► 169) or *least* (► 170).

*The baby's **less** ugly than you.*

*I want to spend the **least** possible time working.*

In informal usage, we more often use *not so . . . as* or *not as . . . as* (► 203).

*The baby's **not so** ugly **as** you.*

similarity and identity: *as, like, so do I, too, the same,* etc

If we want to say that people, things, actions or events are similar, we can use *as* or *like* (► 515); *so/neither do I* and similar structures (► 309); or adverbs such as *too, also* and *as well* (► 369). To say that they are identical, we can use *the same (as)* (► 571).

*He liked working with horses, **as** his father did.*

*Your sister looks just **like** you.* *She likes music, and **so do I**.*

*The fish was over-cooked and the vegetables were **too**.*

*His eyes are just **the same** colour **as** mine.*

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- ✗ He's not so friendly like she is. ▶ 203.2
- ✗ Your hands are as cold like ice. ▶ 203.11
- ✗ He's the happyest person I know. ▶ 204.3
- ✗ The most easiest solution is to do nothing. ▶ 204.3
- ✗ Are humans really the intelligentest creatures? ▶ 204.4
- ✗ Would you mind talking quietlier? ▶ 205
- ✗ Emily's the taller of the four girls. ▶ 206.2
- ✗ Your accent is the worse in the class. ▶ 206.2
- ✗ We're going more slowly and more slowly. ▶ 206.4
- ✗ Older I get, more I am happy. ▶ 206.5
- ✗ The more it is dangerous, the more I like it. ▶ 206.5
- ✗ It's the longest river of the world. ▶ 206.7
- ✗ My boyfriend is very older than me. ▶ 207.1
- ✗ I'm not going out with a man who's twice older than me. ▶ 208.3
- ✗ She spent more money than it was sensible. ▶ 208.4
- ✗ Is this the first time for you to stay here? ▶ 208.5
- ✗ This dictionary is best I could find. ▶ 208.6
- ✗ He's the nicest when he's with children. ▶ 208.6

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203 *as . . . as; as much/many as*

1 use

We use *as . . . as* to say that people or things are equal in some way.

*She's **as** tall **as** her brother.* *Is it **as** good **as** you expected?*
*She speaks Spanish **as** well **as** the rest of us.*
*Take **as** much time **as** you need.*

2 negative structures

After *not*, we can use *so . . . as* instead of *as . . . as*.

*He's **not as/so** friendly **as** she is.* (more informal than *He's less friendly . . .*)

3 *as . . . as possible*, etc

The structures *as . . . as possible/necessary/ever/needed* are common (and others using words with similar meanings).

*Please get here **as** soon **as possible**.*
*I'll spend **as** much **as necessary**.* *You're **as** beautiful **as ever**.*
*We'll do **as** much **as practicable** before the end of the week.*

4 pronouns after *as*

In an informal style we can use object pronouns (*me*, *him*, etc) after *as*.

*She doesn't sing as well **as me**.*

In a formal style, we prefer **subject + verb** after *as*.

*She doesn't sing as well **as I do**.*

A subject form without a verb (e.g. *as well as he*) is unusual in this structure in modern English.

5 *as much/many . . . as*

We can use *as much/many . . . as* to talk about quantity.

*I haven't got **as much** money **as** I thought.*
*We need **as many** people **as** possible.*

As much/many can be used without following nouns.

*I ate **as much** as I could.* *She didn't catch **as many** as she'd hoped.*

And *as much . . .* can be used as an adverb.

*You ought to rest **as much** as possible.*

6 emphatic use: *as much as 80kg*

As much/many as can be used before a number to mean 'the large amount/quantity of'.

*Some of these fish can weigh **as much as 80**kg.*
*There are sometimes **as many as 40** students in the classes.*

As little/few can be used to mean 'the small amount/quantity of'.

*You can fly to Paris for **as little as 20** euros.*

7 *half as . . . as*, etc

Half, twice, three times, etc can be used before *as . . . as.*

*You're not **half as** clever **as** you think you are.*
*I'm not going out with a man who's **twice as** old **as** me.*
*It took **three times as** long **as** I expected.* (OR ***. . . three times longer** than I expected,* ► 208.3)

8 modification: *nearly as . . .*

Before *as . . . as* we can use *(not) nearly, almost, just, nothing like, every bit, exactly, not quite.*

*It's **not nearly as** cold as yesterday.* *He's **just as** strong as ever.*
*You're **nothing like as** bad-tempered as you used to be.*
*She's **every bit as** beautiful as her sister.*
*I'm **not quite as** tired as I was last week.*

9 tenses

In *as . . . as*-clauses (and other kinds of *as*-clauses), a present tense is often used to refer to the future, and a past tense can have a meaning similar to ***would*** + **infinitive** (► 231).

*We'll get there as soon as you **do/will.***
*If you married me, I'd give you as much freedom as you **wanted.***

10 leaving out the second part: *twice as long . . .*

The second part of the *as . . . as* or *so . . . as* structure can be left out when the meaning is clear from what comes before.

*The train takes 40 minutes. By car it'll take you twice **as long.***
*I used to think he was clever. Now I'm not **so sure.***

In cases like this, *not so* is much more common than *not as.*

11 traditional expressions: *as cold as ice*

We use the structure *as . . . as . . .* in a lot of traditional comparative expressions.

***as** cold **as** ice* ***as** black **as** night* ***as** hard **as** nails*

The first *as* can be dropped in these expressions in an informal style.

*She's **hard as nails.***

Note that *as* is usually pronounced /əz/ (► 315).
For *as long as,* ► 379. For *as well as,* ► 382.
For the word order in sentences like *She's as good a dancer as her brother,* ► 187.
For *as* replacing subject or object (e.g. *as many people as want it*), ► 256.
For sentences like *(As) cold as it was, we went out,* ► 255.

204 comparative and superlative adjectives

One-syllable adjectives normally have comparatives and superlatives ending in *-er, -est.* Some two-syllable adjectives are similar; others have *more* and *most.* Longer adjectives have *more* and *most.*

1 one-syllable adjectives (regular comparison)

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative	
old	*older*	*oldest*	Most adjectives: + ***-er, -est.***
tall	*taller*	*tallest*	
cheap	*cheaper*	*cheapest*	
late	*later*	*latest*	Adjectives ending in *-e*: + ***-r, -st.***
nice	*nicer*	*nicest*	
fat	*fatter*	*fattest*	One vowel + one consonant: double consonant.
big	*bigger*	*biggest*	
thin	*thinner*	*thinnest*	

Note the pronunciation of:
younger /ˈjʌŋgə(r)/
youngest /ˈjʌŋgɪst/ OR /ˈjʌŋgəst/
longer /ˈlɒŋgə(r)/
longest /ˈlɒŋgɪst/ OR /ˈlɒŋgəst/
stronger /ˈstrɒŋgə(r)/
strongest /ˈstrɒŋgɪst/ OR /ˈstrɒŋgəst/

2 irregular comparison

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
good	*better*	*best*
bad	*worse*	*worst*
ill	*worse*	
far	*farther/further* (► 462)	*farthest/furthest*
old	*older/elder* (► 445)	*oldest/eldest*

The determiners *little* and *much/many* have irregular comparatives and superlatives:

little (► 168)	*less* (► 169)	*least* (► 170)
much/many (► 165)	*more* (► 166)	*most* (► 167)

Few has two possible comparatives and superlatives: *fewer/less* and *fewest/least.* ► 169–170.

3 two-syllable adjectives

Adjectives ending in *-y* have *-ier* and *-iest.*

happy	***happier***	***happiest***
easy	***easier***	***easiest***

Some other two-syllable adjectives can have *-er* and *-est,* especially adjectives ending in an unstressed vowel, /l/ or /ə(r)/.

narrow	*narrow**er***	*narrow**est***
simple	*simp**ler***	*simp**lest***
clever	*clever**er***	*clever**est***
quiet	*quiet**er***	*quiet**est***

With many two-syllable adjectives (e.g. *polite, common*), *-er/-est* and *more/most* are both possible. With others (including adjectives ending in *-ing, -ed, -ful* and *-less*), only *more/most* is possible. In general, the structure with *more/most* is becoming more common. To find out the normal comparative and superlative for a particular two-syllable adjective, check in a good dictionary.

4 longer adjectives

Adjectives of three or more syllables have *more* and *most.*

intelligent	***more** intelligent*	***most** intelligent*
practical	***more** practical*	***most** practical*
beautiful	***more** beautiful*	***most** beautiful*

Words like *unhappy* (the opposites of two-syllable adjectives ending in *-y*) are an exception: they can have forms in *-er* and *-est.*

unhappy	*unhapp**ier*** / ***more** unhappy*	*unhapp**iest*** / ***most** unhappy*
untidy	*untid**ier*** / ***more** untidy*	*untid**iest*** / ***most** untidy*

Some compound adjectives like *good-looking* or *well-known* have two possible comparatives and superlatives.

good-looking	***better**-looking* OR ***more good**-looking*	***best**-looking* ***most good**-looking*
well-known	***better**-known* OR ***more well**-known*	***best**-known* ***most well**-known*

→

5 *more, most* with short adjectives

Sometimes *more/most* are used with adjectives that normally have *-er/-est*. This can happen, for example, when a comparative is not followed immediately by *than*; forms with *-er* are also possible.

The road's getting ***more and more steep.*** (OR . . . ***steeper and steeper.***)

When we compare two descriptions (saying that one is more suitable or accurate than another), we use *more*; comparatives with *-er* are not possible.

He's ***more lazy*** *than stupid.* (NOT ~~*He's lazier than stupid.*~~)

In a rather formal style, *most* can be used with adjectives expressing approval and disapproval (including one-syllable adjectives) to mean 'very'.

Thank you very much indeed. That is ***most kind*** *of you.* (NOT . . . ~~*That is kindest of you.*~~)

You are ***most*** *welcome.*

Real, right, wrong and *like* always have *more* and *most.*

She's ***more like*** *her mother than her father.* (NOT . . . ~~*liker her mother*~~ . . .)

205 comparative and superlative adverbs

Most comparative and superlative adverbs are made with *more* and *most.*

Could you talk ***more quietly?*** (NOT . . . ~~*quietlier*~~)

Adverbs that have the same form as adjectives (► 194), and a few others, have comparatives and superlatives with *-er* and *-est*. The most common are: *fast, early, late, hard, long, near, high, low, soon, well* (*better, best*), *badly* (*worse, worst*), and in informal English *slow, loud* and *quick.*

Can't you drive any ***faster?*** *Can you come* ***earlier?***

Talk ***louder.*** (informal)

We've all got terrible voices, but I sing ***worst*** *of all.*

Note also the irregular comparatives and superlatives of *far* (*farther/further, farthest/furthest*, ► 462), *much* (*more, most*, ► 166 and ► 167), *little* (*less, least*, ► 169–170).

For the use of comparatives and superlatives, see the following entries.

206 using comparatives and superlatives

1 *than*

After comparatives we use *than*, not *that* or *as.*

Today's hotter ***than*** *yesterday.* (NOT . . . ~~*hotter that*~~ . . . OR . . . ~~*hotter as*~~ . . .)

2 the difference between comparatives and superlatives

We use a comparative to compare one person, thing, action, event or group with another person, thing, etc. We use a superlative to compare somebody/something with the whole group that he/she/it belongs to.

Compare:
- *Emily's* ***taller*** *than her three sisters.*
  Emily's ***the tallest*** *of the four girls.* (NOT . . . ~~*the taller*~~ . . .)
- *Your accent is* ***worse*** *than mine.*
  Your accent is ***the worst*** *in the class.* (NOT . . . ~~*the worse*~~ . . .)
- *He plays* ***better*** *than everybody else in the team.*
  He's ***the best*** *in the team.*

3 groups with two members

When a group only has two members, we sometimes use a comparative instead of a superlative.

I like Lily and Mia, but I think Mia's ***the nicer/nicest*** *of the two.*
I'll give you ***the bigger/biggest*** *steak: I'm not very hungry.*

Some people feel that a superlative is incorrect in this case.

4 double comparatives: *fatter and fatter; more and more slowly*

We can use double comparatives to say that something is changing.

I'm getting ***fatter and fatter****.*
We're going ***more and more slowly****.* (NOT . . . ~~*more slowly and more slowly.*~~)

5 *the . . . the . . .*

We can use comparatives with *the . . . the . . .* to say that things change or vary together.

Word order (in both clauses):

the + comparative expression + subject + verb

The older *I get,* ***the happier*** *I am.* (NOT ~~*Older I get, more I am happy.*~~)
The more dangerous *it is,* ***the more*** *I like it.* (NOT ~~*The more it is dangerous, . . .*~~)
The more *I study,* ***the less*** *I learn.*

Noun phrases with *more* can be used in this structure.

The more money *he makes,* ***the more useless things*** *he buys.*

In longer structures, *that* is sometimes used before the first verb.

The more information ***that*** *comes in, the more confused the picture is.*

A short form of this structure is used in the expression *The more the merrier*, and in sentences ending *the better.*

'*How do you like your coffee?*' '***The stronger the better.***'

Note that in this structure, the word *the* is not really the definite article – it was originally a form of the demonstrative pronoun, meaning 'by that much'. →

6 *than me; than I (am)*

In an informal style, object pronouns (*me*, etc) are used after *than*. In a more formal style, subject pronouns (*I*, etc) are used (usually with verbs).

She's older than ***me.*** (informal)
She is older than ***I (am).*** (formal)

7 *the happiest man in the world*

After superlatives, we do not usually use *of* with a singular word referring to a place or group.

I'm the ***happiest*** *man* ***in*** *the world.* (NOT . . . ~~*of the world.*~~)
She's the ***fastest*** *runner* ***in*** *the class.* (NOT . . . ~~*of the class.*~~)

But *of* can be used before plurals, and before *lot*.

She's the fastest runner ***of them all.*** *He's the best* ***of the lot.***

Note also the structure with possessive *'s*.

He thinks he's ***the world's strongest*** *man.*

8 *than anybody; the best . . . ever*

'Non-affirmative' words like *ever, yet* and *any* (► 222) often follow comparatives and superlatives.

It's the ***best*** *book I've* ***ever*** *read.* *This is my* ***hardest*** *job* ***yet.***
You're ***more stubborn than anybody*** *I know.*

For tenses after *than*, ► 231. For *the first/second/best*, etc + present/past perfect, ► 56.

207 *much older, by far the oldest*, etc

1 *much, far*, etc with comparatives

We cannot use *very* with comparatives. Instead, we use, for example, *much, far, very much, a lot* (informal), *lots* (informal), *any* and *no* (► 373), *rather, a little, a bit* (informal), and *even*.

My boyfriend is ***much/far older*** *than me.* (NOT . . . ~~*very older than me.*~~)
Russian is ***much/far more difficult*** *than Spanish.*

very much *nicer*	***rather*** *more quickly*
a bit *more sensible* (informal)	*She looks* ***no older*** *than her daughter.*
a lot *happier* (informal)	***a little*** *less expensive*
Is your mother ***any better?***	*Your cooking is* ***even worse*** *than Harry's.*

Quite cannot be used with comparatives except in the expression *quite better*, meaning 'recovered from an illness' (► 402.1). *Any, no, a bit* and *a lot* are not normally used to modify comparatives before nouns.

There are ***much/far nicer shops*** *in the town centre.*
(BUT NOT . . . ~~*a bit nicer shops*~~ . . .)

2 *many more/less/fewer*

When *more* (► 166) begins a plural noun phrase, it is modified by *many* instead of *much*. Compare:

much / far / a lot, etc *more money*
many** / far / a lot,* etc ***more opportunities

Much and *many* are not used to modify *less* or *fewer*, in plural noun phrases.

***far fewer** words (~~much/many fewer words~~)*

3 *much, by far, quite*, etc with superlative noun phrases

Superlative noun phrases can be modified by *much* and *by far*, and by other adverbs of degree such as *quite* (meaning 'absolutely'), *almost*, *practically*, *nearly* and *easily*. *Much* and *quite* are used in this way mostly in British English.

*He's **much the most imaginative** of them all.* (BrE)
*She's **by far the oldest**.* *We're walking **by far the slowest**.*
*He's **quite the most stupid** man I've ever met.* (BrE)
*I'm **nearly the oldest** in the company.*
*This is **easily the worst** party I've been to this year.*

4 *very* with superlatives

Note the special use of *very* to emphasise superlatives and *first*, *next* and *last*.

*Bring out your **very best** wine – Michael's coming to dinner.*
*You're the **very first** person I've spoken to today.*
*This is your **very last** chance.*

For modification of *too*, ► 610.3.

208 comparison: advanced points

1 comparative meaning 'relatively', 'more than average'

Comparatives can suggest ideas like 'relatively', 'more than average'. Used like this, comparatives make a less clear and narrow selection than superlatives. Compare:

*There are two classes – one for the **cleverer** students and one for the **slower** learners.*
*The **cleverest** students were two girls from York.*

Comparatives are often used in advertising to make things sound less definite.

***less expensive** clothes for the **fuller** figure* (Compare *cheap clothes for fat people.*)

2 *all/any/none the* + comparative

All the** + **comparative (more common in British English) suggests the idea of 'even more . . .'.

*I feel **all the better** for that swim.*
*Her accident made it **all the more important** to get home fast.*

Any and *none* can be used in similar structures.

*He didn't seem to be **any the worse** for his experience.*
*He explained it all carefully, but I was still **none the wiser**.*

Note that this structure is used mainly to express abstract ideas. We would not say, for example, *Those pills have made him all the slimmer.*

In this structure, *the* was originally a demonstrative, meaning 'by that'. →

3 *three times . . .er*, etc

Instead of *three/four*, etc *times as much* (► 203.7), we can use ***three/four*, etc *times* + comparative**.

*She can walk **three times faster** than you.*
*It was **ten times more difficult** than I expected.*

Note that *twice* and *half* are not possible in this structure.

*She's **twice as lively** as her sister.* (NOT . . . ~~*twice livelier*~~ . . .)

4 words left out after *than*

Than often replaces a subject or object pronoun or an adverbial expression, rather like a relative pronoun or adverb (► 256).

*She spent more money **than was** sensible.* (NOT . . . ~~*than it was sensible.*~~)
*There were more people **than** we had **expected**.* (NOT . . . ~~*than we had expected them.*~~)
*I love you more **than she** does.* (NOT . . . ~~*than how much she does.*~~)

(In some English dialects, the above sentences would be constructed with *than what*.)

5 *the youngest person to . . .*

After a superlative, an infinitive can mean the same as a relative clause.

*She's the **youngest person ever to swim** the Channel.* (= . . . the youngest person who has ever swum . . .)

This structure is also common after *first*, *last* and *next*.

*Who was the **first woman to climb** Everest?*
*The **next to speak** was Mrs Fenshaw.*

Note that this structure is only possible in cases where the noun with the superlative (or *first*, etc) has a subject relationship with the following verb. In other cases, infinitives cannot be used.

Is this the first time that you have stayed here? (NOT . . . ~~*the first time for you to stay here*~~ – *time* is not the subject of *stay*.)

6 superlatives with or without *the*

Nouns with superlative adjectives normally have the article *the*.

*It's **the best book** I've ever read.*

After linking verbs, superlative adjectives also usually have *the*, though it is sometimes dropped in an informal style.

*I'm **the greatest**.* *Which of the boys is **(the) strongest?***
*This dictionary is **(the) best**.*

The cannot be dropped when a superlative is used with a defining expression.

*This dictionary is **the best I could find**.* (NOT ~~*This dictionary is best I could find.*~~)

However, we do not use *the* with superlatives when we compare the same person or thing in different situations. Compare:

– *Of all my friends, he's **(the) nicest**.* (comparing different people)
*He's **nicest** when he's with children.*
(NOT ~~*He's the nicest when . . .*~~ – we're comparing the same person in different situations.)

– *She works* ***(the) hardest*** *in the family; her husband doesn't know what work is.* (A woman is being compared with a man – *the* is possible.)
She works ***hardest*** *when she's doing something for her family.*
(NOT ~~*She works the hardest when*~~ . . . – a woman's work is being compared in different situations.)

The is sometimes dropped before superlative adverbs in an informal style.
Who can run ***(the) fastest****?*

Section 18 Prepositions

INTRODUCTION

meanings and use

It is difficult to learn to use prepositions correctly in a foreign language. Most English prepositions have several different functions (for instance, one well-known dictionary lists fifteen main uses of *at*), and these may correspond to several different prepositions in another language. At the same time, different prepositions can have very similar uses (***in** the morning, **on** Monday morning, **at** night*). Many nouns, verbs and adjectives are normally followed by particular prepositions: we say *the reason **for**, depend **on**, angry **with** somebody*. Often the correct preposition cannot be guessed, and one has to learn the expression as a whole. In some expressions English has no preposition where one may be used in another language; in other expressions the opposite is true.

word order

In English, prepositions can come at the ends of clauses in certain structures, especially in an informal style. For details, ► 209.

*What are you thinking **about**?* *She's not very easy to talk **to**.*

-ing forms

When we use verbs after prepositions, we use *-ing* forms, not infinitives. For details, ► 104, 211.

*She keeps fit **by going** to the gym.*

When *to* is a preposition, it is also followed by *-ing* forms. (► 104.2)

*I look forward **to seeing** you soon.*

prepositions before conjunctions

Prepositions are sometimes dropped before conjunctions and sometimes not. For details, ► 210.

*I'm not certain **(of) what** I'm supposed to do.*

*The question **(of) whether** they should turn back was never discussed.*

prepositions, adverb particles and conjunctions

Words like *on, off, up, down* can function both as prepositions and as adverb particles. For the difference, ► 195. For verbs with prepositions and particles, ► 12–13.

*She ran **up** the stairs.* (preposition)

*She picked it **up**.* (adverb particle)

Some prepositions can also function as conjunctions: ► 249 (*after*), ► 250 (*before*) and ► 579 (*since*).

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- ✗ You bought it? What money with? ▶ 209.2
- ✗ I admired the patience she spoke with. ▶ 209.6
- ✗ Which period did it happen during? ▶ 209.6
- ✗ For whom is it, madam? ▶ 209.7
- ✗ To where shall I send it? ▶ 209.7
- ✗ In my family, about money was never spoken. ▶ 209.7
- ✗ I knew about that he had problems. ▶ 210.1
- ✗ The judge paid a lot of attention that the child was unhappy. ▶ 210.3
- ✗ He said the parents were responsible for that the child had run away. ▶ 210.3
- ✗ I'm worried where she is. ▶ 210.4
- ✗ I'm concerned about if you're ill. ▶ 210.4
- ✗ I don't like the idea of to get married. ▶ 211
- ✗ Try to see it after my point of view. ▶ 212
- ✗ She looks much younger on this picture. ▶ 212
- ✗ I like walking under the rain. ▶ 212
- ✗ What time do we arrive to Cardiff? ▶ 213
- ✗ I'm not bad in tennis. ▶ 213
- ✗ She doesn't want to depend of her parents. ▶ 213
- ✗ Who's the woman dressed with green? ▶ 213
- ✗ We must discuss about your plans. ▶ 214.1
- ✗ See you on next Monday. ▶ 214.2

CONTENTS OF THIS SECTION

(This Section mostly contains information about the grammar of prepositions. Problems concerning particular prepositions and preposition contrasts (e.g. *at, in* and *on, between* and *among, facing* and *opposite, above* and *over*) are dealt with in Section 31. See the Index for their entry numbers.)

209 prepositions at the ends of clauses
210 prepositions before conjunctions
211 *-ing* forms and infinitives
212 prepositions before particular words and expressions
213 prepositions after particular words and expressions
214 expressions without prepositions

209 prepositions at the ends of clauses

1 introduction

A preposition often connects two things: (1) a noun, adjective or verb that comes before it, and (2) a prepositional object – a noun phrase or pronoun that comes after the preposition.

*This is a present **for** you.* *He's looking **at** her.*
*I'm really angry **with** Joe.* *They live **in** a small village.*

In some structures we may put the prepositional object at or near the beginning of a clause. In this case, the preposition does not always go with it – it may stay together with 'its' noun, adjective or verb at the end of the clause. This happens especially in four cases:

wh-questions: *Who's the **present for**?*
relative structures: *Joe's the person that I'm **angry with**.*
passives: *She likes to be **looked at**.*
infinitive structures: *The village is pleasant to **live in**.*

2 *wh*-questions: *What are you looking at?*

When a question word is the object of a preposition, the preposition most often comes at the end of the clause, especially in informal usage.

Who's the present for? (*For whom is the present?* is extremely formal.)
***What** are you looking **at**?* ***Who** did you go **with**?*
***Where** did she buy it **from**?* ***Which** flight is the general travelling **on**?*
***What** kind of films are you interested **in**?*

This also happens in indirect *wh*-questions, and in other *what*-clauses.

*Tell me **what** you're worried **about**.* ***What** a lot of trouble I'm **in**!*

Some questions consist simply of **question word + preposition**.

What with? ***Who for?***

However, this structure is unusual when there is a noun with the question word.

*With **what money**?* (NOT ~~*What money with?*~~)

3 relative clauses: *the house I told you about*

When a relative pronoun (► 233) is the object of a preposition, the preposition also often goes at the end of the clause, especially in informal usage.

*Joe's the person **that** I'm angry **with**.* (Less formal than . . . *with whom I am angry.*)
*This is the house **(that)** I told you **about**.* (Less formal than . . . *about which I told you.*)
*You remember the boy **(who)** I was going out **with**?*
*She's the only woman **(who)** I've ever really been in love **with**.*
*That's **what** I'm afraid **of***

Because *whom* is unusual in an informal style, it is very rare in clauses that end with prepositions (► 237.3).

4 passives: *She likes to be looked at.*

In passive structures (► Section 6), prepositions go with their verbs.

*She likes **to be looked at**.*
*I don't know where he is – his bed **hasn't been slept in**.*
*Kate **was operated on** last night.*

5 infinitive structures: *pleasant to live in*

Infinitive complements (► 101–102) can have prepositions with them.

*The village is pleasant **to live in**.*
*She needs other children **to play with**.*
*Can you get me a chair **to stand on**?*
*I've got lots of music **to listen to**.*
*Their house isn't easy **to get to**.*

6 exceptions: *During which period . . .?*

During and *since* are not normally put at the ends of clauses.

***During** which period did it happen?* (NOT ~~*Which period did it happen during?*~~)
***Since** when have you been working for her?* (NOT ~~*When have you been working for her since?*~~)

7 formal structures: *With whom . . .?*

In a more formal style, a preposition is often put earlier in questions and relative structures, before the question word or relative pronoun.

***With whom** did she go?*
*It was the house **about which** he had told them.*
*She was the only person **with whom** he could discuss his problems.*

This can also happen in infinitive complements, in a very formal style. A relative pronoun is used.

*She needs other children **with whom to play**.*
*It is a boring place **in which to live**.*

Note that after prepositions *which* and *whom* can be used, but not normally *who* and *that*.

Even in a very formal style, prepositions are not often put at the beginning of questions which have *be* as the main verb.

*Who **is it for**, madam?* (NOT ~~*For whom is it?*~~)

And the structures *where . . . to*, *what . . . like* and *what . . . for* have a fixed order.

***Where** shall I send it **to**?* (BUT NOT ~~*To where shall I send it?*~~)
***What** does she look **like**?* (BUT NOT ~~*Like what does she look?*~~)
***What** did you buy that **for**?* (BUT NOT ~~*For what did you buy that?*~~)

Prepositions cannot be moved away from passive verbs even in a formal style.

*In my family, money was never **spoken about**.* (NOT . . . ~~*about money was never spoken.*~~)

For more information about formal and informal language, ► 281.
For sentences like *It's got a hole in (it)*; *I like cakes with cream on (them)*, ► 275.13.

210 prepositions before conjunctions

Prepositions can be followed by conjunctions in some cases but not in others.

1 indirect speech: prepositions dropped before *that*

Prepositions are not used directly before the conjunction *that*. In indirect speech, after words that refer to saying, writing, thinking, etc, prepositions are usually dropped before *that*-clauses. Compare:

- *I **knew about** his problems.*
  *I **knew that** he had problems.* (NOT ~~*I knew about that he had problems.*~~)
- *She had no **idea of** my state of mind.*
  *She had no **idea that** I was unhappy.* (NOT ~~*She had no idea of that I was unhappy.*~~)
- *I wasn't **aware of** the time.*
  *I wasn't **aware that** it was so late.* (NOT ~~*I wasn't aware of that it was so late.*~~)

2 emotional reactions: prepositions dropped

Prepositions are also dropped before *that* after many common words that refer to emotional reactions. Compare:

- *We are **sorry about** the delay.*
  *We are **sorry that** the train is late.* (NOT . . . ~~*sorry about that the train is late.*~~)
- *I was **surprised at** her strength.*
  *I was **surprised that** she was so strong.* (NOT . . . ~~*surprised at that she was*~~ . . .)

3 *the fact that*

In other cases (not involving indirect speech or words referring to emotional reactions) prepositions cannot so often be dropped before *that*-clauses. Instead, the expression *the fact* (► 264.3) is generally put between the preposition and *that*.

*The judge paid a lot of attention **to the fact that** the child was unhappy at home.* (NOT ~~*The judge paid a lot of attention (to) that the child . . .*~~)

*He said the parents were responsible **for the fact that** the child had run away.* (NOT . . . ~~*responsible (for) that the child had run away.*~~)

4 question words

After some very common words like *tell, ask, depend, sure, idea, look,* prepositions can be dropped before *who, which, what, where, whether* and other question words. This is especially common in indirect questions. Compare:

- *Tell me **about** your trip.*
  *Tell me **(about) where** you went.*
- *I **asked** her **about** her religious beliefs.*
  *I **asked** her **whether** she believed in God.* (More natural than *I asked her about whether she believed in God.*)
- *We may be late – it **depends on** the traffic.*
  *We may be late – it **depends (on) how** much traffic there is.*
- *I'm not **sure of** his method.*
  *I'm not **sure how** he does it.* (More natural than *I'm not sure of how he does it.*)

– *I've no* ***idea of*** *the owner.*
I've no ***idea (of) who*** *owns it.*
– ***Look at*** *this.*
Look (at) what *I've got.*

In other cases it is unusual or impossible to leave out the preposition.

I'm ***worried about where*** *she is.* (NOT ~~*I'm worried where she is.*~~)
The police ***questioned*** *me* ***about what*** *I'd seen.* (NOT ~~*The police questioned me what I'd seen.*~~)
There's the ***question of who's*** *going to pay.*
(More natural than . . . *the question who's going to pay.*)
People's chances of getting jobs vary ***according to whether*** *they live in the North or the South.* (NOT . . . ~~*according whether*~~ . . .)

If does not normally follow prepositions; we use *whether* (► 261) instead.
I'm worried ***about whether*** *you're happy.* (NOT ~~*I'm worried about if*~~ . . .)

For the structures (with and without prepositions) that are possible after a particular verb, noun or adjective, see a good dictionary.

211 *-ing* forms and infinitives

Prepositions are not normally used before infinitives in English. After **verb/noun/adjective + preposition**, we usually use the *-ing* form of a following verb.

He insisted ***on being*** *paid at once.* (NOT ~~*He insisted on to be paid*~~ . . .)
I don't like the idea ***of getting*** *married.* (NOT . . . ~~*the idea of to get married.*~~)
I'm not very good ***at cooking.*** (NOT . . . ~~*good at to cook.*~~)

In some cases we drop the preposition and use an infinitive. Compare:

– *He* ***asked for*** *a loan.*
He ***asked to borrow*** *some money.*
– *She was* ***surprised at*** *his mistake.*
She was ***surprised to see*** *what he had done.*
– *We're travelling* ***for pleasure.***
We're travelling ***to enjoy*** *ourselves.*

Sometimes two structures are possible. There may be a difference of meaning (► 105 for some examples).

I'm ***interested in learning*** *more about my family.*
I was ***interested to learn*** *that my grandfather was Jewish.*

For details of the structures that are possible after a particular verb, noun or adjective, see a good dictionary.

212 prepositions before particular words and expressions

This is a list of a few expressions which often cause problems. For other **preposition + noun** combinations, see a good dictionary.

at the cinema (BrE); **at** the theatre; **at** a party; **at** university
What's on ***at the cinema*** *this week?* →

a book (written) **by** Dickens; a concerto (composed) **by** Mozart; a film (directed) **by** Orson Welles (NOT ~~**of**~~ OR ~~**from**~~)
*I've never read anything **by** Dickens.*

by car/bike/bus/train/boat/plane/land/sea/air; **on** foot (but **in the** car, **on a** bus, etc)
*Let's take our time and go **by boat**.*

for . . . reason
*My sister decided to go to America **for** several **reasons**.*

from . . . point of view (NOT ~~**according to**~~ OR ~~**after**~~)
*Try to see it **from** my **point of view**.*

in . . . opinion (NOT ~~**according to**~~ OR ~~**after**~~)
***In** my **opinion**, she should have resigned earlier.*

in the end (= finally, after a long time)
***In the end**, I got a visa for Russia.*

at the end (= at the point where something stops)
*I think the film's a bit weak **at the end**.*

in pen, pencil, ink, etc
*Please fill in the form **in** ink.*

in a picture, photo, etc (NOT ~~**on**~~)
*She looks much younger **in** this **photo**.*

in the rain, snow, etc
*I like walking **in the rain**.*

in a suit, raincoat, shirt, skirt, hat, etc
*Who's the man **in** the funny hat over there?*

in a . . . voice
*Stop talking to me **in** that stupid voice.*

on page 20, etc (NOT ~~**in**~~/~~**at**~~)
*There's a mistake **on page 120**.*

on the radio; **on** TV; **on** the phone
*Is there anything good **on TV** tonight?*
*It's Mrs Ellis **on the phone**: she says it's urgent.*

on time (= at the planned time, neither late nor early)
*Daniel wants the meeting to start exactly **on time**.*

in time (= with enough time to spare, before the last moment)
*He would have died if they hadn't got him to the hospital **in time**.*

213 prepositions after particular words and expressions

It is not always easy to know which preposition to use after a particular noun, verb or adjective. Here are some of the most common combinations which cause difficulty to students of English. Alternatives are sometimes possible, and American and British usage sometimes differ. There is only room for very brief notes here; for more complete information about usage with a particular word, consult a good dictionary.

accuse somebody **of** something (NOT ~~**for**~~)
*She **accused** me **of** poisoning her dog.*
afraid of (NOT ~~**by**~~)
*Are you **afraid of** spiders?*
agree with a person, opinion or policy
*He left the company because he didn't **agree with** their sales policy.*
*I entirely **agree with** you.*
agree about/on a subject of discussion
*We **agree about/on** most things.*
agree on a matter for decision
*Let's try to **agree on** a date.*
agree to a suggestion or demand
*I'll **agree to** your suggestion if you lower the price.*
angry with (sometimes **at**) a person **for** doing something
*I'm **angry with** her **for** lying to me.*
angry about (sometimes **at**) something
*What are you so **angry about?***
anxious about (= worried about)
*I'm getting **anxious about** money.*
anxious for (= eager to have)
*We're all **anxious for** an end to this misunderstanding.*
anxious + infinitive (= eager, wanting)
*She's **anxious to find** a better job.*
apologise to somebody **for** something
*I think we should **apologise to** the Smiths.*
*I must **apologise for** disturbing you.*
arrive at or **in** (NOT ~~**to**~~)
*What time do we **arrive at** Cardiff station?*
*When did you **arrive in** England?*
ask: ► 383.

bad at (NOT ~~**in**~~)
*I'm not **bad at** tennis.*
believe in God, Santa Claus, etc (= believe that . . . exists; trust)
*I half **believe in** life after death.*
*If you **believe in** me, I can do anything.*
BUT **believe** a person or something that is said (= accept as truthful/true – no preposition)
*Don't **believe** her.*
*I don't **believe** a word she says.*
belong in/on, etc (= go, fit, have its place in/on, etc)
*Those glasses **belong on** the top shelf.*
belong to (= be a member of)
*I **belong to** a local athletics club.*
blue with cold, **red with** anger, etc
*My hands were **blue with cold** when I got home*
borrow: ► 408.

care: ► 419.
clever at (NOT ~~**in**~~)
*I'm not very **clever at** cooking.* →

congratulate/congratulations on something
*I must **congratulate** you **on** your exam results.*
__Congratulations on__ your new job!
congratulate/congratulations on/for doing something
*He **congratulated** the team **on/for** having won all their games.*
crash into (NOT USUALLY **~~against~~**)
*I wasn't concentrating, and I **crashed into** the car in front.*

depend/dependent on (NOT **~~from~~** OR **~~of~~**)
*We may play football – it **depends on** the weather.*
*He doesn't want to be **dependent on** his parents.*
BUT **independent of**
details of
*Write now for **details of** our special offer.*
die of/from
*More people **died of** flu in 1919 than were killed in the First World War.*
*A week after the accident he **died from** his injuries.*
different: ▶ 433.
difficulty with something, (**in**) doing something (NOT **~~difficulties to . . .~~**)
*I'm having **difficulty with** my travel arrangements.*
*You won't have much **difficulty (in) getting** to know people in Italy.*
disappointed with/in somebody
*My father never showed if he was **disappointed with/in** me.*
disappointed with/at/about something
*You must be pretty **disappointed with/at/about** your exam results.*
[a] discussion about something
*We had a long **discussion about** politics.*
BUT **[to] discuss** something (no preposition)
*We'd better **discuss** your travel plans.*
divide into (NOT **~~in~~**)
*The book is **divided into** three parts.*
dream of (= think of, imagine)
*I often **dreamed of** being famous when I was younger.*
dream about/of (while asleep)
*What does it mean if you **dream about/of** mountains?*
dress(ed) in (NOT **~~with~~**)
*Who's the woman **dressed in** green?*
drive into (NOT **against**)
*That idiot Kim **drove into** a tree again yesterday.*

enter into an agreement, a discussion, etc
*We've just **entered into** an agreement with Carsons Ltd.*
enter a place (no preposition)
*When I **entered** the room everybody stopped talking.*
example of (NOT **~~for~~**)
*Sherry is an **example of** a fortified wine.*
explain something **to** somebody (NOT **~~explain somebody something~~**)
*Could you **explain** this rule **to** me?*

fight, struggle, etc **with** somebody
*I've spent the last two weeks **fighting with** the tax office.*

fight, struggle, etc **against** something
*As Schiller said, **against** stupidity even the gods **fight** in vain.*
frightened of or **by**: ▶ 96.9.

get in(to) and **out of** a car, taxi or small boat
*When I **got into** my car, I found the radio had been stolen.*
get on(to) and **off** a train, plane, bus, ship, (motor)bike or horse
*We'll be **getting off** the train in ten minutes.*
good at (NOT ~~**in**~~)
*Are you any **good at** tennis?*

[the] idea of . . .ing (NOT ~~**the idea to . . .**~~)
*I don't like **the idea of getting** married yet.*
ill with
*The boss has been **ill with** bronchitis this week.*
impressed with/by
*I'm very **impressed with/by** your work.*
increase in activity, output, etc (NOT ~~**of**~~)
*I'd like to see a big **increase in** productivity.*
independent, independence of or **from**
*She got a job so that she could be **independent of** her parents.*
*When did India get its **independence from** Britain?*
insist on (NOT ~~**to**~~)
*George's father **insisted on** paying.*
interest/interested in (NOT ~~**for**~~)
*When did your **interest in** social work begin?*
*Not many people are **interested in** grammar.*
interested to do /in doing something: ▶ 105.16

kind to (NOT ~~**with**~~)
*People have always been very **kind to** me.*

lack of
***Lack of** time prevented me from writing.*
[to] be lacking in
*She is **lacking in** tact.*
BUT **[to] lack** (no preposition)
*Your mother **lacks** tact.*
laugh at
*I hate being **laughed at**.*
laugh about
*We'll **laugh about** this one day.*
leave from somewhere (talking about the place)
*Does the plane **leave from** Liverpool or Manchester?*
leave somewhere (talking about the action of leaving)
*I **left** London early, before the traffic got too heavy.*
listen to
*If you don't **listen to** people, they won't **listen to** you.*
look at (= point one's eyes at)
*Stop **looking at** me like that.*
look after (= take care of)
*Thanks for **looking after** me when I was ill.* →

look for (= try to find)
*Can you help me **look for** my keys?*

make, made of/from: ► 522.
marriage to; get/be married to (NOT ~~**with**~~)
*Her **marriage to** Philip didn't last very long.*
*How long have you been **married to** Hannah?*
BUT **marry** somebody (no preposition)
*She **married** her childhood sweetheart.*

near (to): ► 531.
nice to (NOT ~~**with**~~)
*You weren't very **nice to** me last night.*

operate on a patient
*They **operated on** her yesterday evening.*

pay for something that is bought (NOT ~~**pay something**~~)
*Excuse me, sir. You haven't **paid for** your drink.*
pleased with somebody
*The boss is very **pleased with** you.*
pleased with/about/at something
*I wasn't very **pleased with/about/at** my exam results.*
polite to (NOT ~~**with**~~)
*Try to be **polite to** Uncle Richard for once.*
prevent . . . from . . .ing (NOT ~~**to**~~)
*The noise from downstairs **prevented** me **from** sleeping.*
proof of (NOT ~~**for**~~)
*I want **proof of** your love. Lend me some money.*

reason for (NOT ~~**of**~~)
*Nobody knows the **reason for** the accident.*
remind of (and ► 568)
*She **reminds** me **of** a girl I was at school with.*
responsible/responsibility for (NOT ~~**of**~~)
*Who's **responsible for** the shopping this week?*
rude to (NOT ~~**with**~~)
*Peggy was pretty **rude to** my family last weekend.*
run into (= meet)
*I **ran into** Philip at Victoria Station this morning.*

search for (= look for)
*The customs were **searching for** drugs at the airport.*
search (without preposition) (= look through; look everywhere in/on)
*They **searched** everybody's luggage.*
*They **searched** the man in front of me from head to foot.*
shocked at/by
*I was terribly shocked **at/by** the news of Daniel's accident.*
shout at (aggressive)
*If you don't stop **shouting at** me, I'll come and hit you.*
shout to (= call to)
*Emily **shouted to** us to come in and swim.*

smile at
*If you **smile at** me like that, I'll give you anything you want.*
sorry about something that has happened (not the speaker's fault)
*I'm **sorry about** your exam results.*
sorry for/about something that one has done (apologising)
*I'm **sorry for/about** breaking your window.*
sorry for a person (sympathy)
*I feel really **sorry for** her children.*
speak to; speak with (especially AmE)
*Could I **speak to/with** your father for a moment?*
suffer from
*My wife is **suffering from** hepatitis.*
surprised at/by
*Everybody was **surprised at/by** the weather.*

take part in (NOT ~~at~~ OR ~~of~~)
*I don't want to **take part in** any more conferences.*
think of/about (NOT ~~think to~~)
*I'm **thinking of** studying medicine.*
*I've also **thought about** studying dentistry.*
the thought of (NOT ~~the thought to~~)
*I hate **the thought of** going back to work.*
throw . . . at (aggressive)
*Stop **throwing** stones **at** the cars.*
throw . . . to (in a game, etc)
*If you get the ball, **throw** it **to** me.*
translate into (NOT ~~in~~)
*Could you **translate** this **into** Greek for me?*
trip over
*He **tripped over** the cat and fell downstairs.*
typical of (NOT ~~for~~)
*The wine's **typical of** the region.*

write: ▸ 8.
wrong with
*What's **wrong with** Rachel today?*

For *of* after determiners like *some, most,* ▸ Section 13.

214 expressions without prepositions

This is a list of some common expressions in which we do not use prepositions, or can leave them out.

1 *discuss, emphasise, enter, marry, lack, resemble* and *approach*

These verbs are normally followed by direct objects without prepositions.
*We must **discuss your plans**.* (NOT . . . ~~*discuss about your plans.*~~)
*The Minister **emphasised the need** for secrecy.* (NOT . . . ~~*emphasised on the need*~~ . . .) →

Conversation stopped as we ***entered the church.*** (NOT . . . ~~*entered in(to) the church.*~~)
She ***married a friend*** *of her sister's.* (NOT . . . ~~*married with*~~ . . .)
He's clever, but he ***lacks experience.*** (NOT . . . ~~*lacks of*~~ . . .)
The child does not ***resemble either*** *of its parents.* (NOT . . . ~~*resemble to*~~ . . .)
The train is now ***approaching*** *Paddington.* (NOT . . . ~~*approaching to*~~ . . .)

Note that the related nouns must have prepositions before complements:

discussion ***of*** *emphasis* ***on*** *entry* ***into*** *experience* ***of***
resemblance ***to*** *approach* ***to*** *marriage* ***to***

2 *next, last,* etc

Prepositions are not used before a number of common expressions of time beginning *next, last, this, that* (sometimes), *one, every, each, some, any* (in an informal style), *all.*

See you ***next Monday.*** (NOT . . . ~~*on next Monday.*~~)
The meeting's ***this Thursday.*** *We met* ***one Tuesday*** *in August.*
I'll never forget meeting you ***that afternoon.***
Come ***any day*** *you like.* *The party lasted* ***all night.***

Note also *tomorrow morning, yesterday afternoon,* etc.

3 days of the week

In an informal style, we sometimes leave out *on* before the names of the days of the week.

Why don't you come for a drink ***(on) Monday*** *evening?*

4 *a* meaning 'each'

No preposition is used in expressions like *three times a day, sixty miles an hour, eighty pence a kilo.*

Private lessons cost £20 ***an hour.***

For *per* in expressions like these, ► 322.2.

5 *What time . . .?,* etc

We usually leave out *at* before *what time.*

What time *does Granny's train arrive?* (More natural than *At what time . . .?*)

In an informal style, we can also leave out *on* before *what/which day(s).*

What day *is your hair appointment?*
Which day *do you have your music lesson?*

6 *about*

In an informal style, *at* is often dropped before ***about*** + **time expression**.

I'll see you ***(at) about three o'clock.***

7 'how long'

In an informal style, *for* is often left out in expressions that say how long something lasts.

I've been here ***(for) three weeks*** *now.*
How long *are you staying* ***(for)?***

8 measurement expressions, etc after *be*

Expressions containing words like *height, weight, length, size, shape, age, colour* are usually connected to the subject of the clause by the verb *be*, without a preposition.

*He **is just the right height** to be a police officer.*
*She's **the same age** as me.* *His head's **a funny shape**.*
*I'm **the same weight** as I was twenty years ago.*
***What shoe size are** you?*
***What colour are** her eyes?* (NOT ~~*Of what colour . . .?*~~)

9 *(in) this way*, etc

We often leave out *in* (especially in informal speech) in expressions like *(in) this way, (in) the same way, (in) another way*, etc.

*They plant corn **(in) the same way** their ancestors used to 500 years ago.*

10 *home*

We do not use *to* before *home* (► 489).

*I'm going **home**.*

In informal English (especially American), *at* can be left out before *home*.

*Is anybody **home**?*

11 *place*

In an informal style, *to* can be dropped in some expressions with the word *place*. This is normal in American English.

*Let's go **(to) some place** where it's quiet.*
*I always said you'd go **places**.* (= become successful)

12 infinitive structures

Prepositions can sometimes be dropped in the structure **noun + infinitive + preposition** (► 102.5).

*She has no **money to buy food (with)**.*
*We have **an hour to do it (in)**.*

This is particularly common with the noun *place*.

*We need **a place to live (in)**.* *She had **no place to go (to)**.*

Section 19 **Basic Clause Types**

INTRODUCTION

Simple (one-clause) sentences come in four main types from the point of view of structure:

- **declarative clauses**: typically used for making statements (positive or negative)
  Your hair looks nice. *The government haven't done it.*
- **interrogative clauses**: typically used for asking questions
  Does my hair look OK? *What haven't they done this time?*
- **imperative clauses**: typically used for giving instructions, making suggestions, etc
  Try cutting it a bit shorter. *Write to your MP about it.*
- **exclamatory clauses**: typically used (naturally) for exclaiming
  What a good idea! *How optimistic you are!*

Structure and meaning don't always go together.
Your coat's on the floor. (= 'Pick up your coat.' – declarative for instruction)
What do you take me for? (= 'I'm not stupid.' – interrogative for statement)

English has fairly fixed word order, especially in formal writing and speech. The main points are summarised in 215. Other entries in this Section deal separately with the structures used in questions, negatives, imperatives and exclamations. The grammar of more complex clauses and sentences is covered in Sections 20–24. Some structures typical of very formal usage (e.g. academic writing) are illustrated in 288; some structures mainly found in informal speech are discussed in 299.

English word order can cause problems for learners whose languages move grammatical elements around more freely. In many languages, sentences frequently start with the **topic** – what is being talked about – whether or not this is the grammatical subject. English, especially formal English, prefers to combine topic and grammatical subject in the same noun phrase, and to put this first in a declarative clause. Informal speech can separate topic and subject more easily, ► 299.

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- ✗ The train stopped not. ▶ 215.5
- ✗ I like very much mushrooms. ▶ 215.6
- ✗ When you are leaving? ▶ 216.1
- ✗ What means 'periphrastic'? ▶ 216.2
- ✗ What does the boss wants? ▶ 216.4
- ✗ Did you went climbing last weekend? ▶ 216.4
- ✗ When was made your reservation? ▶ 216.5
- ✗ So there are two models. Which does cost more? ▶ 216.6
- ✗ I like not this soup. ▶ 217.1
- ✗ I didn't thought it mattered. ▶ 217.1
- ✗ Expect not quick results. ▶ 217.2
- ✗ It's important to don't worry. ▶ 217.3
- ✗ Not George came, but his brother. ▶ 217.4
- ✗ 'Haven't you written to Emily?' 'Yes, I haven't.' ▶ 218.4
- ✗ I don't hope it rains tomorrow. ▶ 219.2
- ✗ I opened the door, but I couldn't see nobody. ▶ 220.1
- ✗ How it is cold! ▶ 223.1
- ✗ What nice dress! ▶ 223.2
- ✗ What a beautiful weather! ▶ 223.2
- ✗ What a beautiful smile has your sister! ▶ 223.2
- ✗ They're so kind people! ▶ 223.3
- ✗ Anybody don't say a word, OK? ▶ 224.5
- ✗ Remember always what I told you. ▶ 224.7

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215 sentence structure: basic word order

1 subject – verb – object/complement

The basic word order of English clauses in positive statements is **Subject – Verb – (Complement/Object)**.

Anna smiled. *Sam is a doctor.* *My parents live in North Wales.*
The boss has bought another new car.

In a few affirmative structures the verb can come before the subject (e.g. *So **can I**, **In came** Mrs Parker*, ► 270–271).

For sentences that begin with the object (e.g. *Those people I can't stand*), ► 272.

In informal language, especially speech, word order often departs from the basic pattern, ► 299.

2 preparatory *it* and *there*

When the subject or object is an infinitive phrase or clause, we often put it at the end of a sentence, and use *it* as a preparatory subject or object (► 268–269).

*It's difficult **to understand what he wants**.*
*She made **it clear that she disagreed**.*

There can be a preparatory subject for an indefinite expression (► 20).

***There is a big spider** in the bath.*

3 direct and indirect objects

Indirect objects can come before direct objects (without a preposition) or after direct objects (with a preposition).

*She sent **the nurse some flowers**.* *She sent **some flowers to the nurse**.*

For details, ► 8.

4 questions: auxiliary before subject

Most written questions, and many spoken questions, have the order **auxiliary verb – subject – main verb**.

Have you seen Andrew? *Where was she going?* *Did Emily phone?*

Indirect questions (► 260) have the subject before the verb.

*Do you know where **she was** going?*

5 negatives: auxiliary + *not*

Negative structures have *not* after an auxiliary verb.

*The train **did not** stop.* (NOT ~~*The train stopped not.*~~)

For word order in negative questions (e.g. *Why didn't she come? / Why did she not come?*), ► 218.

6 adverbials: possible positions

Different adverbials can go in different places in a sentence: at the beginning, with the verb, or at the end. For details, ► 196–202.

***Suddenly** I had a terrible thought.*
*The children had **probably** gone home.*
*I was playing **badly**.* *I'll see you **at the club on Tuesday**.*

An adverbial cannot normally come between a verb and its object.

*I **like mushrooms** very much.* (NOT ~~*I like very much mushrooms.*~~)

7 subordinate clauses (*who . . ., after . . . , if . . ., because . . ., that . . .*, etc)

Relative clauses usually follow the nouns that they modify (► 233).

The ***woman who phoned*** *wanted to speak to the manager.*

Other kinds of clause have various positions, depending on their function and the overall sentence structure.

How you do it *is your business.*

Everybody agreed ***that they were wasting their time****.*

More than one position is often possible.

If you need help*, call me.* *Call me* ***if you need help****.*

For details, ► Sections 20–24.

8 prepositions: *in what . . . / what . . . in*

In an informal style, a preposition can be separated from its object in certain structures. For details, ► 209. Compare:

In what hotel *did the President stay?* (formal)

What hotel *did the President stay* ***in?*** (informal)

For ways of arranging the information in a sentence, ► 267.
For word order in exclamations (e.g. *How kind you are!*), ► 223.
For word order with phrasal verbs (e.g. *She put out the cat / She put the cat out*), ► 12.4.
For structures like *the older I get . . .*, ► 206.5. For structures like *cold as/though she was*, ► 255.
For structures like *so/how strange an experience*, ► 187. For the position and order of adjectives, ► 184.
For the position and order of determiners, ► Sections 12–13. For *quite a . . .* and *rather a . . .*, ► 564–565.
For word order with *enough*, ► 450.

216 questions: basic rules

These rules apply to most ordinary spoken and written questions. For declarative questions (e.g. *This is your car?*), ► 302. For rhetorical questions (e.g. *What's the use of asking her?*), ► 303. For echo questions (e.g. *She's invited how many?*), ► 304. For reply questions (e.g. *Did you, dear?*), ► 307 For question tags, ► 305–306.

1 auxiliary verb before subject: *Have you . . .?*

In a question, an auxiliary verb normally comes before the subject.

When ***is Oliver*** *leaving?* (NOT ~~*When Oliver is leaving?*~~)

Have you *received my email of June 17?* (NOT ~~*You have received . . .?*~~)

Why ***are you*** *laughing?* (NOT ~~*Why you are laughing?*~~)

What ***are all those people*** *looking at?* (NOT ~~*What all those people are looking at?*~~)

How much ***does the room*** *cost?* (NOT ~~*How much the room costs?*~~ ~~*How much the room costs?*~~)

2 *do*: *Do you like . . .?*

If there is no other auxiliary verb, we use *do*, *does* or *did* to form a question.

Do *you like Mozart?* (NOT ~~*Like you Mozart?*~~)

What ***does*** *'periphrastic' mean?* (NOT ~~*What means 'periphrastic'?*~~)

Did *you wash the car today?* →

3 *do* not used with other auxiliaries

Do is not used together with other auxiliary verbs or with *be*.

***Can you** tell me the time?* (NOT ~~*Do you can tell me the time?*~~)
***Have you** seen Jack?* (NOT ~~*Do you have seen Jack?*~~)
***Are you** ready?*

4 infinitive after *do*: *What does he want?*

After *do*, we use the infinitive (without *to*).

*What does the boss **want?*** (NOT ~~*What does the boss wants?*~~)
*Did you **go** climbing last weekend?* (NOT ~~*Did you went . . .?*~~ OR ~~*Did you to go . . .?*~~)

5 only auxiliary verb before subject

Only the auxiliary verb goes before the subject, not the whole of the verb phrase.

*Is your mother **coming** tomorrow?* (NOT ~~*Is coming your mother tomorrow?*~~)
*Is your daughter **having** a lesson today?* (NOT ~~*Is having your daughter . . .?*~~)
*When **was** your reservation **made**?* (NOT ~~*When was made your reservation?*~~)

This happens even if the subject is very long.

*Where are **the President and his family** staying?* (NOT ~~*Where are staying the President . . .?*~~)

6 *Who phoned? / Who did you phone?*

When *who*, *which*, *what* or *whose* is the subject (or part of the subject), *do* is not normally used. Compare:

– *Who **phoned?*** (*Who* is the subject.)
*Who **did** you **phone?*** (*Who* is the object.)
– *What **happened?*** (*What* is the subject.)
*What **did** she **say?*** (*What* is the object.)

More examples:

*Which **costs** more – the blue one or the grey one?* (NOT ~~*Which does cost more . . .?*~~)
*Which type of battery **lasts** longest?* (NOT ~~*Which type of battery does last longest?*~~)
*How many people **work** in your office?* (NOT ~~*How many people do work . . .?*~~)

But *do* can be used after a subject question word for emphasis, to insist on an answer.

*Well, tell us – what **did happen** when your father found you?*
*So who **did marry** the Princess in the end?*

For questions like *Who do you wish that you'd married?*, ► 264.

7 indirect questions: *Tell me when you are leaving.*

In an indirect question, we do not put an auxiliary before the subject, and we do not use a question mark. For details, ► 260.

Tell me what you want. (NOT ~~*Tell me what do you want?*~~)

8 prepositions: *What are you talking about?*

Prepositions often come at the end of *wh*-questions, separated from their objects. (For details, ► 209.)

What** are you talking **about? (NOT ~~*About what are you talking?*~~)
Who** did you buy the ticket **from? ***What** did you clean the floor **with?***

For negative questions, ► 218. For ellipsis in questions (e.g. *Seen Jack? Coming tonight?*), ► 277.

217 negative structures: basic rules

1 negative verb forms: auxiliary + *not*

We make negative verb forms by putting *not* after an auxiliary verb.

*We **have not** forgotten you.* *It **was not** raining.* *She **can't** swim.*

Do is normally used if there is no other auxiliary verb.

*I like the salad, but I **don't** like the soup.* (NOT ~~*I like not the soup.*~~)

Do is followed by the infinitive without *to*.

*I didn't **think**.* (NOT ~~*I didn't to think.*~~ OR ~~*I didn't thinking.*~~ OR ~~*I didn't thought.*~~)

Do is not used with another auxiliary verb.

*You **mustn't** worry.* (NOT ~~*You don't must worry.*~~)

Do is not normally used with *be* (even when *be* is not auxiliary).

*The supper **isn't** ready.* (NOT ~~*The supper doesn't be ready.*~~)

For negative forms of *have*, *dare*, *need* and *used*, see the entries on these verbs.
For the dialect form *ain't*, ► 337.4.
For negatives without *do* in older English (e.g. *I like him not*), ► 318.10.
For negative subjunctives (e.g. *It's important that he not be disturbed*), ► 232.2.

2 imperatives: *Don't worry.*

Negative imperatives are made with *do not / don't* + infinitive (► 224).

***Do not expect** quick results.* (NOT ~~*Expect not*~~ . . .)
***Don't worry** – I'll look after you.* (NOT ~~*Worry not*~~ . . .)

Do not / don't is also used to make the negative imperative of *be*.

***Don't be** rude.*

3 infinitives and *-ing* forms: *It's important not to worry.*

We put *not* before infinitives and *-ing* forms. *Do* is not used.

*It's important **not to worry**.* (NOT . . . ~~*to don't worry.*~~)
*The best thing about the weekend is **not working**.*

4 other parts of a clause: *not his wife, not before six*

We can put *not* with other parts of a clause, not only a verb.

*Ask Jake, **not his wife**.* *Come early, but **not before six**.*
*It's working, but **not well**.*

We do not usually begin a sentence with ***not** + **subject***. Instead, we use a structure with *it* ('cleft sentence', ► 273).

***It** was **not George** that came, but his brother.* (NOT ~~*Not George came*~~ . . .)

For the difference between *not* and *no* with nouns, ► 536.

5 other negative words: *never, seldom,* etc

Other words besides *not* can make a clause negative. Compare:

*He's **not** at home.* *He's **never** at home.*

*He's **seldom / rarely / hardly ever** at home.*

We do not normally use the auxiliary *do* with these other words. Compare:

*He **doesn't** work.*

*He never **works**.* (NOT ~~*He does never work.*~~)

*He seldom / rarely / hardly ever **works**.* *They **refuse** to listen to reason.*

*The soup **lacks** salt.* *We're **unhappy** about your decision.*

However, *do* can be used for emphasis or contrast.

*I never **did** like her.*

6 question tags: *You don't . . ., do you?*

After negative clauses, question tags (► 305–306) are not negative.

*You don't work on Sundays, **do you?***

*You seldom work on Saturdays, **do you?*** (NOT ~~*You seldom work on Saturdays, don't you?*~~)

*She never smiled, **did she?***

The same thing happens after clauses with *little* and *few* (► 168).

*There's **little** point in doing anything about it, **is there?*** (NOT . . . ~~*isn't there?*~~)

*He has **few** reasons for staying, **has he?***

7 'non-affirmative' words: *any,* etc

We do not usually use *some, somebody,* etc in negative clauses. Instead, we use the 'non-affirmative' words *any, anybody,* etc (► 222). Compare:

*I've found **some** mushrooms.* *I **haven't found any** mushrooms.*

218 negative questions

1 structure: *Doesn't she understand? / Does she not understand?*

Contracted and uncontracted negative questions have different word order. (Uncontracted negative questions are usually formal.)

auxiliary verb + *n't* + subject . . .

***Doesn't she** understand?* *Why **haven't you** reserved your flight yet?*

auxiliary verb + subject + *not* . . .

***Does she not** understand?* *Why **have you not** reserved the flight yet?*

Non-auxiliary *have* (in British English) and *be* go in the same position as auxiliary verbs.

***Hasn't she** any friends to help her?* ***Aren't you** ready?*

***Have they not** at least a room to stay in?* ***Is Mrs Allen not** at home?*

2 two meanings

Negative questions can have two different kinds of meaning. It is usually clear from the situation and context which kind of question is being asked.

a 'It's true that . . ., isn't it?'

A negative question can ask for confirmation of a positive belief. In this case the question expects the answer *Yes*, and means 'It's true that . . ., isn't it?'

***Didn't you** go and see Ella yesterday? How is she?* (= I believe you went and saw Ella yesterday . . .)

Expressions of opinion and suggestions can be made less definite by expressing them as negative questions (so that they ask for agreement).

***Wouldn't it** be better to switch the lights on?*

Negative questions of this kind are common in exclamations (► 223) and rhetorical questions (► 303).

***Isn't it** a lovely day!*

*'She's growing up to be a lovely person.' 'Yes, **isn't she!**'*

***Isn't the answer** obvious?* (= Of course the answer is obvious.)

b 'Is it true that . . . not . . .?'

A negative question can also ask for confirmation of a negative belief. In this case the question expects the answer *No*, and means 'Is it true that . . . not . . .?'

***Don't you** feel well?* (= Am I right in thinking you don't feel well?)

*Oh, dear. **Can't they** come this evening?*

This kind of negative question can show that the speaker is surprised that something has not happened or is not happening.

***Hasn't the mail** come yet?*

***Didn't the alarm** go off? I wonder what's wrong with it.*

3 polite requests, invitations, offers, complaints and criticisms

Pressing invitations and offers often begin *Won't you . . .?*, *Wouldn't you . . .?* or *Why don't you . . .?*

***Won't you** come in for a few minutes?*

***Wouldn't you** like something to drink?*

***Why don't you** come and spend the weekend with us?*

Why don't you . . .? can also introduce aggressive suggestions.

***Why don't you** shut up?*

But in other cases we do not usually use negative questions to ask people to do things. This is done with ordinary questions, or with **negative statement + question tag** (especially British English).

*Excuse me, **can you** help me for a moment?* (ordinary question, used as a request)

You can't** help me for a moment, **can you? (negative statement + question tag, common in informal requests)

BUT NOT ~~*Can't you help me for a moment?*~~

Negative questions may be understood as complaints or criticisms.

***Can't you** lend me your pen for a minute?* (= something like 'Are you too selfish to lend me . . .?')

***Don't you** ever listen to what I say?* →

4 *yes* and *no*

In a reply to a negative question, *Yes* suggests an affirmative verb, and *No* suggests a negative verb. Compare:

– *'Haven't you written to Emily?'* ***'Yes.'*** (= I have written to her.)
'Haven't you told her about us?' ***'No.'*** (= I haven't told her about us.)
– *'Didn't Dan call this morning?'* ***'Yes, he did.'***
'Didn't he give you a message for me?' ***'No, he didn't.'***

219 negative structures with *think*, *hope*, *seem*, etc

1 *I don't think . . .*

When we introduce negative ideas with *think, believe, suppose, imagine* and words with similar meanings, we usually make the first verb (*think*, etc) negative, not the second.

I don't think *you've met my wife.* (More natural than *I think you haven't met my wife.*)
I don't believe *she's at home.* (More natural than *I believe she isn't at home.*)

However, surprise is often expressed with ***I thought*** + **negative**.

'Would you like a drink?' ***'I thought*** *you'd* ***never*** *ask.'*
Hello! I ***thought*** *you* ***weren't*** *coming.*

2 *I hope that . . . not . . .*

This does not happen with *hope*.

I ***hope*** *it* ***doesn't*** *rain.* (NOT ~~*I don't hope it rains.*~~)

3 short answers: *I suppose not.*

In short answers, most of these verbs can be followed by *not* (► 585).

'Are we going to see Luke again?' ***'I believe/suppose/hope not.'***

Another possible short answer construction is *I don't . . . so* (► 585).

'Do you think it'll snow?' ***'I don't believe/suppose/think so.'***

Hope is not used in this structure.

I ***hope not.*** (NOT ~~*I don't hope so.*~~)

I don't think so is more common than *I think not*, which is rather formal.

4 verbs followed by infinitives

Many verbs can be followed by infinitives (► 97). In an informal style we often prefer to make the first verb negative rather than the infinitive, although this may not change the meaning at all. This happens, for example, with *appear, seem, expect, happen, intend* and *want*.

Sibyl ***doesn't seem*** *to like you.* (Less formal than *Sibyl seems not to like you.*)
I ***don't expect*** *to see you before Monday.* (More natural than *I expect not to see you . . .*)
Angela and I were at the same university, but we ***never happened*** *to meet.* (Less formal than *. . . we happened never to meet.*)
I ***don't want*** *to fail this exam.* (NOT ~~*I want not to fail . . .*~~)
I never want *to see you again.* (More natural than *I want never to see you again.*)

220 multiple negatives: ~~*I couldn't see nobody.*~~

1 English and other languages

In some languages, a negative idea is expressed both by the verb and by accompanying pronouns or adverbs. In standard English, one negative word is normally enough.

I opened the door, but I ***couldn't*** *see anybody / I* ***could*** *see* ***nobody****.*
(NOT . . . ~~*but I couldn't see nobody.*~~)

Tell *them* ***nothing****.* (NOT ~~*Don't tell them nothing.*~~)

Your suggestion ***will*** *help* ***neither*** *of us.* (NOT . . . ~~*won't help neither*~~ . . .)

Nothing matters *now – everything's finished.* (NOT ~~*Nothing doesn't matter*~~ . . .)

I've ***never*** *understood what she wants.* (NOT ~~*I haven't never understood*~~ . . .)

2 *nobody* and *not anybody*, etc

Nobody, nothing, never, etc are rather emphatic. We often prefer to use *not anybody, not anything, not ever,* etc. Note that *anybody, anything, ever,* etc are not themselves negative words (► 222) – they have to be used with *not* to give a negative meaning.

I opened the door, but I ***couldn't*** *see* ***anybody****.* (NOT . . . ~~*but I could see anybody.*~~)

Don't *tell them* ***anything****.* *Your suggestion* ***won't*** *help* ***either*** *of us.*

At the beginning of a clause, only *nobody, nothing,* etc are used.

Nothing *matters.* (NOT ~~*Not anything matters.*~~) ***Nowhere*** *is safe.*

3 double and multiple negatives and their meaning

Two or more negative words can be used in one clause, but then both words normally have their full meaning. Compare:

Say ***nothing****.* (= Be silent.)

Don't *just say* ***nothing****. Tell us what the problem is.* (= Don't be silent . . .)

Multiple negatives are sometimes used instead of simple positive structures for special stylistic effects. This is rather literary; in spoken English it can seem unnatural or old-fashioned.

Not *a day passes when I* ***don't*** *regret* ***not*** *having studied music in my youth.*
(More natural: *Every day I regret not having studied music when I was younger.* OR *I wish I had studied music when I was younger.*) →

4 dialects

In many British, American and other dialects, two or more negatives can be used with a single negative meaning.

*I **ain't** seen **nobody**.* (Standard English: *I haven't seen anybody.*)

*I **ain't never** done **nothing** to **nobody**, and I **ain't never** got **nothing** from **nobody no** time.* (American song by Bert Williams)

For more information about *ain't*, ► 337.4.

5 *. . . I don't think*, etc

In informal speech, expressions like *I don't think* or *I don't suppose* are often added after negative statements. In this case, the extra negative makes no difference to the meaning of the statement.

*She hasn't got much chance of passing the exam, **I don't think**.*

*We won't be back before midnight, **I don't suppose**.*

6 extra negative in expressions of doubt

In informal speech, a negative verb (without a negative meaning) is sometimes used after expressions of doubt or uncertainty.

*I shouldn't be surprised if they **didn't** get married soon.* (= . . . if they got married soon.)

*I wonder whether I **oughtn't** to go and see a doctor – I'm feeling a bit funny.* (= . . . whether I ought to . . .)

221 ambiguous negatives

In a negative structure, *not* can refer to different parts of a sentence. Compare:

*Adam did**n't write** to Emma yesterday – he phoned her.*

*Adam did**n't** write to **Emma** yesterday – he wrote to Anna.*

*Adam did**n't** write to Emma **yesterday** – he wrote this morning.*

The exact meaning is shown in speech by stress and intonation, and even in writing it is usually clear from the context and situation. However, confusions sometimes arise. They can usually be avoided by reorganising the sentence. Compare:

The car crash didn't kill him. (Did he live, or did something else kill him?)

It wasn't the car crash that killed him. (Only one possible meaning.)

Negative sentences with *because*-clauses are often ambiguous.

*I didn't sing **because Amy was there**.*

This sentence could mean 'My reason for not singing was that Amy was there' or 'My reason for singing was not that Amy was there'. The first meaning could be shown clearly by putting the *because*-clause at the beginning.

***Because Amy was there**, I didn't sing.*

222 non-affirmative words: *anybody, ever, yet,* etc

There are some words that are not often used in affirmative sentences – for example *any, anybody, ever, yet.* When we affirm or assert (that is, when we say that something is true) we normally use other words – for example *some, somebody, once, sometimes, already.* Compare:

- ***Somebody** telephoned.*
  *Did **anybody** telephone?*
- *I've bought you **something**.*
  *I haven't bought you **anything**.*
- *She's **already** here.*
  *Is she here **yet**?*
- *I **sometimes** go to the theatre.*
  *Do you **ever** go to the theatre?*
- *I met the Prime Minister **once**.*
  *Have you **ever** met the Prime Minister?*

Non-affirmative words are common not only in questions and negative sentences, but in other cases where we are not making affirmative statements – for example in *if*-clauses, after comparisons, and together with adverbs, verbs, prepositions, adjectives and determiners that have a negative kind of meaning.

*Let me know **if** you have **any** trouble.*
*I wonder **if** she found **anything**.*
*She writes **better** than **anybody** I know.*
*He **seldom** says **anything**.*
*I've **hardly** been **anywhere** since Christmas.*
*He **denied** that he had **ever** seen her.*
*Please **forget** that I **ever** told you **anything** about it.*
*I'd rather do it **without anybody**'s help.*
*It's **difficult** to understand **anything** he says.*
***Few** people have **ever** seen her laugh.*

For information about particular non-affirmative words, check in the Index to find the entries for the words in question.

223 exclamations

Exclamations are often constructed with *how* and *what* or with *so* and *such*; negative question forms are also common.

1 exclamations with *how*

These are often felt to be a little formal or old-fashioned.

how + adjective

Strawberries! ***How nice!***

how + adjective/adverb + subject + verb

How cold *it is!* (NOT ~~*How it is cold!*~~)
How beautifully *you sing!* (NOT ~~*How you sing beautifully!*~~)

how + subject + verb

How *you've grown!*

For the structure of expressions like *How strange a remark*, ► 187.

2 exclamations with *what*

what a/an (+ adjective) + singular countable noun

What a *rude man!* (NOT ~~*What rude man!*~~)
What a *nice dress!* (NOT ~~*What nice dress!*~~)
What a *surprise!*

what (+ adjective) + uncountable/plural noun

What *beautiful weather!* (NOT ~~*What a beautiful weather!*~~)
What *lovely flowers!* ***What*** *fools!*

what + object + subject + verb (note word order)

What a *beautiful smile* ***your sister has!*** (NOT . . . ~~*has your sister!*~~)

3 exclamations with *so* and *such*

so + adjective

You're ***so kind!***

such a/an (+ adjective) + singular countable noun

He's ***such a*** *nice boy!* (NOT . . . ~~*a such nice boy!*~~)

such (+ adjective) + uncountable/plural noun

They talk ***such*** *rubbish!* (NOT . . . ~~*such a rubbish!*~~)
They're ***such*** *kind people!* (NOT . . . ~~*so kind people!*~~)

For more information about *such* and *so*, ► 597.

4 negative question forms

Isn't *the weather nice!* ***Hasn't*** *she grown!*
Americans and some British speakers may use ordinary (non-negative) question forms in exclamations.
Boy, ***am I*** *hungry!* *Wow,* ***did she*** *make a mistake!* ***Was I*** *furious!*

For more information about negative questions, ► 218.

224 imperatives

1 forms and use

In sentences like *Come here, Be quiet, Have a drink* or *Don't worry about it*, the verb forms *come, be, have* and *don't worry* are called '**imperatives**'. Affirmative imperatives have the same form as the infinitive without *to*; negative imperatives are constructed with *do not* (*don't*).
Imperatives are used, for example, to tell or ask people to do things, to make suggestions, to give advice or instructions, to encourage and offer, and to express wishes for people's welfare.
Look *in the mirror before you drive off.*
Please ***do not lean*** *out of the window.*
Tell *him you're not free this evening.*
Try *again – you nearly did it.* ***Have*** *some more tea.* ***Enjoy*** *your break.*
An imperative followed by *and* or *or* can mean the same as an *if*-clause.
Walk *down our street any day* ***and*** *you'll see kids playing.* (= If you walk . . .)
Shut up or *I'll lose my temper.* (= If you don't shut up . . .)
Don't do *that again* ***or*** *you'll be in trouble.*

2 emphatic imperative: *Do sit down.*

We can make an emphatic imperative with *do* (mainly BrE).
Do sit *down.* ***Do be*** *more careful.* ***Do forgive*** *me.*

3 passive imperative: *Get vaccinated.*

To tell people to arrange for things to be done to them, we often use ***get*** **+ past participle.**
Get vaccinated *as soon as you can.*

For more about *get* as passive auxiliary, ► 60.

4 *do(n't) be*

Although *do* is not normally used as an auxiliary with *be* (► 19), this happens in negative imperatives.
Don't be *silly!*
Do be can begin emphatic imperatives.
Do be *quiet!* →

5 subject with imperative: *Somebody answer the phone.*

The imperative does not usually have a subject, but we can use a noun or pronoun to make it clear who we are speaking to.

***Emily come** here – **everybody else stay** where you are.*
Somebody answer** the phone.* ***Relax, everybody.

You before an imperative can suggest emphatic persuasion or anger.

***You** just **sit down** and relax for a bit.*
***You take** your hands off me!*

Note the word order in negative imperatives with pronoun subjects.

***Don't you** believe it.* (NOT ~~*You don't believe it.*~~)
***Don't anybody** say a word.* (NOT ~~*Anybody don't say . . .*~~)

6 question tags

After imperatives, common question tags (► 305–306) are *will you?*, *would you?*, *can you?* and *could you?*

*Give me a hand, **will you?*** *Wait here for a minute, **would you?***
*Get me something to drink, **can you?***

Can't you and *won't you* are more emphatic.

*Be quiet, **can't you?*** *Sit down, **won't you?***

After negative imperatives, *will you?* is used.

*Don't tell anybody, **will you?***

7 word order with *always* and *never*

Always and *never* come before imperatives.

***Always remember** what I told you.* (NOT ~~*Remember always . . .*~~)
***Never speak** to me like that again.*

225 *let* introducing imperatives

English verbs do not have a first-person imperative (used to suggest that *I* or *we* should do something), or a third-person imperative (for other people besides the hearer). However, *let* can be used to construct a type of imperative.

1 first person plural imperative: *let's . . .*

We can use *let us* (formal) or *let's* (informal) to make suggestions or to give orders to a group that includes the speaker.

***Let us** pray.* ***Let's** have a drink.* *OK, **let's** all get moving.*

Shall we? is used as a question tag (► 305–306) in British English for *Let's*; *let's* can be used as a short answer.

*'Let's go for a walk, **shall we?**' 'Yes, **let's.**'*

Negatives are *let us not* / *do not let us* (formal); *let's not* / *don't let's* (informal).

***Let us not** despair.* (formal)
***Do not let us** forget those who came before us.* (formal)
***Let's not** get angry.* (informal)
***Don't let's** stay up too late tonight.* (informal)

2 first person singular imperative: *let me . . .*

Let me is used to 'give instructions to oneself'; the expressions *Let me see* and *Let me think* are very common.

*'What time shall we leave?' '**Let me think**. Yes, eight o'clock will be OK.'*
*What's the best way to Manchester? **Let me see** – suppose I take the M6.*
***Let me** just get my coat and I'll be with you.*

In a very informal style, *let's* is often used to mean *let me* (also ► 174.6).

***Let's** see. Suppose I take the M6 . . .*

3 third-person imperative: *let him . . .*

Let can also introduce a suggestion or order for someone or something else, not the speaker or hearer. This is common in formal and ceremonial language, but informal uses are also possible.

Let the prayers begin.
Let our enemies understand that we will not hesitate to defend our territory.
*'Your boyfriend's going out with another girl.' '**Let him**. I don't care.'*

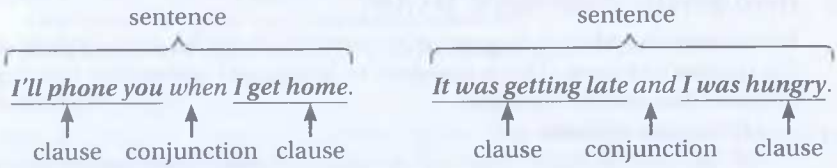
Note the structure with ***let*** + **the infinitive of** ***there is***.

***Let there be** no doubt in your minds about our intentions.*

Section 20 Conjunctions, Sentences and Clauses

INTRODUCTION

A **sentence** can have more than one **clause**, usually joined by a **conjunction** which shows the relationship between them.



We brought the food ***and*** *they supplied the drink.* (addition)
She was poor ***but*** *she was happy.* (contrast)
We can go swimming, ***or*** *we could stay here.* (alternative)
People disliked her ***because*** *she was so rude.* (cause)
I'll phone you ***when*** *I arrive.* (time)

subordinate clauses

One clause can be **subordinate** to another. A subordinate clause with its conjunction is a part of the other (**main**) clause – for example an object or an adverbial. For practical purposes, subordinate clauses can be divided into three main groups: **noun clauses, adverbial clauses** and **adjective (relative) clauses.**
Noun clauses function rather like noun phrases:

I told them	***a lie.***
	that I knew nothing about it.

Adverbial clauses function rather like adverbials:

We drove home	***at high speed.***
	as fast as we could.

Relative clauses function rather like adjectives in noun phrases:

She told me	*a*	***funny***	*story.*	
	a		*story*	***that made me laugh out loud.***

Examples of **subordinating conjunctions**: *when, after, how, that.*
Some conjunctions are made up of two or more words, for example *as soon as, in case.*

co-ordinate clauses

Co-ordinate clauses have equal weight: neither is subordinate to the other.
Dan cooked supper and Joe washed the dishes.
The forecast was impressive but the results were disappointing.
Examples of co-ordinating conjunctions: *and, but, either . . . or.*

no conjunction

Participles and infinitives can begin clauses (► Section 10). These are normally connected to other clauses with no conjunction.

*I rushed out of the house, **slamming the door behind me.***
*He went up to his room, **to find a dog asleep on his bed.***

This Section covers co-ordination (of phrases as well as clauses), and some general points to do with subordination. Particular types of subordinate clause are dealt with in Sections 22–25.

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- ✗ Could I have some butter and bread? ► 226.2
- ✗ He doesn't smoke and drink. ► 226.4
- ✗ He doesn't smoke nor drink. ► 227.1
- ✗ The project was not successful in political terms and in economic terms. ► 227.1
- ✗ Jack isn't here neither. ► 227.2
- ✗ Both he can borrow the flat and he can use the car. ► 228.1
- ✗ Neither he smiled nor he spoke. ► 228.3
- ✗ She was depressed because didn't know what to do. ► 229.3
- ✗ Although she was tired but she went to work. ► 229.5
- ✗ As you know, that I work very hard. ► 229.5
- ✗ You'll find Coca-Cola wherever you will go. ► 231.1
- ✗ If I had lots of money, I would give some to anybody who would ask for it. ► 231.6

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226 putting things together: *and, but, or*

1 *and*

And can join two or more grammatically similar expressions, from single words up to complete clauses.

bread ***and*** *cheese* *the Prime Minister* ***and*** *his cabinet*
You need to go home ***and*** *have a good rest.*
Her English is good ***and*** *her Japanese is not bad.*

With more than two expressions, we generally only put *and* before the last.

We drank, talked ***and*** *danced.*
He started as a cleaner, he worked his way up, ***and*** *now he runs the company.*

And is sometimes left out in a very literary or poetic style, but this is unusual.

My dreams are full of darkness, despair, death.

In expressions joined by *and*, repeated words are often left out.

We need a saw, (a) hammer ***and*** *(a) screwdriver.*
She's worked in China, (in) Thailand ***and*** *(in) Brazil.*

For details, ► 276.

For *and* with adjectives, ► 185. For rules about the use of commas, ► 296.
For singular and plural verbs after subjects with *and*, ► 129.5.
For *and* after *try, wait, go, come*, etc, ► 99.

2 fixed expressions: *bread and butter, hands and knees*

Some common expressions with *and* have a fixed order which cannot be changed. The shortest expression often comes first.

bread and butter (NOT ~~*butter and bread*~~)
hands and knees (NOT ~~*knees and hands*~~)
young and pretty *thunder and lightning* *knife and fork*
black and white *cup and saucer*

3 *but*

But can also join grammatically similar expressions.

They were poor ***but*** *happy.* *There were some chairs* ***but*** *no tables.*

Most often, *but* joins clauses.

We wanted to stay ***but*** *we simply didn't have time.*
The film started well, ***but*** *then it went downhill.*

For *but* meaning 'except', ► 413.

4 *or*

Or also joins grammatically similar expressions.

Would you like tea ***or*** *coffee?* *We can meet today* ***or*** *wait until Thursday.*

After a negative verb, we use *or*, not *and*.

*He does****n't*** *smoke* ***or*** *drink.* (NOT ~~*He doesn't smoke and drink.*~~)

But *or* does not join negative adjectives or adverbs. Compare:

We were not comfortable ***or*** *happy.*
We were uncomfortable ***and*** *unhappy.* (NOT . . . ~~*uncomfortable or unhappy.*~~)

227 *not . . . or; not . . . nor; and not*

1 *not* used once for two negative ideas

When *not* (used once) refers to two or more verbs, nouns, adjectives, etc, we usually join them with *or*.

He doesn't ***smoke or drink***. (NOT ~~*He doesn't smoke nor drink.*~~)

She wasn't ***angry or upset***. *It's not* ***on the table or in the cupboard***.

However, we can use *nor* after a pause, to separate and emphasise a second verb, adjective, etc.

Our main need is not food, ***nor*** *money. It is education.*

She didn't phone that day, ***nor*** *the next day.*

Note that *neither* cannot be used in this way.

And cannot normally be used in this kind of structure.

The project was not successful in economic terms ***or*** *in political terms.*
(NOT ~~*The project was not successful in political terms and in economical terms.*~~)

This also happens after negative nouns or adjectives.

The country suffered from a ***lack*** *of employment legislation* ***or*** *of an independent labour union.* (More normal than *a lack of . . . and . . .*)

For the use of *neither . . . nor* to join two negative ideas (e.g. *He neither smokes nor drinks*), ► 228.3.

2 two separate negative clauses: *not either*

After using a negative verb in one clause, we can mention a second negative idea or fact in another clause with *not . . . either*.

Daniel ***isn't*** *here today. Jack* ***isn't*** *here* ***either***. (NOT ~~*Jack isn't here neither.*~~)

Another way of expressing this is with ***neither/nor*** + ***be***/**auxiliary** + **subject**.

Daniel isn't here today. ***Neither is*** *Jack.*

I can't sing, and ***nor can*** *any of my family.*

For details of this and similar structures, ► 309.2.

Also, as well and *too* are not normally used with *not* in this way.

You ***can't*** *have an apple, and you* ***can't*** *have an orange* ***either***.
(NOT . . . ~~*and you can't have an orange also / as well / too.*~~)

3 positive + negative: *also / as well / too*

After mentioning a positive (non-negative) fact or idea, we can add a negative point by using *not . . . also, not . . . as well* or *not . . . too*.

You ***can*** *have an apple, but you* ***can't*** *have an orange* ***too***.

He ***drinks*** *too much, but at least he* ***doesn't smoke as well***.

228 emphatic coordination: *both . . . and; (n)either . . . (n)or; not only*

We may want to emphasise that both (or all) parts of a coordination have equal weight. There are several common ways of doing this.

1 *both . . . and*

We often balance this structure, so that the same kind of words or expressions follow *both* and *and*. →

She's ***both*** *pretty* ***and*** *clever.* (adjectives)
I spoke to ***both*** *the Director* ***and*** *her secretary.* (nouns)
She ***both*** *dances* ***and*** *sings.* (verbs)

However, unbalanced sentences with *both . . . and* are common. Some people prefer to avoid them.

She ***both*** *dances* ***and*** *she sings.* (***both*** + **verb**; ***and*** + **clause**)
I ***both*** *play the piano* ***and*** *the violin.*

Both cannot begin a complete clause in this structure.

He can ***both*** *borrow the house* ***and*** *(he can) use the car.* (BUT NOT ~~*Both he can borrow the house and he can use the car.*~~)

2 *either . . . or*

We use *either . . . or* to talk about a choice between two or more possibilities.

I don't speak ***either*** *Russian* ***or*** *Polish.*
You can ***either*** *come with me now* ***or*** *walk home.*
If you want ice cream there's ***either*** *raspberry, lemon* ***or*** *vanilla.*

We often balance this structure, so that the same kind of words or expressions follow *either* and *or*.

You can have ***either*** *tea* ***or*** *coffee.* (nouns)
He's ***either*** *in London* ***or*** *in New York.* (prepositional phrases)
Either *you'll leave this house* ***or*** *I'll call the police.* (clauses)

However, unbalanced sentences with *either . . . or* are common.

You can ***either*** *have tea* ***or*** *coffee.* *He's* ***either*** *in London* ***or*** *New York.*
You'll ***either*** *leave this house* ***or*** *I'll call the police.*

There is a prescriptive 'rule', found in some books, which says that *either* should not introduce more than two alternatives (as in *either raspberry, lemon or vanilla*). This rule is mistaken: it does not correspond to normal usage.

For *either* as a determiner, ► 156. For pronunciation, ► 156.6.

3 *neither . . . nor*

This structure is the opposite of *both . . . and*. It is usually rather formal.

I ***neither*** *smoke* ***nor*** *drink.* (less formal: *I don't smoke or drink.*)
The film was ***neither*** *well made* ***nor*** *well acted.*

Sometimes more than two ideas are connected by *neither . . . nor*.

He neither ***smiled***, ***spoke***, *nor* ***looked*** *at me.*

Neither cannot begin a complete clause in this structure.

He neither smiled . . . nor . . . (BUT NOT ~~*Neither he smiled . . .*~~)

When singular subjects are connected by *neither . . . nor*, the verb is normally singular, but it can be plural in a less formal style.

Neither James nor Virginia ***was*** *at home.* (normal)
Neither James nor Virginia ***were*** *at home.* (less formal)

As with *either . . . or*, there is a prescriptive 'rule' , found in some books, which says that *neither* should not introduce more than two alternatives (as in *He neither smiled, spoke nor looked at me*). This rule is mistaken.

4 *not only . . . but also*

In the rather formal structure *not only . . . but also*, the expressions *not only* and *but also* can go immediately before the words or expressions that they modify.

We go there ***not only in winter, but also in summer.***

***Not only the bathroom** was flooded, **but also the rest** of the house.*
*The place was **not only cold, but also damp**.*

Mid-position with the verb (► 200) is also possible.

*She **not only sings** like an angel, but also dances divinely.*
*She **not only plays** the piano, but also the violin.*

Not only can be moved to the beginning of a clause for emphasis. It is then followed by **auxiliary verb + subject**; *do* is used if there is no other auxiliary (for more about this word order, ► 270). *But* can be left out in this case.

***Not only has she been** late three times; she has also done no work.*
***Not only do they need** clothing, but they are also short of water.*

In informal English *not only . . . but also* is not very common; other structures are generally preferred.

*We **don't only** go there in winter. We go in summer **too**.*

229 subordinate clauses: some general points

In most languages of European origin, clauses are joined together by conjunctions in similar ways. However, students who speak other languages may have some problems in using English conjunctions correctly.

1 position of subordinate clauses

Adverbial clauses can usually go either first or last in a sentence, depending on the focus. Putting a clause at the end can give it more importance.

- ***While I was taking a shower**, I slipped.* (emphasises what happened)
  *I slipped **while I was taking a shower**.* (emphasises when it happened)
- ***If you need help**, just let me know.*
  *Just let me know **if you need help**.*
- ***Although the bicycle was expensive**, she decided to buy it.*
  *She decided to buy the bicycle **although it was expensive**.*
- ***Because she was too angry to speak**, Anna said nothing.*
  *Anna said nothing, **because she was too angry to speak**.*

For the position of other kinds of clause, ► Sections 22–25.

2 punctuation

Commas are often used to separate longer or more complicated clauses. Shorter pairs of clauses are often connected without commas. Compare:

They changed all their policies after they had won the election.
They made a large number of disturbing changes in their policies, after they had won the election and settled in with a comfortable majority.

When a subordinate clause begins a sentence, it is more often separated by a comma unless the sentence is very short.

When we opened the door, we saw water running down the stairs.
When we opened the door(,) we got a shock.

For punctuation in relative clauses, ► 234. →

3 leaving words out

Words for repeated ideas can often be left out in the second of two co-ordinate clauses (► 276 for details), but not normally in a subordinate clause. Compare:

*She was depressed **and didn't** know what to do.* (= and she didn't know what to do.)

*She was depressed, **because she didn't** know what to do.* (NOT ~~*She was depressed, because didn't know . . .*~~)

However, after *if, when, while, until, once, unless* and *(al)though*, a pronoun subject and the verb *be* can often be dropped, especially in common fixed expressions like *if necessary*.

*I'll pay for you **if necessary**.* (= . . . if it is necessary.)

***If in doubt**, wait and see.* (= If you are in doubt . . .)

***When in Rome**, do as the Romans do.* *Cook slowly **until ready**.*

***Once in bed**, I read for twenty minutes and then turned out the light.*

Many conjunctions that express time relations (*after, before, since, when, while, whenever, once* and *until*) can often be followed by *-ing* forms or past participles instead of subjects and full verbs (► 115.6).

*I always feel better **after talking** to you.*

*Some things are never forgotten, **once learnt**.*

4 conjunctions in separate sentences

Normally a conjunction connects two clauses into one sentence. However, sometimes a conjunction and its clause can stand alone. This happens, for example, in answers.

'*When are you going to get up?*' '***When I'm ready.***'

'*Why did you do that?*' '***Because I felt like it.***'

Writers and speakers can also separate clauses for emphasis.

*This government has got to go. **Before it does any more damage.***

Schoolchildren are sometimes told that it is wrong to write a one-clause sentence beginning with a conjunction in this way. In fact, the structure is perfectly correct when used appropriately.

Afterthoughts may also begin with conjunctions.

*OK, I did it. – **But I didn't mean to.***

5 one conjunction for two clauses

One conjunction is enough to join two clauses – we do not normally use two.

– ***Although** she was tired, she went to work.*
*She was tired **but** she went to work.*
(NOT ~~*Although she was tired but she went to work.*~~)

– ***Because** I liked him, I tried to help him.*
*I liked him, **so** I tried to help him.*
(NOT ~~*Because I liked him, so I tried to help him.*~~)

– ***As** you know, I work very hard.*
*You know **that** I work very hard.*
(NOT ~~*As you know, that I work very hard.*~~)

However, we can use *and* or *or* together with a repeated conjunction.

*We came back because we ran out of money, **and because** Anna got ill.*

*She didn't write when I was ill, **or when** I got married.*

6 relative pronouns

Relative pronouns (*who, which* and *that,* ► 233) also join clauses.

*There's the girl **who** works with my sister.*

A relative pronoun is the subject or object of the verb that comes after it. So we do not need another subject or object.

*I've got a friend **who** works in a pub.* (NOT . . . ~~*who he works in a pub.*~~)

*The man **(that)** she married was an old friend of mine.* (NOT ~~*The man that she married him . . .*~~)

*She always thanks me for the money **that** I give her.* (NOT . . . ~~*the money that I give her it.*~~)

230 *who, which, what,* etc after prepositions

Interrogative conjunctions like *who, which, what, where, whether* can follow prepositions.

*We discussed the question **of who** to appoint as manager.*

*I may be able to come: it depends **on which** day you are holding the meeting.*

*They were not at all interested **in what** I thought.*

After common words like *tell, ask, idea,* prepositions are often dropped before these conjunctions.

*Tell me **about** your trip.* BUT *Tell me **where** you went.*

*Do you have any **idea of** the cost?* BUT *Do you have any **idea what** it costs?*

Prepositions are not normally used before other conjunctions such as *that.* Either they are dropped:

*I **knew about** his problems.* BUT *I **knew that** he had problems.* (NOT ~~*I knew about that he had problems.*~~)

or the expression *the fact* is put between the preposition and *that.*

*I was not responsible for **the fact that** the documents were stolen.* (NOT ~~*I was not responsible for that the documents were stolen.*~~)

For more details, ► 210.

231 tense simplification in subordinate clauses

1 reasons for tense simplification

If the main verb of a sentence makes it clear what kind of time the speaker is talking about, it is not always necessary for the same time to be indicated again in subordinate clauses. Compare:

– *This discovery **means** that we **will spend** less on food.*
  *This discovery **will mean** that we **spend** less on food.*
– *It **is** unlikely that he **will win**.*
  *I **will pray** that he **wins**.*

Verbs in subordinate clauses are often simpler in form than verbs in main clauses – for example present instead of future, simple past instead of ***would*** + **infinitive**, simple past instead of past perfect.

*You'll find Coca-Cola wherever you **go**.* (NOT . . . ~~*wherever you will go.*~~)

*He would never do anything that **went** against his conscience.* (More natural than . . . *that would go against his conscience.*)

*I hadn't understood what she **said**.* (More natural than . . . *what she had said.*) →

2 present instead of future: *I'll write when I have time.*

Present tenses are often used instead of ***will* + infinitive** to refer to the future in subordinate clauses. This happens not only after conjunctions of time like *when, until, after, before, as soon as,* but in most other subordinate clauses – for instance after *if, whether* and *on condition that,* after question words and relative pronouns, and in indirect speech.

*I'll write to her when I **have** time.* (NOT . . . ~~*when I will have time.*~~)
*I'll think of you when I'**m lying** on the beach.* (NOT . . . ~~*when I will be lying*~~ . . .)
*Will you stay here until the plane **takes off**?*
*It will be interesting to see whether he **recognises** you.*
*I'll have a good time whether I **win** or **lose**.* *I'll go where you **go**.*
*I'll lend it to you on condition that you **bring** it back tomorrow.*
*He says he'll give five pounds to anybody who **finds** his pen.*
*If she **asks** what I'**m doing** in her house, I'll say I'**m checking** the gas.*

This can happen when the main verb is not future in form, but refers to the future.

*Phone me when you **arrive**.* *Make sure you **come** back soon.*
*You can tell who you **like** next week, but not until then.*

In comparisons with *as* and *than*, present and future verbs are both possible.

*She'll be on the same train as we **are**/**will** tomorrow.*
*We'll get there sooner than you **do**/**will**.*

3 present perfect: . . . *when I've finished*

The present perfect is used instead of the future perfect, to express the idea of completion.

*I'll phone you when I'**ve finished**.* (NOT . . . ~~*when I will have finished.*~~)
*At the end of the year there will be an exam on everything you'**ve studied**.*
(NOT . . . ~~*everything you will have studied.*~~)

4 future in subordinate clauses: . . . *where she will be*

A future verb is necessary for future reference in a subordinate clause if the main verb does not refer to the future (or to the same time in the future).

*I don't know where she **will be** tomorrow.*
*I'm sure I **won't understand** a word of the lecture.*
*I'll hide it somewhere where he'll never **find** it.* (two different future times)
*If she rings, I'll tell her that I'll **ring** back later.* (two different future times)

For future verbs in *if*-clauses (e.g. *I'll give you £100 if it will help you to get home*), ► 243.

5 *in case, I hope, I bet, it doesn't matter,* etc

A present tense is normally used with a future meaning after *in case* even if the main verb is present or past. For details, ► 248.

*I've got my tennis things in case we **have** time for a game tomorrow.*

In an informal style, present verbs are often used with future meanings after *I hope* (► 490) and *I bet* (► 401).

*I hope you **sleep** well.* *I bet he **gets** married before the end of the year.*

Present tenses are also used with future reference after *it doesn't matter, I don't care, I don't mind, it's not important* and similar expressions.

*It doesn't matter where we **go** this summer.*
*I don't care what we **have** for dinner if I **don't have** to cook it.*

6 past instead of *would . . .*

Would, like *will*, is avoided in subordinate clauses; instead, we generally use past verbs. This happens in *if*-clauses (► 239), and also after most other conjunctions.

If I ***had*** *lots of money, I would give some to anybody who* ***asked*** *for it.*
(NOT ~~*If I would have . . . who would ask for it.*~~)
Would you follow me wherever I ***went?*** (NOT . . . ~~*wherever I would go?*~~)
In a perfect world, you would be able to say exactly what you ***thought****.*
(NOT . . . ~~*what you would think.*~~)
I would always try to help anybody who ***was*** *in trouble, whether I* ***knew*** *them or not.*

For past tenses after *It's time*, ► 502; after *I'd rather*, ► 566; after *I wish*, ► 632.

7 simplification of perfect and progressive verbs

Simple past verb forms are used quite often in subordinate clauses instead of present perfect and past perfect tenses, if the meaning is clear.

*It's been a good time while it****('s) lasted****.*
*I've usually liked the people I****('ve) worked*** *with.*
For thirty years, he had done no more than he ***(had) needed*** *to.*
He probably crashed because he had gone to sleep while he ***was*** *driving.*
(More natural than . . . *while he had been driving.*)

Progressives are often replaced by simple forms in subordinate clauses.

He's working. But at the same time as he ***works****, he's exercising.*
(OR . . . *at the same time as he's working . . .*)

8 exceptions

These rules do not usually apply to clauses beginning *because*, *although*, *since* or *as* (meaning 'because'), or to non-identifying relative clauses (► 234).

I won't see you next week because ***I'll be*** *in Canada.*
I'll come to the opera with you, although I probably ***won't enjoy*** *it.*
You'll work with Mr Harris, who ***will explain*** *everything to you.*

For tenses in indirect speech, ► 259.

232 subjunctive: *that she go, that they be, if I were*, etc

1 What is the subjunctive?

Some languages have special verb forms called 'subjunctive', which are used especially in subordinate clauses to talk about 'unreal' situations: things which are possible, desirable or imaginary. Older English had subjunctives, but in modern English they have mostly been replaced by uses of *should*, *would* and other modal verbs, by special uses of past tenses (► 46), and by ordinary verb forms. English only has a few subjunctive forms left: third person singular present verbs without *-(e)s*, (e.g. *she see, he have*) and special forms of *be* (e.g. *I be, he were*). Except for *I/he/she/it were* after *if*, they are not very common. →

2 *that she see*

Ordinary verbs only have one subjunctive form: a third person singular present with no *-(e)s* (e.g. *she see*). It is sometimes used in *that*-clauses in a formal style, especially in American English, after words which express the idea that something is important or desirable (e.g. *suggest, recommend, ask, insist, vital, essential, important, advice*). The same forms are used in both present and past sentences.

It is essential that every child ***have*** *the same educational opportunities.*
It was important that James ***contact*** *Adam as soon as possible.*
Our advice is that the company ***invest*** *in new equipment.*
The judge recommended that Simmons ***remain*** *in prison for life.*

Do is not used in negative subjunctives. Note the word order.

We felt it desirable that he ***not leave*** *school before eighteen.*

With verbs that are not third person singular, the forms are the same as ordinary present-tense verbs (but they may refer to the past).

I recommended that you ***move*** *to another office.*

3 *be*

Be has special subjunctive forms: *I be, you be,* etc.

It is important that Ella ***be*** *present when we sign the papers.*
The Director asked that he ***be*** *allowed to advertise for more staff.*

I were and *he/she/it were*, used for example after *if* (► 239.4) and *wish* (► 632) in a formal style, are also subjunctives.

If I ***were*** *you I should stop smoking.* *I wish it* ***were*** *Saturday.*

4 fixed phrases: *as it were; so be it*

Subjunctives are also used in certain fixed phrases. Examples:

God ***save*** *the Queen!* *Long* ***live*** *the King!*
God ***bless*** *you.* *Heaven* ***forbid****.*
He's a sort of adopted uncle, as it ***were****.* (= . . . in a way.)
Be *that as it may . . .* (= Whether that is true or not . . .)
If we have to pay £2,000, then so ***be*** *it.* (= We can't do anything to change it.)

5 other structures

Most subjunctive structures are formal and unusual in British English.

In *that*-clauses, British people usually prefer ***should*** + **infinitive** (► 264.7), or ordinary present and past tenses.

It is essential that every child ***should have*** *the same educational opportunities.*
(OR . . . *that every child has . . .*)
It was important that James ***should contact*** *Adam as soon as possible.*
(OR . . . *that James contacted . . .*)

Section 21 Relative Clauses

INTRODUCTION

What are relative clauses?

Clauses beginning with question words (e.g. *who, which, where*) are often used to modify nouns and some pronouns – to identify people and things, or to give more information about them. These are called '**relative clauses**'.

*Do you know the people **who live next door**?*
*There's a programme tonight **which you might like**.*
*He lives in a village **where there are no shops**.*
*Leslie, **who works with me**, often babysits for us.*

When *who, which, where,* etc are used in this way, they are called '**relative pronouns**'. *That* can also be used as a relative pronoun.

There are two kinds of relative clause (► 234): those that typically say **who** or **what** we are talking about ('identifying clauses'), and those that typically just give **extra information** ('non-identifying clauses').

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- ✗ What's the name of the tall man which just came in? ► 233.1
- ✗ Is that all which is left? ► 233.4
- ✗ All what you say is true. ► 233.4
- ✗ I've found the keys that you were looking for them. ► 233.6
- ✗ I saw a girl whose her hair came down to her waist. ► 233.7
- ✗ He got married again, what surprised everybody. ► 233.8, 236.2
- ✗ Dorota, who does my hair is from Poland. ► 234.2
- ✗ I lent him 'The Old Man and the Sea', that is easy to read. ► 234.3
- ✗ This is Naomi, that sells the tickets. ► 234.3
- ✗ I poured him a glass of wine, he drank at once. ► 234.4
- ✗ We met a man of whom I've forgotten the name. ► 235.2
- ✗ He's married to a singer whose you may have heard. ► 235.3
- ✗ We need a house we can stay for a few days. ► 237.7
- ✗ He liked the people with who he worked. ► 237.8
- ✗ The idea was interesting which she put forward. ► 237.12
- ✗ You're the one that know where to go. ► 237.13
- ✗ I can't think of anybody whom to invite. ► 237.14
- ✗ The children will have a garden which to play in. ► 237.14
- ✗ This is a letter from my father, whom we hope will be fully recovered soon. ► 237.17

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233 relatives: basic information

1 *who, whom* and *which*

The relative pronouns *who* and *whom* refer to people; *which* refers to things.

What's the name of the tall man ***who*** *just came in?* (NOT . . . ~~*the tall man which* . . .~~)

It's a book ***which*** *will interest children of all ages.* (NOT . . . ~~*a book who* . . .~~)

2 subject and object

Who and *which* can be the subjects of verbs in relative clauses.

I like people ***who smile*** *a lot.*

This is the back door key, ***which also opens*** *the garage.*

Who(m) and *which* can also be the objects of verbs in relative clauses. *Whom* is unusual in an informal style (► 626).

Do you remember the people ***who we met*** *in Italy?* (*Who* is the object of *met*.)

I forget most of the films ***which I see***. (*Which* is the object of *see*.)

3 *that* = *who/which*

We often use *that* instead of *who* or *which*, especially in an informal style.

I like people ***that*** *smile a lot.* *This is the key* ***that*** *opens the garage.*

Do you remember the people ***that*** *we met in Italy?*

I forget most of the films ***that*** *I see.*

4 *all that, only . . . that,* etc

That is especially common after quantifiers like *all, every(thing), some(thing), any(thing), no(thing), none, little, few, much, only*, and after superlatives.

Is this ***all that****'s left?* (More natural than . . . *all which is left?*)

Have you got ***anything that*** *belongs to me?*
(More natural than . . . *anything which* . . .)

The ***only*** *thing* ***that*** *matters is to find our way home.*

I hope the ***little that*** *I've done has been useful.*

It's the ***best*** *film* ***that****'s ever been made about madness.*

Note that *what* (► 236) cannot be used in these cases.

All that *you say is certainly true.* (NOT ~~*All what you say* . . .~~)

5 leaving out object pronouns: *the people we met*

Object pronouns can often be left out.

Do you remember ***the people we met*** *in Italy?*

I forget most of ***the films I see***. *****All I want*** *is your happiness.*

This is not possible in all relative clauses: ► 234.

6 one subject or object is enough

As subjects or objects, *who(m), which* and *that* replace words like *she, him* or *it*: one subject or object in a relative clause is enough. Compare:

– *He's got a new girlfriend.* ***She*** *works in a garage.*

He's got a new girlfriend ***who*** *works in a garage.* (NOT . . . ~~*who she works in a garage*.~~)

– *This is Mr Rogers. You met* ***him*** *last year.*
This is Mr Rogers, ***whom*** *you met last year.* (NOT . . . ~~*whom you met him last year.*~~)
– *Here's an article.* ***It*** *might interest you.*
Here's an article ***which*** *might interest you.* (NOT . . . ~~*which it might interest you.*~~)

Prepositional verbs, like others, only have one object.
Are there any papers ***that*** *I can* ***look at?*** (NOT . . . ~~*that I can look at them?*~~)
I've found the keys ***that*** *you were* ***asking about.*** (NOT . . . ~~*that you were asking about them.*~~)

7 whose: *a girl whose hair . . .*

Whose is a possessive relative pronoun, used as a determiner before nouns. It replaces *his/her/its*. For more details, ► 235.
I saw a girl ***whose hair*** *came down to her waist.* (NOT . . . ~~*whose her hair came down*~~ . . .)

8 *which* referring to a whole clause

Which can refer not only to a noun, but also to the whole of a previous clause. Note that *what* cannot be used in this way.
He got married again a year later, ***which*** *surprised everybody.*
(NOT . . . , ~~*what surprised everybody.*~~)
She cycled from London to Glasgow, ***which*** *is pretty good for a woman of 75.*
(NOT ~~*She cycled*~~ . . . , ~~*what is pretty good*~~ . . .)

9 relative *when, where* and *why*

When and *where* can introduce relative clauses after nouns referring to time and place. They are used in the same way as **preposition + *which***.
I'll never forget the day ***when*** *I first met you.* (= . . . the day on which . . .)
Do you know a shop ***where*** *I can find sandals?* (= . . . a shop at which . . .)
Why is used in a similar way after *reason*.
Do you know the reason ***why*** *she doesn't like me?*
(= . . . the reason for which . . .)

234 identifying and non-identifying clauses: *the tall man who . . .; Mr Rogers, who . . .*

1 two kinds of relative clause

Some relative clauses identify or classify nouns: they tell us which person or thing, or which kind of person or thing, is meant. (In grammars, these are called 'identifying', 'defining' or 'restrictive' relative clauses.)
What's the name of the tall man ***who just came in?***
People ***who take physical exercise*** *live longer.*
Who owns the car ***which is parked outside?***
Have you got something ***that will get paint out of a carpet?***

Other relative clauses do not identify or classify; they simply tell us more about a person or thing that is already identified. (In grammars, these are called 'non-identifying', 'non-defining' or 'non-restrictive' relative clauses.) →

This is Ms Rogers, ***who's joining the company next week.***
In 1908 Ford developed his Model T car, ***which sold for $500.***

There are several grammatical differences between the two kinds of relative clause. There are also stylistic differences: non-identifying clauses are generally more formal, and are less frequent in informal speech.

2 pronunciation and punctuation

Identifying relative clauses usually follow immediately after the nouns that they modify, without a break. They are not separated by pauses or intonation movements in speech, or by commas in writing. (This is because the noun would be incomplete without the relative clause, and the sentence would make no sense or have a different meaning.) Non-identifying clauses are normally separated by pauses and/or intonation breaks and commas. Compare:

– ***The woman who does my hair*** *is from Poland.*
Dorota, who does my hair, *is from Poland.*
– *She married* ***someone that she met on a bus.***
She married ***a very nice young architect from Belfast, whom she met on a bus.***

If an identifying clause is left out, the sentence may not give enough information to make sense.

The woman is from Poland. (Which woman?)
She married someone. (!)

When a non-identifying clause does not come at the end of a sentence, two commas are necessary.

Dorota, who does my hair, *is from . . .* (NOT ~~*Dorota, who does my hair is from . . .*~~)

3 use of *that*

That is common as a relative pronoun in identifying clauses. In non-identifying clauses, *that* is unusual. Compare:

– *Have you got a book* ***which/that*** *is really easy to read?*
I lent him 'The Old Man and the Sea', ***which*** *is really easy to read.*
(NOT . . . ~~*'The Old Man and the Sea', that is really easy to read.*~~)
– *Where's the girl* ***who/that*** *sells the tickets?*
This is Naomi, ***who*** *sells the tickets.* (NOT ~~*This is Naomi, that sells the tickets.*~~)

4 leaving out object pronouns

~~*This is Naomi, that sells the tickets.*~~)

In identifying relative clauses, we often leave out pronouns if they are objects, especially in an informal style. In non-identifying clauses this is not possible. Compare:

– *I feel sorry for* ***the man she married.***
She met ***my brother, whom she later married.*** (NOT ~~*She met my brother, she later married.*~~)
– *Did you like* ***the wine we drank last night?***
I poured him ***a glass of wine, which he drank at once.*** (NOT ~~*I poured him a glass of wine, he drank at once.*~~)

For sentences like *It was Jack who told the police* ('cleft sentences'), ► 273.

235 *whose*

1 relative possessive

Whose is a relative possessive word, used as a determiner before nouns in the same way as *his, her, its* or *their*. It can refer back to people or things. In a relative clause, ***whose*** + **noun** can be the subject, the object of a verb or the object of a preposition.

*I saw a girl **whose beauty** took my breath away.* (subject)
*It was a meeting **whose purpose** I did not understand.* (object)
*Michel Croz, **with whose help** Whymper climbed the Matterhorn, was one of the first professional guides.* (object of preposition)
*I went to see my friends the Forrests, **whose children** I used to look **after** when they were small.* (object of preposition)

Whose can be used in both identifying and non-identifying clauses.

2 things: *of which; that . . . of*

Instead of *whose*, we can use *of which* or *that . . . of* (less formal) to refer to things, and these are sometimes preferred. The most common word order is **noun** + ***of which*** or ***that . . . of***, but ***of which . . .*** + **noun** is also possible. Compare the following four ways of expressing the same idea.

*He's written a book **whose name** I've forgotten.*
*He's written a book **the name of which** I've forgotten.*
*He's written a book **that** I've forgotten **the name of***
*He's written a book **of which** I've forgotten **the name**.*

We do not normally use **noun** + ***of whom*** in a possessive sense to talk about people.

a man whose name I've forgotten (NOT ~~*a man of whom I've forgotten the name*~~)

3 only used as a determiner

Relative *whose* is only used as a possessive determiner, before a noun. In other cases we use *of which/whom* or *that . . . of*.

*He's married to a singer **of whom** you may have heard.* OR *. . . **that** you may have heard **of**.* (NOT ~~*. . . a singer whose you may have heard.*~~)

4 formality

Sentences with *whose* are generally felt to be rather heavy and formal; in an informal style other structures are often preferred. *With* (► 633) is a common way of expressing possessive ideas, and is usually more natural than *whose* in descriptions.

*I've got some friends **with a** house that looks over a river.* (Less formal than *. . . whose house looks over a river.*)
*You know that girl **with a** brother who drives buses?* (Less formal than *. . . whose brother drives buses?*)
*She's married to the man over there **with the** enormous ears.* (More natural than *. . . the man over there whose ears are enormous.*)

For *whose* in questions, ► 628.

After *way, in which* can be replaced by *that* or dropped in an informal style.

I didn't like ***the way (that)*** *she spoke to me.*

Do you know ***a way (that)*** *you can earn money without working?*

The same thing happens with *why* after *reason.*

The reason (that) *you're so bad-tempered is that you're hungry.*

For more about *place,* ► 554. For *way,* ► 620. For *reason,* ► 567.

8 position of prepositions

Prepositions can come either before relative pronouns (more formal) or at the ends of relative clauses (more informal). Compare:

– *He was respected by the people* ***with whom*** *he worked.* (formal)
He was respected by the people ***(that)*** *he worked* ***with.*** (informal)

– *This is the room* ***in which*** *I was born.* (formal)
This is the room ***(that)*** *I was born* ***in.*** (informal)

That is not used after prepositions, and *who* is unusual.

. . . the people ***with whom*** *he worked.* (NOT . . . ~~*with that he worked*~~; NOT USUALLY . . . *with who he worked*)

For more about prepositions at the ends of clauses, ► 209.

9 *some of whom, none of which,* etc

In non-identifying clauses, quantifying determiners (e.g. *some, any, none, all, both, several, enough, many, few*) can be used with *of whom, of which* and *of whose.* The determiner most often comes before *of which/whom/whose,* but can sometimes come after it in a very formal style.

They picked up five boat-loads of refugees, ***some of whom*** *had been at sea for several months.* (OR . . . ***of whom some*** . . .)

We've tested three hundred types of boot, ***none of which*** *is completely waterproof.* (OR . . . ***of which none*** . . .)

They've got eight children, ***all of whom*** *are studying music.* (OR . . . ***of whom all*** *are studying . . .*)

She had a teddy bear, ***both of whose*** *eyes were missing.*

This structure is also possible with other expressions of quantity, with superlatives, with *first, second,* etc, and with *last.*

a number ***of whom***	*three* ***of which***	*half* ***of which***
the majority ***of whom***	*the youngest* ***of whom***	*the last* ***of which***

10 *whatever, whoever,* etc

Whatever can be used rather like *what,* as **noun + relative pronoun** together.

Take ***whatever*** *you want.* (= . . . anything that you want.)

Other words that can be used like this are *whoever, whichever, where, wherever, when, whenever* and *how.*

This is for ***whoever*** *wants it.* (= . . . any person that wants it.)

I often think about ***where*** *I met you.* (= . . . the place where . . .)

We've bought a cottage in the country for ***when*** *we retire.* (= . . . the time when . . .)

Whenever *you want to come is fine with me.* (= Any day that . . .)

Look at ***how*** *he treats me.* (= . . . the way in which . . .)

For details of the use of *whoever, whatever* and other words ending in *-ever,* ► 252.
For more about *how*-clauses, ► 492.

11 reduced relative clauses: *the girl dancing*

A participle is often used instead of a relative pronoun and full verb.

*Who's the girl **dancing** with your brother?* (= . . . that is dancing with your brother?)

*Anyone **touching** that wire will get a shock.* (= . . . who touches . . .)

*Half of the people **invited** to the party didn't turn up.* (= . . . who were invited . . .)

*I found him sitting at a table **covered** with papers.* (= . . . which was covered with papers.)

Reduced structures are also used with the adjectives *available* and *possible*.

*Please send me all the tickets **available**.* (= . . . that are available.)

*Tuesday's the only date **possible**.*

12 separating a noun from its relative pronoun

Relative pronouns usually follow their nouns directly.

*The **idea which** she put forward was interesting.* (NOT ~~*The idea was interesting which she put forward.*~~)

*I called in **Mrs Spencer, who** did our accounts.* (NOT ~~*I called Mrs Spencer in, who did our accounts.*~~)

However, a descriptive phrase can sometimes separate a noun from its relative pronoun.

*I called in **Mrs Spencer, the Manager's secretary, who** did our accounts.*

13 agreement of person

Most relative clauses have third-person reference; *I who . . ., you who . . .* and *we who . . .* are unusual, though they sometimes occur in a very formal style. A different kind of first- and second-person reference is common in the relative clauses of cleft sentences (► 273). However, the verb is usually third-person, especially in an informal style.

*It's me **that's** responsible for the organisation.* (More formal: *It is **I who am** responsible . . .*)

*You're the one **that knows** where to go.* (NOT . . . ~~*the one that know*~~ . . .)

14 relative + infinitive: *a garden in which to play*

When a noun or pronoun is the object of a following infinitive, a relative pronoun is not normally used.

*I can't think of **anybody to invite**.* (NOT . . . ~~*anybody whom to invite.*~~)

However, relative pronouns are possible with preposition structures.

*We moved to the country so that the children would have a garden **in which to play**.*

*He was miserable unless he had neighbours **with whom to quarrel**.*

This structure is rather formal, and it is more common to use **infinitive + preposition** without a relative pronoun.

*. . . so that the children would have a garden to **play in**.* (NOT . . . ~~*which to play in.*~~)

*. . . unless he had neighbours **to quarrel with**.* (NOT . . . ~~*whom to quarrel with.*~~) →

15 relative clauses after indefinite noun phrases

The distinction between identifying and non-identifying clauses (► 234) is most clear when they modify definite noun phrases like *the car, this house, my father, Mrs Lewis*. After indefinite noun phrases like *a car, some nurses* or *friends*, the distinction is less clear, and both kinds of clause are often possible with slight differences of emphasis.

He's got ***a new car that*** *goes like a bomb.* (OR *He's got* ***a new car, which*** *goes like a bomb.*)

We became friendly with ***some nurses that*** *Jack had met in Paris.* (OR *We became friendly with* ***some nurses, whom*** *Jack had met in Paris.*)

In general, identifying clauses are used when the information they give is felt to be centrally important to the overall message. When this is not so, non-identifying clauses are preferred.

16 *It was Alice who . . .; What I need is . . .*

Relative clauses (including *what*-clauses) are used to structure '**cleft sentences**': ► 273–274 for details.

It was Alice ***who called the police.*** ***What I need*** *is a long rest.*

17 *somebody I know you'll like*

It is often possible to combine relative clauses with indirect statements and similar structures, e.g. *I know/said/feel/hope/wish (that) . . .*, especially in an informal style. Expressions like *I know, I said*, etc come after the position of the relative pronoun.

We're going to meet somebody ***(who/that) I know (that) you'll like.***

It's a house ***(which/that) we feel (that) we might want to buy.***

That's the man ***(who/that) I wish (that) I'd married.***

Note that the conjunction (the second *that*) is usually dropped in this structure; it must be dropped if the relative pronoun is a subject.

This is the woman ***(who/that) Anna said could show us the church.***

(NOT ~~*This is the woman (who/that) Anna said that could show us . . .*~~)

In this structure, people sometimes use *whom* as a subject pronoun. This is not generally considered correct.

This is a letter from my father, ***whom we hope will be fully recovered soon.***

(More correct: . . . *who we hope will be . . .*)

Relative clauses can also be combined with *if*-clauses in sentences like the following.

I am enclosing an application form, ***which I should be grateful if you would sign and return.***

18 *a car that I didn't know how fast it could go*, etc

We do not usually combine a relative clause with an indirect question structure. However, this sometimes happens in informal speech.

I've just been to see an old friend ***that I'm not sure when I'm going to see again.***

There's a pile of paperwork ***that I just don't know how I'm going to do.***

There is no grammatically correct way of doing this when the relative pronoun is the subject of the relative clause. However, sentences like the following (with added pronouns) are also sometimes heard in informal speech. Some real examples:

I was driving a car ***that I didn't know how fast it could go.***
It's ridiculous to sing songs ***that you don't know what they mean.***
There's a control at the back ***that I don't understand how it works.***
There's still one kid ***that I must find out whether she's coming to the party or not.***

19 omission of subject

In a very informal style, a subject relative pronoun is sometimes dropped after *there is.*

There's** a man at the door* ***wants to talk to you.

20 double object

Occasionally a relative pronoun acts as the object of two verbs. This happens especially when a relative clause is followed by *before . . .ing, after . . .ing* or *without . . .ing.*

We have water ***that** it's best not to* ***drink before boiling.*** (OR . . . *boiling* ***it.***)
I'm sending you a letter ***that** I want you to* ***destroy after reading.*** (OR . . . *after reading* ***it.***)
He was somebody ***that** you could* ***like without admiring.***
(OR . . . *admiring* ***him.***)

21 older English: *who* and *that which*

In older English, *who* could be used in a similar way to *what,* as **noun + relative pronoun** together, meaning 'the person who', 'whoever' or 'anybody who'. In modern English, this is very unusual.

***Who** steals my purse steals trash.* (Shakespeare, *Othello*) (Modern English: *Whoever/Anybody who . . .*)

That which used to be used in the same way as *what.* This, too, is very unusual in modern English.

We have ***that which** we need.* (Modern English: *We have what we need.*)

Section 22 *If*

INTRODUCTION

uncertain events and situations

In clauses after *if*, we usually talk about uncertain events and situations: things which may or may not happen, which may or may not be true, etc.

Ask Jack ***if he's staying tonight****.* (He may or may not be staying.)
If I see Annie*, I'll give her your love.* (I may or may not see Annie.)

conditions

An *if*-clause often refers to a condition – something which must happen so that something else can happen.

If you get here before eight*, we can catch the early train.*
Oil floats ***if you pour it on water****.*

Clauses of this kind are often called 'conditional' clauses.

'first', 'second' and 'third' conditionals; other structures

Some students' grammars concentrate on three common sentence structures with *if*, which are often called the 'first', 'second' and 'third' conditionals.

'first conditional'

if + present	*will* + infinitive
If we play tennis,	*I'll win.*

'second conditional'

if + past	*would* + infinitive
If we played tennis,	*I would win.*

'third conditional'

if + past perfect	*would have* + past participle
If we had played tennis,	*I would have won.*

These are useful structures to practise. However, students sometimes think that these are the only possibilities, and become confused when they meet sentences like *If she didn't phone this morning, then she's probably away* ('What's this? A fourth conditional?'). It is important to realise that *if* is not only used in special structures with *will* and *would*; it can also be used, like other conjunctions, in ordinary structures with normal verb forms. (A research study carried out in the 1990s found that less than 25% of *if*-conditional sentences follow the traditional 'first', 'second' and 'third' patterns.)

position of *if*-clause

An *if*-clause can come at the beginning or end of a sentence. When an *if*-clause comes first, it is often followed by a comma.
Compare:

If you eat too much, you get fat. *You get fat if you eat too much.*

For other meanings of *if*, ► 244.10–244.13. For *if* and *whether* in indirect speech, ► 260–261.
For *if not* and *unless*, ► 247. For more information about *would/should*, ► 76, 80, 86.
For the difference between *if* and *in case*, ► 248. For *even if*, ► 452.4.

How good are the rules?

The 'rules' given in this Section are intended to be useful for learners. They describe what happens most of the time, and are generally valid for formal speech and writing. However, usage is far from fixed, and educated speakers and writers quite often mix structures. So if a sentence is crossed out in one of the following explanations (e.g. ~~*If I would know her name, I would tell you*~~) this means that it should be avoided in contexts like formal letters or examination scripts. It may not strictly speaking be wrong.

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- ✗ I'll give her your love if I'll see her. ► 238.2
- ✗ If you asked me, I had told you. ► 241.1
- ✗ If I would know his address I would tell you. ► 239.2
- ✗ If I knew they had a problem, I could have helped them. ► 241.2
- ✗ If I were to know his address, I would tell you. ► 244.2
- ✗ Hadn't we missed the plane, we would all have been killed in the crash. ► 244.5
- ✗ It would of been better if we had started earlier. ► 245.3
- ✗ If only I would know more people! ► 242
- ✗ I only she didn't tell the police, everything would have been all right. ► 242
- ✗ I'll be surprised unless the car breaks down soon. ► 247.2
- ✗ I've bought a chicken in case your mother will stay to lunch. ► 248.1

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240 *if I were you*
241 unreal past situations
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243 *if . . . will*
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246 other words and expressions with similar uses
247 *unless*
248 *in case* and *if*

238 ordinary structures

If you didn't study physics at school, you won't understand this book.
I'll give her your love if I see her.

1 the same tenses as with other conjunctions

When we are not talking about 'unreal' situations (► 239), we use the same tenses with *if* as with other conjunctions. Present tenses are used to refer to the present, past tenses to the past, and so on. Compare:

- *Oil **floats** **if** you **pour** it on water.*
  *Iron **goes** red **when** it **gets** very hot.*
- ***If** Jack **didn't come** to work yesterday, he **was** probably ill.*
  ***As** Jack **didn't come** to work yesterday, he **was** probably ill.*
- ***If** you **didn't study** physics at school, you **won't understand** this book.*
  ***Because** you **didn't study** physics at school, you **won't understand** this book.*

2 present tense with future meaning

In an *if*-clause, we normally use a present tense to talk about the future. This happens after most conjunctions (► 231). Compare:

- *I'll give her your love **if** I **see** her.* (NOT . . . ~~*if I will see her.*~~)
  *I'll give her your love **when** I **see** her.* (NOT . . . ~~*when I will see her.*~~)
- ***If** we **have** fine weather tomorrow, I'm going to paint the windows.*
  ***As soon as** we **have** fine weather, I'm going to paint the windows.*

For *if* + *will* (e.g. *if it will make you feel better*), ► 243.
For *if* + *will* in reported speech (e.g. *I don't know if I'll be ready*), ► 260.3.

239 special structures with past tenses and *would*

If I knew her name, I would tell you.
What would you do if you lost your job?

1 unreal situations

We use special structures with *if* when we are talking about unreal situations – things that will probably not happen, situations that are untrue or imaginary, and similar ideas. In these cases, we use past tenses and *would* to 'distance' our language from reality.

2 *if* + past; *would* + infinitive

To talk about unreal or improbable situations now or in the future, we use a past tense in the *if*-clause (even though the meaning is present or future), and ***would*** + **infinitive** (without *to*) in the other part of the sentence.

*If I **knew** her name, I **would tell** you.* (NOT ~~*If I know*~~ . . . OR ~~*If I would know*~~ . . . OR . . . ~~*I will tell you.*~~)
*She **would be** perfectly happy if she **had** a car.*
*What **would** you **do** if you **lost** your job?*

This structure can make suggestions sound less definite, and so more polite.

*It **would be** nice **if you helped** me a bit with the housework.*
***Would** it **be** all right **if I came** round about seven tomorrow?*

3 *would, should* and *'d*

After *I* and *we, should* is sometimes used with the same meaning as *would.* This is now unusual in British English, and has almost disappeared from American English.

*If I knew her name, I **should** tell you.* (rare)

We use *'d* as a contraction (► 337).

*We**'d** get up earlier if there was a good reason to.*

For *I should . . .* meaning 'I advise you to . . .', ► 240.2. For *would* in the *if*-clause, ► 245. For *should* in the *if*-clause, ► 244.1.

4 *if I were*, etc

We often use *were* instead of *was* after *if.* This is common in both formal and informal styles. In a formal style *were* is more common than *was,* and many people consider it more correct, especially in American English. The grammatical name for this use of *were* is 'subjunctive' (► 232).

*If I **were** rich, I would spend all my time travelling.*
*If my nose **were** a little shorter, I'd be quite pretty.*

For the expression *If I were you . . .*, ► 240.

5 Ordinary tense-use or special tense-use? *If I come* or *if I came*?

The difference between, for example, *if I come* and *if I came* is not necessarily a difference of time. They can both refer to the future; but the past tense suggests that a future situation is impossible, imaginary or less probable. Compare:

- *If I **become** President, I'll . . .* (said by a candidate in an election)
  *If I **became** President, I'd . . .* (said by a schoolboy)
- *If I **win** this race, I'll . . .* (said by the fastest runner)
  *If I **won** this race, I'd . . .* (said by the slowest runner)
- *Will it be all right if I **bring** a friend?* (direct request)
  *Would it be all right if I **brought** a friend?* (less direct, more polite)

6 *could* and *might*

We can use *could* to mean 'would be able to' and *might* to mean 'would perhaps' or 'would possibly'.

*If I had another £500, I **could** buy a car.*
*If you asked me nicely, I **might** get you a drink.*

For other cases where a past tense has a present or future meaning, ► 46. For *if only*, ► 242.

240 *if I were you*

1 advice

We often use the structure *If I were you . . .* to give advice. British English has *should* or *would* in the main clause; American English *would.*

*I wouldn't/shouldn't worry **if I were you.***

→

238 ordinary structures

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For the expression *If I were you* . . ., ► 240.

5 Ordinary tense-use or special tense-use? *If I come* or *if I came*?

The difference between, for example, *if I come* and *if I came* is not necessarily a difference of time. They can both refer to the future; but the past tense suggests that a future situation is impossible, imaginary or less probable. Compare:

– *If I **become** President, I'll . . .* (said by a candidate in an election)
  *If I **became** President, I'd . . .* (said by a schoolboy)
– *If I **win** this race, I'll . . .* (said by the fastest runner)
  *If I **won** this race, I'd . . .* (said by the slowest runner)
– *Will it be all right if I **bring** a friend?* (direct request)
  *Would it be all right if I **brought** a friend?* (less direct, more polite)

6 *could* and *might*

We can use *could* to mean 'would be able to' and *might* to mean 'would perhaps' or 'would possibly'.

*If I had another £500, I **could** buy a car.*

*If you asked me nicely, I **might** get you a drink.*

For other cases where a past tense has a present or future meaning, ► 46. For *if only*, ► 242.

240 *if I were you*

1 advice

We often use the structure *If I were you . . .* to give advice. British English has *should* or *would* in the main clause; American English *would*.

*I wouldn't/shouldn't worry **if I were you**.* →

If I were you, I'd get that car serviced.
If I was you is also possible. Some people consider it incorrect (► 239.4).

2 *I should/would . . .*

Sometimes we leave out *If I were you,* and just use *I should . . .* (British English) or *I would . . .* to give advice.

*I **shouldn't** worry.* *I **would** get that car serviced.*

In this case, *I should/would* is similar to *you should.*

241 unreal past situations

If you had worked harder, you would have passed your exam.

1 *if* + past perfect; *would have* + past participle

To talk about past situations that did not happen, we use a past perfect tense in the *if*-clause, and ***would have*** + **past participle** in the other part of the sentence.

*If you **had asked** me, I **would have told** you.* (NOT ~~*If you would have asked me . . .*~~ OR ~~*If you asked me . . .*~~ OR ~~*. . . I had told you.*~~)

*If you **had worked** harder, you **would have passed** your exam.*

*I'd **have been** in bad trouble if Megan **hadn't helped** me.*

2 *could have . . .* and *might have . . .*

We can use ***could have*** + **past participle** to mean 'would have been able to . . .', and ***might have*** + **past participle** to mean 'would perhaps have . . . ' or 'would possibly have . . .'.

*If he'd run a bit faster, he **could have won.***

*If I hadn't been so tired, I **might have realised** what was happening.*

3 present use: situations that are no longer possible

We sometimes use structures with *would have . . .* to talk about present and future situations which are no longer possible because of the way things have turned out.

*It **would have been** nice to go to Australia this winter, but there's no way we can do it.* (OR *It would be nice . . .*)

*If my mother hadn't met my father at a party thirty years ago, **I wouldn't have been** here now.* (OR *. . . I wouldn't be here now.*)

242 *if only*

We can use *If only . . .!* to say that we would like things to be different. It means the same as *I wish . . .* (► 632), but is more emphatic. The clause with *if only* often stands alone, without a main clause. Tense use is as follows:

a past to talk about the present

***If only** I **knew** more people!* ***If only** I **was** better-looking!*

We can use *were* instead of *was* (► 239.4).

*If only your father **were** here!*

b *would* + infinitive (without *to*) to talk about the future

If only it ***would stop*** *raining, we could go out.*
If only somebody ***would smile****!*

c past perfect to talk about the past

If only she ***hadn't told*** *the police, everything would have been all right.*

243 *if . . . will*

I'll give you £100 if it will help you to get home.
If Anna won't be here, we'd better cancel the meeting.
I don't know if I'll be ready in time.
If you will come this way . . .
If you will eat so much . . .

We normally use a present tense with *if* (and most other conjunctions) to refer to the future (► 231).

I'll phone you if I ***have*** *time.* (NOT . . . ~~*if I will have time.*~~)

But in certain situations we use *if . . . will.*

1 results

We use *will* with *if* to talk about what will happen because of possible future actions – to mean 'if this will be the later result'. Compare:

– *I'll give you £100 if I* ***win*** *the lottery.* (Winning the lottery is a condition – it must happen first.)
*I'll give you £100 if it****'ll help*** *you to get home.* (The return home is a result – it follows the gift of money.)
– *We'll go home now if you* ***get*** *the car.* (condition)
We'll go home now if it ***will make*** *you feel better.* (result)

2 'If it is true now that . . .'

We use *will* with *if* when we are saying 'if it is true now that . . .' or 'if we know now that . . .'.

If Anna ***won't be*** *here on Thursday, we'd better cancel the meeting.*
If prices ***will*** *really* ***come*** *down in a few months, I'm not going to buy one now.*

3 indirect questions: *I don't know if . . .*

We can use *will* after *if* in indirect questions (► 260.3).

I don't know if I'll ***be*** *ready in time.* (NOT . . . ~~*if I'm ready in time.*~~)

4 polite requests: *If you will come this way . . .*

We can use *if* + *will* in polite requests. In this case, *will* is not a future auxiliary; it means 'are willing to' (► 80.1).

If you ***will come*** *this way, I'll show you your room.*
If your mother ***will complete*** *this form, I'll prepare her ticket.*

Would can be used to make a request even more polite.

If you ***would come*** *this way . . .* →

5 insistence: *If you WILL eat so much . . .*

Stressed *will* can be used after *if* to criticise people's habits or choices.

*If you **WILL eat** so much, it's not surprising you feel ill.* (= 'If you insist on eating so much . . .')

244 other points

1 *if . . . happen to*

We can suggest that something is unlikely, or not particularly probable, by using *. . . happen to . . .* after *if*.

*If I **happen to** run into Daniel, I'll tell him to call you.*

*If you **happen to** pass a supermarket, perhaps you could pick up some eggs.*

Should can be used after *if* in British English with a similar meaning, but this is now unusual.

*If I **should** run into Daniel . . .*

2 *if . . . was/were to*

This is another way of talking about unreal or imaginary future events.

*If the boss **was/were to come in** now, we'd be in real trouble.*
(= If the boss came . . .)

*What would we do **if I was/were to lose** my job?*

It can be used to make a suggestion sound less direct, and so more polite.

*If you **were to move** your chair a bit, we could all sit down.*

This structure is not normally used with verbs like *be* or *know*, which refer to continuing situations.

*If I **knew** her name . . .* (NOT ~~*If I were to know her name . . .*~~)

For the difference between *was* and *were* after *if*, ► 239.4.

3 *if it was/were not for*

This structure is used to say that one event or situation changes everything.

*If it **wasn't/weren't for** his wife's money he'd never be a director.*
(= Without his wife's money, . . .)

*If it **wasn't/weren't for** the children, we could go skiing next week.*

To talk about the past we use *If it had not been for*.

*If it **hadn't been for** your help, I don't know what I'd have done.*

But for can be used to mean 'if it were not for' or 'if it had not been for'.

***But for** your help, I don't know what I'd have done.*

4 leaving out *if*: conversational – *You want to get in, you pay.*

If is sometimes left out at the beginning of a sentence in a conversational style, especially when the speaker is making conditions or threats.

You want to get in, you pay like everybody else. (= If you want . . .)

You touch me again, I'll kick your teeth in.

5 leaving out *if*: formal inversion structures – *Had I realised . . .*

In formal and literary styles, *if* can be dropped and an auxiliary verb put before the subject. This happens mostly with *were*, *had* and *should*.

***Were she** my daughter, . . .* (= If she were my daughter . . .)
***Had I** realised what you intended, . . .* (= If I had realised . . .)
***Should you** change your mind, . . .* (= If you should change . . .)

Negatives are not contracted.

***Had we not** missed the plane, we would all have been killed in the crash.*
(NOT ~~*Hadn't we missed . . .*~~)

For other uses of inverted word order, ► 270–271.

6 leaving out words after *if*

We sometimes leave out **subject** + ***be*** after *if*. Note the common fixed expressions *if necessary, if any, if anything, if ever, if in doubt.*

*I'll work late tonight **if necessary**.* (= . . . if it is necessary)
*There is little **if any** good evidence for flying saucers.*
*I'm not angry. **If anything**, I feel a little surprised.*
*He seldom **if ever** travels abroad.*
***If in doubt**, ask for help.* (= If you are in doubt . . .)
***If about** to go on a long journey, try to have a good night's sleep.*

For more details of ellipsis (structures with words left out), ► 275–280.

7 *if so* and *if not*

After *if*, we can use *so* and *not* instead of repeating a whole clause.

*Are you free? **If so**, let's go out for a meal.* (= . . . If you are free . . .)
*I might see you tomorrow. **If not**, then it'll be Saturday.* (= . . . If I don't see you tomorrow . . .)

8 extra negative: *I wonder if we shouldn't . . .*

An extra *not* is sometimes put into *if*-clauses after expressions suggesting doubt or uncertainty.

*I wonder **if** we **shouldn't ask** the doctor to look at Emily.* (= I wonder if we should ask . . .)
*I wouldn't be surprised **if** she **didn't** get married soon.* (= . . . if she got married soon.)

9 *if . . . then*

We sometimes construct sentences with *if . . . then* to emphasise that one thing depends on another.

***If** she can't come to us, **then** we'll have to go and see her.*

10 *if* meaning 'even if'

We can use *if* to mean 'even if' (► 452.4).

*I'll finish this job **if** it takes all night.*
*I wouldn't marry you **if** you were the last man in the world.*

11 admitting facts with *if*

An *if*-clause can be used to admit a fact when giving a reason for it.

***If I'm a bit sleepy**, it's because I was up all night.* →

12 *if* meaning 'I'm saying this in case'

If-clauses are quite often used to explain the purpose of a remark – to suggest 'I'm saying this in case . . .'

There's some steak in the fridge ***if you're hungry****.*
If you want to go home*, Anne's got your car keys.*

13 *if* meaning 'although'

In a formal style, *if* can be used with a similar meaning to *although*. This is common in the structure ***if*** **+ adjective** (with no verb). *If* is not as definite as *although*; it can suggest that what is being talked about is a matter of opinion, or not very important.

His style, ***if*** *simple, is pleasant to read.*
The profits, ***if*** *a little lower than last year's, are still extremely healthy.*

The same kind of idea can be expressed with *may . . . but.*

His style ***may*** *be simple,* ***but*** *it is pleasant to read.*

245 other structures found in spoken English

1 *would* in both clauses

Conditional *would* is sometimes used in both clauses of an *if*-sentence. This is very informal, and quite common in speech. It is not usually written, and is incorrect in formal writing.

It ***would*** *be good if we'****d*** *get some rain.*
How ***would*** *we feel if this* ***would*** *happen to our family?*

For *if . . . would* in polite requests, ► 243.4.

2 *'d have . . . 'd have; would have . . . would have*

In informal spoken English, *if*-clauses referring to the past are sometimes constructed with *'d have*. This, too, is very informal, but it occurs quite often in speech. It is not usually written, and is incorrect in formal writing.

If *I'****d have*** *known, I'd have told you.*
It would have been funny ***if*** *she'****d have*** *recognised him.*
You wonder what the attitudes of both players ***would have*** *been if Nadal* ***would have*** *gone on and won that second set.* (from a tennis commentary)

3 *had've* and *would've*

Instead of the contracted *'d* in these structures, full forms are sometimes used for emphasis or in negatives. Both *had* and *would* occur. The following are genuine examples taken from conversation.

I didn't know. But ***if*** *I* ***had've*** *known . . .*
We would never have met ***if*** *he* ***hadn't have*** *crashed into my car.*
If *I* ***would've*** *had a gun, somebody might have got hurt.*
If *you* ***wouldn't have*** *phoned her, we'd never have found out what was happening.*

Confusion about this structure sometimes leads people to write *would of* instead of *would have* (they are pronounced the same: /ˈwʊdəv/ in normal speech).

4 mixed tenses

Sometimes a simple past tense is used with *if* where a past perfect would be normal. This is more common in American English.

***If I knew** you were coming, I'd have baked a cake.*
***If I had** the money with me, I would have bought you one.*
***If I didn't have** my walking boots on, I think I would have really hurt my foot.*

246 other words and expressions with similar uses

Many words and expressions can be used in similar ways to *if*, and often with similar structures. Some of the commonest are *imagine (that), suppose (that), supposing (that)* (used to talk about what might happen), and *providing (that), provided (that), as/so long as, on condition (that)* (used to make conditions).

***Imagine** we could all fly. Wouldn't that be fun!*
***Supposing** you'd missed the train. What would you have done?*
*You can borrow my bike **providing/provided** you bring it back.*
*I'll give you the day off **on condition that** you work on Saturday morning.*
*You're welcome to stay with us **as/so long as** you share the expenses.*

For suggestions with *suppose, supposing* and *what if*, ► 599.

247 *unless*

1 meaning

Unless has a similar meaning to *if . . . not*, in the sense of 'except if'.

*Come tomorrow **unless** I phone.* (= . . . **if** I don**'t** phone / **except if** I phone.)
*I'll take the job **unless** the pay is too low.* (= . . . **if** the pay is**n't** too low / **except if** the pay is too low.)
*I'll be back tomorrow **unless** there's a plane strike.*
*Let's have dinner out – **unless** you're too tired.*
*I'm going to dig the garden this afternoon, **unless** it rains.*

2 when *unless* cannot be used

Unless means 'except if'; it is not used with other meanings of 'if . . . not'. Compare:

– *OK. So we'll meet this evening at 7.00 – **unless** my train's late.* (= . . . except if my train's late.)
*If my train is**n't** late it will be the first time this week.* (NOT ~~*Unless my train's late it will be the first time this week.*~~ The meaning is not 'except if'.)
– *I'll drive over and see you, **unless** the car breaks down.* (= . . . **except if** the car breaks down.)
*I'll be surprised **if** the car does**n't** break down soon.* (NOT ~~*I'll be surprised unless the car breaks down soon.*~~) →

3 tenses

In clauses with *unless*, we usually use present tenses to refer to the future (► 231).

I'll be in all day unless the office ***phones.*** (NOT . . . ~~*unless the office will phone.*~~)

248 *in case* and *if*

1 precautions

In British English, *in case* is mostly used to talk about precautions – things which we do in order to be ready for possible future situations.

I always take an umbrella ***in case*** *it rains.* (= . . . because it might rain.)

To talk about the future, we use a present tense after *in case* (► 231).

I've bought a chicken ***in case*** *your mother* ***stays*** *to lunch.* (NOT . . . ~~*in case your mother will stay*~~ . . .)

2 *in case . . . happen to*

We can use the expression *happen to* after *in case* to emphasise the meaning of 'by chance'.

I've bought a chicken in case your mother ***happens to*** *stay to lunch.*

We took our swimming things in case we ***happened to*** *find a pool.*

Should can be used in the same way in British English, but this is no longer very common.

. . . in case your mother ***should*** *stay to lunch.*

3 *in case* and *if*

In British English, *in case* and *if* are normally used in quite different ways. 'Do A *in case* B happens' means 'Do A (first) because B might happen later'. 'Do A *if* B happens' means 'Do A if B has already happened'. Compare:

– *Let's buy a bottle of wine* ***in case*** *George comes.* (= Let's buy some wine now because George might come later.)
Let's buy a bottle of wine ***if*** *George comes.* (= We'll wait and see. If George comes, then we'll buy the wine. If he doesn't we won't.)

– *I'm taking an umbrella* ***in case*** *it rains.*
I'll open the umbrella ***if*** *it rains.* (NOT ~~*I'll open the umbrella in case it rains.*~~)

– *People insure their houses* ***in case*** *they catch fire.* (NOT . . . ~~*if they catch fire.*~~)
People telephone the fire brigade ***if*** *their houses catch fire.*
(NOT . . . ~~*telephone . . . in case their houses catch fire.*~~)

In American English, *in case* is often used in a similar way to *if*.

In case *you're free this evening, give me a call.* (less typical of British English)

4 *in case of*

The prepositional phrase *in case of* has a wider meaning than the conjunction *in case*, and can be used in similar situations to *if* in both American English and British English.

In case of *fire, break glass.* (= If there is a fire . . .)

Section 23 Other Adverbial Clauses

INTRODUCTION

This Section deals with some conjunctions and clause structures which may cause grammatical problems for learners. Less problematic conjunctions (e.g. *because, although, until*) are included in Section 31; see the Index for their exact place.

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- ✗ I passed the exam, after it was easier to get a good job. ► 249.1
- ✗ I'll call you after I'll arrive. ► 249.2
- ✗ As I was a child I lived in London. ► 251.2
- ✗ His parents died while he was twelve. ► 251.2
- ✗ I'll take whichever tent you're not using it. ► 252
- ✗ No matter what you do is fine with me. ► 253
- ✗ As much I respect your point of view, I can't agree. ► 255
- ✗ He worries more than it is necessary. ► 256.1
- ✗ We've got food for as many people as they want it. ► 256.1
- ✗ I'm sending you the bill, as it was agreed. ► 256.1

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249 *after*: conjunction

after + clause, + clause
clause + *after* + clause

1 use and position

After and its clause can come either before the main clause (often with a comma) or after. Putting it at the end can give it more importance in information structure (► 267).

***After I moved to Scotland**, I changed jobs.*
*I changed jobs **after I moved to Scotland**.*

Note the time relations: in both cases the speaker moved to Scotland first and then changed jobs. Compare:

*I moved to Scotland **after I changed jobs**.* (The speaker changed jobs first.)

2 present with future meaning

We use *after* with a present tense to talk about the future (► 231).

*I'll telephone you **after I arrive**.* (NOT . . . ~~*after I will arrive*~~.)

3 perfect tenses

In clauses with *after*, we often use present and past perfect tenses to show that one thing is completed before another starts (► 54.1).

*I usually go straight home **after I've finished** work.*
***After Lara had finished school**, she went to America.*

We use a present perfect, not a future perfect, to talk about the future with *after*.

*I'll call you **after I've seen** Jake.* (NOT . . . ~~*after I'll have seen Jake*~~.)

4 *after . . .ing*

In a formal style, we often use the structure ***after** + **-ing***.

***After completing this form**, give it to the secretary.*

After having** + **past participle is also possible when talking about the past.

*He wrote his first book **after returning / having returned** from Mongolia.*

For *after* as an adverb, ► 360.

250 *before*: conjunction

before + clause, + clause
clause + *before* + clause

1 use and position

Before and its clause can come either before the main clause (often with a comma) or after. Putting it at the end can give it more importance in information structure (► 267).

***Before I have breakfast**, I go for a walk.*
*I go for a walk **before I have breakfast**.*

Note the time relations: in both cases the speaker goes for a walk first and then has breakfast. Compare:

*I have breakfast **before I go for a walk**.* (The speaker has breakfast first.)

2 present or present perfect tense with future meaning

With *before*, we use a present or present perfect tense if the meaning is future (► 231).

*I'll telephone you **before I come**.* (NOT . . . ~~*before I will come*~~.)

*We can't leave **before the speeches have finished**.*

3 perfect tenses

In clauses with *before*, we often use present perfect and past perfect tenses to emphasise the idea of completion.

*You can't go home **before I've signed** the report.* (= . . . before the moment when I have completed the report.)

*He went out **before** I **had finished** my sentence.* (= . . . before the moment when I had completed my sentence.)

(Note that in sentences like the last, a past perfect tense can refer to a time *later* than the action of the main verb. This is unusual.)

4 before things that don't happen

We sometimes use *before* to talk about things that don't happen (because something stops them).

*We'd better get out of here **before your father catches us**.*

*She left **before I could ask** for her phone number.*

5 *before . . .ing*

In a formal style, we often use the structure ***before** + **-ing**.*

*Please turn out all the lights **before leaving the office**.*

***Before beginning the book**, she spent five years on research.*

For *before* as an adverb and preposition, ► 396–397. For *before* and *ever*, ► 454.4.

251 *as, when* and *while*: simultaneous events

To talk about actions or situations that take place at the same time, we can use *as*, *when* or *while*. There are some differences.

1 'backgrounds': *as, when* or *while*

We can use all three words to introduce a longer 'background' action or situation, which is/was going on when something else happens/happened.

***As I was walking down the street** I saw Joe driving a Porsche.*

*The telephone always rings **when you are having a bath**.*

***While they were playing cards**, somebody broke into the house.*

A progressive tense is usually used for the longer 'background' action or situation (*was walking*; *are having*; *were playing*). But *as* and *while* can be used with a simple tense, especially with a 'state' verb like *sit*, *lie*, or *grow*.

***As I sat** reading the paper, the door burst open.* →

4 *whenever* = 'every time that'

Whenever can suggest repetition, in the sense of 'every time that'.

***Whenever** I see you I feel nervous.*

*I stay with Monica **whenever** I go to London.*

5 *whoever*, etc . . . *may*

May can be used to suggest ignorance or uncertainty.

*He's written a book on the philosopher Matilda Vidmi, **whoever** she **may** be.*

*She's just written to me from Llandyfrdwy, **wherever** that **may** be.*

6 leaving out the verb: *whatever his problems*

In a clause like *whatever his problems are*, where *whatever* is the complement of the verb *be*, it is possible to leave out the verb.

***Whatever his problems**, he has no right to behave like that.*

*A serious illness, **whatever its nature**, is almost always painful.*

After ***however*** + **adjective**, we can leave out a **pronoun** + ***be***.

*A grammar rule, **however true** (it is), is useless unless it can be understood.*

7 informal uses: short answers

In an informal style, these conjunctions are sometimes used as short answers.

'*When shall we start?*' '***Whenever.***' (= Whenever you like.)

'*Potatoes or rice?*' '***Whichever.***' (= I don't mind.)

Whatever is often used to mean 'I don't care' or 'I'm not interested'. This can sound rude.

'*What would you like to do? We could go and see a film, or go swimming.*'

'***Whatever.***'

Or whatever can mean 'or anything else'.

*Would you like some orange juice or a beer **or whatever**?*

*If you play football or tennis **or whatever**, it does take up a lot of time.*

8 *whatever* meaning 'at all'

After *any* and *no*, *whatever* can be used in British English to mean 'at all'.

*Don't you have **any** regrets **whatever**?*

*I can see **no** point **whatever** in buying it.*

In American English, *whatsoever* is preferred in this sense; in British English it is a formal alternative.

For other uses of *whatever* and *however*, see a good dictionary. For *who ever*, *what ever*, etc, ► 627.

253 *no matter who*, etc

1 conjunction

No matter can be used with *who, whose, what, which, where, when* and *how*. These expressions are similar to conjunctions, and introduce adverbial clauses. The meaning is similar to 'it is not important who/what, etc'.

I'll love you ***no matter what*** *you do.*
No matter where *you go, I'll follow you.*

We use a present tense with a future meaning after *no matter* (► 231).

No matter where you ***go****, you'll find people who love music.*
You'll be welcome no matter when you ***come****.*

2 *no matter who*, etc and *whoever*, etc

The expressions *no matter who/what*, etc are used rather like *whoever, whatever*, etc (► 252). Compare:

– ***No matter what*** *you say, I won't believe you.*
Whatever *you say, I won't believe you.*
– *Call me when you arrive,* ***no matter how*** *late it is.*
Call me when you arrive, ***however*** *late it is.*

However, clauses with *whoever/whatever/whichever* can be used as subjects or objects. Clauses with *no matter who*, etc cannot be used in this way.

Whatever you do *is fine with me.* (BUT NOT ~~*No matter what you do is fine with me.*~~)
You can have ***whichever you like****.* (BUT NOT ~~*You can have no matter which you like.*~~)

3 *no matter* and *it doesn't matter*

Because *no matter who*, etc act like conjunctions, they must be used with two clauses.

No matter when *you come, you'll be welcome.* (BUT NOT ~~*No matter when you come.*~~)

To introduce just one clause, we can use *It doesn't matter*.

It doesn't matter *when you come.*

4 *no matter what*

No matter what can be used at the end of a clause, without a following verb.

I'll always love you, ***no matter what****.* (= . . . no matter what happens.)

For sentences like *Something's the matter with my foot*, ► 524.

254 *whether . . . or . . .*

We can use *whether . . . or . . .* as a double conjunction, with a similar meaning to *It doesn't matter whether . . . or . . .*

*The ticket will cost the same, **whether** we buy it now **or** wait till later.*

Present tenses are used to refer to the future.

*Whether we **go** by bus **or** train, it'll take at least six hours.*

Several structures are possible with *whether . . . or not.*

Whether you like it or not, . . . *Whether or not you like it, . . .*

Whether you like it or whether you don't, . . .

For *whether* and *if*, ► 261.

255 *as* and *though*: special word order

adjective/adverb/noun + *as* + clause

As and *though* can be used in a special structure after an adjective or adverb. In this case they both mean 'although', and suggest an emphatic contrast. (In American English only *as* is normally used like this; *though* is unusual.)

***Cold as/though** it was, we went out.* (= Although it was very cold, . . .)

***Bravely as/though** they fought, they had no chance of winning.*

***Much as/though** I respect your point of view, I can't agree.*

***Strange as/though** it may seem, I don't like watching cricket.*

After a noun, *though* can be used in this way (but not *as*).

***Scot though** she was, she supported the English team.*

Occasionally, the structure with *as* can be used to give a reason.

***Tired as** she was, I decided not to disturb her.* (= Because she was so tired . . .)

In American English, *as . . . as* is common.

***As cold as** it was, we went out.*

For the word order in structures like *I did as good a job as I could*, ► 187.

256 *than-* and *as*-clauses: leaving out subjects, etc

1 subjects: *more than is necessary; as happened*

Than and *as* can take the place of subjects in clauses (rather like relative pronouns).

He worries ~~more than they came last year.~~). ~~more than it/what is necessary.~~)

*There were a lot of people at the exhibition – more **than came** last year.*
(NOT . . . ~~*more than they came last year.*~~)

*The train might be late, **as happened** yesterday.* (NOT . . . ~~*as it happened yesterday.*~~)

*We've got food for as many people **as want** it.* (NOT . . . ~~*as they want it.*~~)

Common expressions with *as* in place of a subject: *as follows; as was expected; as was agreed; as is well known.*

I have prepared a new plan, ***as follows.*** (NOT . . . ~~*as it follows.*~~)
They lost money, ***as was expected.*** (NOT . . . ~~*as it was expected.*~~)
I am sending you the bill, ***as was agreed.*** (NOT . . . ~~*as it was agreed.*~~)
As is well known, *smoking is dangerous.* (NOT ~~*As it is well known*~~ . . .)

2 objects and complements: *as I did last year*

Than and *as* can also take the place of objects and complements.

They sent more vegetables ***than I had ordered.*** (NOT . . . ~~*than I had ordered them.*~~)
Don't lose your passport, ***as I did*** *last year.* (NOT . . . ~~*as I did it last year.*~~)
She was more frightened ***than I was.*** (NOT . . . ~~*than I was it.*~~)
You're as tired ***as I am.*** (NOT . . . ~~*as I am it.*~~)

Some English dialects use *what* after *as* and *than* in these cases.

They sent more paper ***than what*** *I had ordered.* (non-standard)
You're as tired ***as what*** *I am.* (non-standard)

Section 24 Noun Clauses, Direct and Indirect Speech

INTRODUCTION

uses of noun clauses

Clauses can act as subjects, objects or complements, just like noun phrases. Clauses used like this are called '**noun clauses**'. Compare:

- *The departure date doesn't matter.* (noun phrase subject)
  When we leave doesn't matter. (noun clause subject)
- *I told them a lie.* (noun phrase object)
  I told them that I knew nothing about it. (noun clause object)
- *The main thing is your happiness.* (noun phrase complement)
  The main thing is that you're happy. (noun clause complement)

Noun clauses begin with *that* and with question-words like *when*, *where* or *who*. They are common in indirect speech, where they can also begin with *if* and *whether*.

direct and indirect speech

When we report people's words, thoughts, beliefs, etc, we can give the exact words (more or less) that were said, or that we imagine were thought. This kind of structure is called '**direct speech**' (though it is used for reporting thoughts as well as speech).

So he said, 'I want to go home,' and just walked out.
She asked, 'What do you want?'
And then I thought, 'Does he really mean it?'

We can also make somebody's words or thoughts part of our own sentence, by using conjunctions with noun clauses, and changing pronouns, tenses and other words where necessary. This kind of structure is called '**indirect speech**' or 'reported speech'.

So he said that he wanted to go home, and just walked out.
She asked what I wanted.
And then I wondered whether he really meant it.

These two structures cannot normally be mixed.

She said to me, 'I've lost my keys'.
OR *She said to me that she had lost her keys.*
(BUT NOT ~~*She said to me that I have lost my keys.*~~)

For punctuation in direct speech, ▸ 296, 298. For reporting verbs and word order, ▸ 257.

rules for indirect speech

In many languages, indirect speech structures follow special rules and may have special tenses or verb forms. In English, the tenses in indirect speech are mostly the same as in other structures. Compare:

He was happy and he didn't want to go home.
He said he was happy and didn't want to go home.
He stayed out because he was happy and didn't want to go home.

So there is no need for learners to memorise complicated rules for the 'sequence of tenses' in indirect speech, or to practise converting direct speech to indirect speech. (Native speakers don't do this when they are reporting what people say or think.) In a few cases tense use follows special rules: ► 263.
This Section deals with direct speech, indirect speech and other uses of noun clauses.

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- ✗ 'You monster!' screamed she. ► 257.2
- ✗ James wanted to go home because he doesn't like that party. ► 258.4
- ✗ She told me that it has been a wonderful trip. ► 259.2
- ✗ He wanted to know what did I need. ► 260.1
- ✗ We asked where the money was? ► 260.2
- ✗ I am not certain if I see her tomorrow. ► 260.3
- ✗ The driver said whether I wanted the town centre. ► 260.4
- ✗ There was a big argument about if we should move. ► 261.2
- ✗ They can't decide if to get married. ► 261.3
- ✗ 'Are you happy?' 'If I'm happy?' ► 261.5
- ✗ I suggested him to try a different approach. ► 262.3
- ✗ The secretary said me not to park there. ► 262.3
- ✗ The Greeks thought that the sun goes round the earth. ► 263.2
- ✗ That she was foreign made it difficult for her to get a job. ► 264.3
- ✗ The judge paid no attention to that she had just lost her husband. ► 264.3
- ✗ Who do you think that is outside? ► 264.8
- ✗ He replied he was feeling better. ► 265.1
- ✗ He disagreed with Copernicus' view the earth went round the sun. ► 265.3

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257 direct speech: reporting verbs and word order

1 informal spoken reports: *said, thought*

When we repeat people's words or thoughts, we normally use *say* or *think*. They can go before sentences or at other natural breaks (e.g. between clauses or after discourse markers).

*So I **said**, 'What are you doing in our bedroom?' 'I'm sorry,' he **said**, 'I thought it was my room.' Well, I **thought**, that's funny, he's got my handbag open. 'If that's the case,' I **said**, 'what are you doing with my handbag?'*

2 literary direct speech: *ask, exclaim, suggest . . .*

In novels, short stories, etc, a much wider variety of reporting verbs are used: for example *ask, exclaim, suggest, reply, cry, reflect, suppose, grunt, snarl, hiss, whisper*. And reporting verbs are often put before their subjects ('inversion', ► 271).

*'Is this Mr Rochester's house?' **asked Emma**.*

*'Great Heavens!' **cried Celia**. 'Is there no end to your wickedness? I implore you – leave me alone!' 'Never,' **hissed the Duke** . . .*

Inversion is not normal with pronoun subjects.

*'You monster!' **she screamed**.* (NOT . . . ~~*screamed she*~~.)

In literary writing, reporting expressions often interrupt the normal flow of the sentences quoted.

*'Your information,' **I replied**, 'is out of date.'*

3 *I was like . . .*

In recent years the structure *be like*, meaning 'say', has become common in informal speech as a reporting formula, especially when describing people's attitudes.

***I was like**, 'Why don't you come out with us?', and **she was like**, 'OK, cool, what time?'*

Originally used mostly by young Americans, the structure is now common in the speech of many people of all ages in both Britain and North America.

*I didn't want to **be like**, 'Please be quiet'.* (A university teacher talking about students chatting in lectures.)

258 indirect speech: introduction

1 change of situation

Words that are spoken or thought in one place by one person may be reported in another place at a different time, and perhaps by another person. Because of this, there are often grammatical differences between direct and indirect speech. Compare:

JAMES (on Saturday evening): ***I don't like this** party. **I want** to go home **now**.*

JACKIE (on Saturday evening): *James says/said **he doesn't like the** party, and **he wants** to go home.*

DANIEL (on Sunday morning): *James said that* ***he didn't like the*** *party, and* ***he wanted*** *to go home.*

These differences are mostly natural and logical, and it is not necessary to learn complicated rules about indirect speech in English.

2 pronouns

A change of speaker may mean a change of pronoun.

In the above example, James says *I* to refer to himself. Jackie and Daniel, talking about what James said, naturally use *he*.

James said that ***he*** *didn't like . . .* (NOT ~~*James said that I didn't like . . .*~~)

3 'here and now' words

A change of place and time may mean changing or dropping words like *here, this, now, today*. Daniel, reporting what James said, does not use *this* and *now* because he is no longer at the party.

James said that he didn't like ***the*** *party . . .* (NOT ~~*James said that he didn't like this party . . .*~~)

. . . he wanted to go home. (NOT . . . ~~*to go home now.*~~)

Some other 'here and now' words: *next, last, yesterday, tomorrow*. Compare:

– DIRECT: *I'll be back* ***next week.***
INDIRECT: *She said she'd be back* ***the next week****, but I never saw her again.*

– DIRECT: *Anna got her licence* ***last Tuesday.***
INDIRECT: *He said Anna had got her licence* ***the Tuesday before.***

– DIRECT: *I had an accident* ***yesterday.***
INDIRECT: *He said he'd had an accident* ***the day before.***

– DIRECT: *We'll be there* ***tomorrow.***
INDIRECT: *They promised to be there* ***the next day.***

4 tenses

A change of time may mean a change of tense.

James said that he ***didn't*** *like the party . . .* (NOT ~~*James said that he doesn't like the party . . .*~~ – when Daniel is talking, the party is finished.)

5 dropping *that*

The conjunction *that* is often dropped, especially after common reporting verbs (e.g. *say, think*) in informal speech. For more details, ► 265.

She ***said (that)*** *she'd had enough.* *I* ***think (that)*** *you're probably right.*

259 indirect speech: tenses

1 past reporting verbs: *He said he didn't like the party.*

When we report what somebody said or thought, it is usually natural to use different tenses from the original speaker (because we are most often talking at a different time).

JAMES (on Saturday evening): *I* ***don't like*** *this party. I* ***want*** *to go home now.* (present tenses)

DANIEL (on Sunday morning): *James said that he* ***didn't like*** *the party, and he* ***wanted*** *to go home.* (past tenses) →

It would be strange for Daniel to say on Sunday *'James said that he doesn't like the party'*, just as it would be strange for Daniel to say, on Sunday, *'James doesn't like the party yesterday and goes home'*. The tenses used in indirect speech are usually just the tenses that are natural for the situation. Compare:

*James **didn't like** the party.* *James said he **didn't like** the party.*
*James wanted to go home because he **didn't like** the party.*

The second sentence is an example of indirect speech, but it uses exactly the same tense as the other two: the one that is natural.

2 examples of natural tense changes after past reporting verbs

simple present → simple past
DIRECT: *I **need** help.*
INDIRECT: *She thought she **needed** help.*

present progressive → past progressive
DIRECT: *My English **is getting** better.*
INDIRECT: *I knew my English **was getting** better.*

present perfect → past perfect
DIRECT: *This **has been** a wonderful trip.*
INDIRECT: *She told me that it **had been** a wonderful trip.*

past → past perfect
DIRECT: *Anna **grew** up in Kenya.*
INDIRECT: *I found out that Anna **had grown** up in Kenya.*

will → would
DIRECT: *The exam **will** be difficult.*
INDIRECT: *They said that the exam **would** be difficult.*

can → could
DIRECT: *I **can** fly!*
INDIRECT: *Poor chap – he thought he **could** fly.*

may → might
DIRECT: *We **may** come back early.*
INDIRECT: *They said they **might** come back early.*

Past perfect tenses do not change.
DIRECT: *I arrived late because I **had lost** the address.*
INDIRECT: *He said he had arrived late because he **had lost** the address.*

3 *would, could,* etc: no change

Past modal verbs are usually unchanged in indirect speech.
DIRECT: *It **would** be nice if we **could** meet.*
INDIRECT: *He said it **would** be nice if we **could** meet.*

For more details, ► 263.3.

4 *I told them I was British.*

After past reporting verbs, we usually change the original tenses even if the things the original speaker said are still true.

– DIRECT: *I'm British.*
INDIRECT: *I told the police I **was** British.* (The speaker is still British.)
– DIRECT: *You **can** use my car today.*
INDIRECT: *Your mother said I **could** use her car today. Have you got the keys?*
– DIRECT: *How old **are** you?*
INDIRECT: *Didn't you hear me? I asked how old you **were**.*
– DIRECT: *That **is** my seat.*
INDIRECT: *Sorry, I didn't realise this **was** your seat.*

However, it is often also possible to keep the original speaker's tenses in these cases.

*Didn't you hear me? I asked how old you **are**.*

For details, ▶ 263.2.

5 No tense change after *He says, I'll tell her*, etc

After present, future and present perfect reporting verbs, tenses are usually the same as in the original (because there is no important change of time).

– DIRECT: *I **don't** want to play any more.*
INDIRECT: *He says he **doesn't** want to play any more.*
– DIRECT: *We **need** some help.*
INDIRECT: *I'll tell her you **need** some help.*
– DIRECT: *Taxes **will** be raised.*
INDIRECT: *The government has announced that taxes **will** be raised.*

260 indirect speech: questions and answers

1 word order: *I asked where Alice was.*

In reported questions the subject normally comes before the verb in standard English, and auxiliary *do* is not used.

– DIRECT: *Where's Alice?*
INDIRECT: *I asked **where Alice was**.* (NOT USUALLY . . . *where was Alice.*)
– DIRECT: *When are you leaving?*
INDIRECT: *He wanted to know **when I was leaving**.* (NOT USUALLY . . . *when was I leaving.*)
– DIRECT: *What do I need?*
INDIRECT: *She asked **what she needed**.* (NOT . . . ~~*what did she need.*~~)
– DIRECT: *Where are the President and his wife staying?*
INDIRECT: *I asked **where the President and his wife were staying**.*
(NOT ~~*Where were staying* . . .~~)

The same structure is used for reporting the answers to questions.

*I knew **how they felt**.* (NOT . . . ~~*how did they feel.*~~)
*Nobody told me **why I had to sign** the paper.*
(NOT . . . ~~*why did I have to sign* . . .~~)
*She explained **what the problem was**.*
*They haven't told me **where I'm going to work**.* →

In very informal speech, indirect questions sometimes have the same word order as direct questions:

He asked when ***was I*** *leaving.*

We're wondering ***will we*** *get to Cardiff on time,* ***will we*** *be able to park.*

2 no question marks

Question marks are not used in reported questions.

We asked ***where the money was.*** (NOT . . . ~~*where the money was?*~~)

3 *yes/no* questions: *He asked if . . .*

Yes/No questions are reported with *if* or *whether* (for the difference, ► 261).

The driver asked ***if/whether*** *I wanted the town centre.*

I don't know ***if/whether*** *I can help you.*

In reported questions, we do not use a present tense after *if* to talk about the future.

I'm not sure ***if I'll see her tomorrow.*** (NOT . . . ~~*if I see her tomorrow.*~~)

4 *say* and *tell*: answers, not questions

Say and *tell* are not used to report questions.

NOT ~~*The driver said whether I wanted the town centre.*~~

But *say* and *tell* can introduce the answers to questions.

Please ***say whether you want*** *the town centre.*

He never ***says where he's going.*** *I* ***told*** *her* ***what time it was.***

For the difference between *say* and *tell*, ► 572.

261 *whether* and *if*

1 indirect questions

Whether and *if* can both introduce indirect questions.

I'm not sure ***whether/if*** *I'll have time.*

I asked ***whether/if*** *she had any messages for me.*

After verbs that are more common in a formal style, *whether* is preferred.

We ***discussed whether*** *we should close the shop.* (More normal than *We discussed if . . .*)

In a formal style, *whether* is usually preferred in a two-part question with *or*.

The Directors have not decided ***whether*** *they will recommend a dividend* ***or*** *reinvest the profits.*

If an indirect question is fronted (► 272), *whether* is used.

Whether I'll have time *I'm not sure at the moment.*

2 prepositions

After prepositions, only *whether* is possible.

There was a big argument ***about whether*** *we should move to a new house.* (NOT . . . ~~*about if we should move*~~ . . .)

I haven't settled the question ***of whether*** *I'll go back home.*

3 infinitives

Whether, but not *if*, is used before *to*-infinitives.

They can't decide ***whether to get*** *married now or wait.* (NOT ~~*They can't decide if to get married . . .*~~)

4 subject, complement and adverbial clauses

When a question-word clause is a subject or complement, *whether* is normally preferred.

***Whether we can stay** with my mother is another matter.* (subject)

*The question is **whether the man can be trusted**.* (complement)

The question is if . . . is also possible, but less common.

***The question is if** the man can be trusted.*

5 not used in echo questions

If and *whether* are not normally used in 'echo questions' (► 304).

'Are you happy?' 'Am I happy? No!' (NOT . . . ~~*If/Whether I'm happy?*~~ . . .)

262 indirect speech: infinitives

1 *He promised to write.*

Speech relating to actions (e.g. promises, agreements, orders, offers, requests, advice and suggestions) is often reported with infinitives.

*He promised **to write**.* *She agreed **to wait** for me.*

*Anna has offered **to babysit** tonight.*

Object + infinitive is common with *ask, advise, tell* and *order* (but not normally with *offer*).

*I told **Andrew to be** careful.*

*The landlady has asked **us to be** quiet after nine o'clock.*

*I advise **you to think** again before you decide.*

*The policeman told **me not to park** there.*

BUT NOT ~~*Anna has offered us to babysit tonight.*~~

2 *He asked her how to . . .*

The structure **question word + infinitive** is common (► 111). It often corresponds to a direct question with *should*.

*He asked her **how to make** a white sauce.* ('How should I make a white sauce?')

*Don't tell me **what to do**.* *I've forgotten **where to put** the keys.*

*I didn't know **whether to laugh or cry**.*

3 *suggest, say*: infinitives not used

We do not use infinitive structures after *suggest* (► 598) or (usually) after *say*. However, after these and many other verbs, we can report instructions, etc with *that*-clauses, usually with modal verbs.

*I **suggested that he should try** a different approach.*
(NOT ~~*I suggested him to try*~~ . . .)

*The secretary **said that I mustn't park** there.* (NOT ~~*The secretary said me not to park there.*~~)

*I told **Andrew that he ought to be** careful.*

Subjunctives (► 232) and *-ing* forms are also possible after some verbs, e.g. *suggest*. Subjunctives are particularly common in American English.

*I **suggested that he try** a different approach.*

*I **suggested trying** a different approach.*

For the structures that are possible after particular verbs, see a good dictionary.

263 indirect speech: advanced points

1 reporting past tenses

In indirect speech, a speaker's past tenses are often reported using past perfect tenses.

– DIRECT: *I've just **written** to Jack.*
INDIRECT: *She told me she **had** just **written** to Jack.*
– DIRECT: *I **saw** Penny at the theatre a couple of days ago.*
INDIRECT: *In her email, she said she'**d seen** Penny at the theatre a couple of days before.*

However, past perfect tenses are not always used, especially if the time relationships are clear without a change from past to past perfect.

*This man on TV said that dinosaurs **were** around for 250 million years.* (NOT . . . ~~*that dinosaurs had been around*~~ . . .)
*I told you Jack **(had) phoned** this morning, didn't I?*
*We were glad to hear you **(had) enjoyed** your trip to Denmark.*

2 reporting present and future tenses

If somebody talked about a situation that has still not changed – that is to say, if the original speaker's present and future are still present and future – a reporter can often choose whether to keep the original speaker's tenses or to change them, after a past reporting verb. Both structures are common.

– DIRECT: *The earth **goes** round the sun.*
INDIRECT: *He proved that the earth **goes/went** round the sun.*
– DIRECT: *How old **are** you?*
INDIRECT: *Are you deaf? I asked how old you **are/were**.*
– DIRECT: *It **will** be windy tomorrow.*
INDIRECT: *The forecast said it **will/would** be windy tomorrow.*

We are more likely to change the original speaker's tenses if we do not agree with what he/she said, if we are not certain of its truth, or if we wish to make it clear that the information comes from the original speaker, not from ourselves.

*The Greeks thought that the sun **went** round the earth.* (NOT . . . ~~*that the sun goes round the earth.*~~)
*She just said she **was** thirty! I don't believe her for a moment.*
*He announced that profits **were** higher than forecast.*

3 modal verbs in indirect speech

The modals *would, should, could, might, ought* and *must* are usually unchanged after past reporting verbs in indirect speech. This is also true of *needn't* (► 532) and *had better* (► 77).

– DIRECT: *It **would** be nice if I **could** see you again.*
INDIRECT: *He said it **would** be nice if he **could** see me again.*
– DIRECT: *It **might** be too late.*
INDIRECT: *I was afraid that it **might** be too late.*
– DIRECT: *It **must** be pretty late. I really **must** go.*
INDIRECT: *She said it **must** be pretty late and she really **must** go.*
– DIRECT: *You **needn't** pretend to be sorry.*
INDIRECT: *I said he **needn't** pretend . . .*

First-person *shall* and *should* may be reported as *would* in indirect speech (because of the change of person).

DIRECT: *We **shall/should** be delighted to come.*
INDIRECT: *They said they **would** be delighted to come.*

For *had to* as a past of *must*, ► 73.5.

4 reporting *'Shall I . . .?'*

There are different ways of reporting questions beginning *Shall I . . .?*, depending on whether the speaker is asking for information or making an offer.

– DIRECT: ***Shall I** be needed tomorrow?* (BrE, information)
INDIRECT: *He wants to know if he **will** be needed tomorrow.*
– DIRECT: ***Shall I** carry your bag?* (offer)
INDIRECT: *He wants to know if he **should/can/could** carry your bag.*

5 conditionals

After past reporting verbs, sentences with *if* and *would* are usually unchanged.

DIRECT: *It **would** be best if we **started** early.*
INDIRECT: *He said it **would** be best if they **started** early.*

However, *if*-sentences that refer to 'unreal' situations can change as follows.

DIRECT: *If I **had** any money I'd **buy** you a drink.*
INDIRECT: *She said if she **had had** any money, she **would have bought** me a drink.* (OR *She said if she **had** any money, she **would buy** . . .*)

6 negative questions

Negative questions often express emotions such as surprise or enthusiasm (► 218), and these are usually reported in special ways.

– DIRECT: *Don't the children like ice cream?*
INDIRECT: ***She was surprised** that the children didn't like ice cream.* (NOT ~~*She asked if the children didn't like ice cream.*~~)
– DIRECT: *Isn't she lovely!*
INDIRECT: ***I remarked** how lovely she was.* (NOT ~~*I asked if she wasn't lovely.*~~)

7 word order with *what, who* and *which*

Questions beginning ***who/what/which** + **be*** can ask for a subject or a complement. Compare:

***Who is** the best player here?* (This asks for a subject: a possible answer is ***Jack** is the best player here.*)
***What is** the time?* (This asks for a complement: a possible answer is *The time is **4.30**,* NOT ~~*4.30 is the time.*~~)

When we report the first kind of question (where ***who/what/which** + **be*** asks for a subject), two word orders are possible.

– DIRECT: *Who's the best player here?*
INDIRECT: *She asked me **who was the best player.***
*She asked me **who the best player was.***
– DIRECT: *What's the matter?*
INDIRECT: *I asked **what was the matter.***
*I asked **what the matter was.*** →

– DIRECT: *Which is my seat?*
INDIRECT: *She wondered **which was her seat.***
*She wondered **which her seat was.***

This does not normally happen when *who/what/which* asks for a complement, except in very informal speech.

DIRECT: *What's the time?*
INDIRECT: *She asked **what the time was.*** (informally also *She asked what was the time.*)

8 *She's written I don't know how many books.*

Complicated structures can be produced in informal speech when reporting expressions are put into sentences with question-word clauses or relatives.

*She's written **I don't know how many books.***
*He's gone **I don't know where.***
*This is the man who **Anna said would tell us about the church.***

For more about relative structures of this kind, ► 237.17.
For more about embedding (clauses inside clauses) in general, ► 285.5.

9 indirect speech without reporting verbs

In newspaper, radio and TV reports, reports of parliamentary debates, records of conferences, minutes of meetings, etc, the indirect speech construction is often used with very few reporting verbs. The use of tenses is enough to make it clear that a text is a report.

*The Managing Director began his address to the shareholders by summarising the results for the year. Profits on the whole **had been** high, though one or two areas **had been** disappointing. It **was**, however, important to maintain a high level of investment, and he **was** sure that the shareholders **would appreciate** . . .*

In literary narrative, similar structures are common. The reported speech may be made more vivid by using direct question structures and 'here and now' words.

At breakfast, Daniel refused to go to school. Why should he spend all his time sitting listening to idiots? What use was all that stuff anyway? If he stayed at home he could read books. He might even learn something useful. His father, as usual, was unsympathetic. Daniel had to go to school, by damn, and he had better get moving now, or there'd be trouble.

264 *that*-clauses

1 *that* as a connector

That is a conjunction with little real meaning. It simply functions as a connector – it shows that a clause forms part of a larger sentence. Compare:

I understood. He was innocent. (two separate sentences)
*I understood **that** he was innocent.* (The clause *he was innocent* has become the object of the verb in the larger sentence.)

2 *that*-clauses in sentences

A *that*-clause can be the subject of a sentence. (This is very formal and unusual.)

That she should forget me so quickly *was rather a shock.*

It can be a complement after *be.*

The main thing is ***that you're happy.***

Many verbs can have *that*-clauses as objects.

We ***knew that*** *the next day would be difficult.*

I ***regretted that*** *I was not going to be at the meeting.*

And many nouns and adjectives can be followed by *that*-clauses.

I admire your ***belief that*** *you are always right.*

The Minister is ***anxious that*** *nothing should get into the papers.*

3 *the fact that . . .*

It is unusual for *that*-clauses to stand alone as subjects. They are more often introduced by the expression *the fact.*

The fact that *she was foreign made it difficult for her to get a job.* (NOT ~~*That she was foreign made it difficult*~~ . . .)

The fact that *Simon had disappeared didn't seem to worry anybody.*
(More natural than *That Simon had disappeared didn't* . . .)

The fact also introduces *that*-clauses after prepositions (*that*-clauses cannot follow prepositions directly).

The judge paid no attention ***to the fact that*** *she had just lost her husband.*
(NOT . . . ~~*paid no attention to that she had just*~~ . . .)

He held her completely responsible ***for the fact that*** *she took food without paying for it.* (NOT . . . ~~*responsible for that she took*~~ . . .)

In spite ***of the fact that*** *she had three small children, he sent her to prison for six months.* (NOT ~~*In spite of that she had*~~ . . .)

For cases when prepositions are dropped before *that*-clauses, ▸ 210.

4 preparatory *it*

It is often used as a preparatory subject or object for a *that*-clause (▸ 268–269).

It *surprised me* ***that he was still in bed.*** (More natural than *That he was still in bed surprised me.*)

She made ***it*** *clear* ***that she was not interested.*** (NOT ~~*She made that she was not interested clear.*~~)

For reasons why *that*-clauses are often moved to the ends of sentences, ▸ 267.

5 *that*-clauses after verbs, nouns and adjectives

Some verbs, nouns or adjectives can be followed by *that*-clauses; some cannot. Compare:

– *I* ***hope that*** *you will have a wonderful time.*
I want you to have a wonderful time. (NOT ~~*I want that you'll have*~~ . . .)

– *I understood his* ***wish that*** *we should be there.*
I understood the importance of our being there. (NOT . . . ~~*the importance that we should be there.*~~)

– *It's* ***essential that*** *you visit the art museum.*
It's worth your visiting the art museum. (NOT ~~*It's worth that you visit*~~ . . .)

Unfortunately, there is no easy way to decide which nouns, verbs or adjectives can be followed by *that*-clauses. It is best to check in a good dictionary. →

6 *should* in *that*-clauses: *It's important that . . . should*

In formal British English, *should* can be used in *that*-clauses after adjectives and nouns expressing the importance of an action (e.g. *important, necessary, vital, essential, eager, anxious, concerned, wish*).

It's ***important*** *that somebody* ***should*** *talk to the police.*
Is it ***necessary*** *that my uncle* ***should*** *be informed?*
I'm ***anxious*** *that nobody* ***should*** *be hurt.*
It is his ***wish*** *that the money* ***should*** *be given to charity.*

This also happens after some verbs expressing similar ideas, especially in sentences about the past.

He ***insisted*** *that the contract* ***should*** *be read aloud.*
I ***recommended*** *that she* ***should*** *reduce her expenditure.*

In a less formal style, other structures are preferred.

It's ***important*** *that she* ***talks*** *to me when she gets here.*
Was it ***necessary to tell*** *my uncle?*

In American English, this use of *should* is unusual; subjunctives may be used (► 232).

It's important that somebody ***talk*** *to the police.*
Was it necessary that my uncle ***be*** *informed?*
I recommend that she ***reduce*** *her expenditure.*

7 *should* in *that*-clauses: *It's surprising that . . . should*

Should is also used in subordinate clauses after words expressing personal judgements and reactions, especially to facts which are already known or have already been mentioned. (This use, too, is more common in British than American English. It is not particularly formal.)

It's ***surprising*** *that she* ***should*** *say that to you.*
I was ***shocked*** *that she* ***shouldn't*** *have invited Phyllis.*
I'm ***sorry*** *you* ***should*** *think I did it on purpose.*
Do you think it's ***normal*** *that the child* ***should*** *be so tired?*

In American English, *would* is more usual in this kind of sentence.

It was ***natural*** *that they* ***would*** *want him to go to a good school.*
(BrE . . . *that they should . . .*)

Sentences like these can also be constructed without *should*. Subjunctives cannot be used.

It's ***surprising*** *that she* ***says/said*** *that sort of thing to you.*
(BUT NOT ~~*It's surprising that she say . . .*~~)
I was ***shocked*** *that she* ***didn't*** *invite Phyllis.*

For *should* in *if*-clauses, ► 244.1; after *in case*, ► 248.2; after *lest*, ► 511; after *so that* and *in order that*, ► 588.

8 *Who do you wish (that) you'd married?*

A *wh*-question usually refers to the main clause which starts with the question word. However, questions can also refer to subordinate *that*-clauses after verbs like *wish, think* or *say*.

Who do you wish ***(that) you'd married****, then?*
How long do you think ***(that) we should wait****?*
What did you say ***(that) you wanted*** *for Christmas?*

That is usually dropped in cases like these; it must be dropped when the question word refers to the subject of the subordinate clause.

Who** do you think **is outside? (NOT ~~*Who do you think that is outside?*~~)

What** do you suppose **will happen now? (NOT ~~*What do you suppose that will happen now?*~~)

9 compound conjunctions

Some conjunctions are made up of two or more words, including *that*. Common examples: *so that, in order that, provided that, providing that, seeing that, given that, now that.*

*I got here early **so that** we could have a few minutes alone together.*

*I'll come with you **providing that** James doesn't mind.*

*OK, I'll help you, **seeing that** you asked so nicely.*

***Given that** I'm free on Monday, we could go to Scotland for the weekend.*

For the relative pronoun *that*, ► 233.

265 leaving out *that*

We can often leave out the conjunction *that*, especially in an informal style.

1 indirect speech: *He said (that) . . .*

That can be left out informally after many common reporting verbs.

*James **said (that)** he was feeling better.*

*I **thought (that)** you were in Ireland.*

*The waiter **suggested (that)** we should go home.*

That cannot be dropped after certain verbs, especially verbs that are normally intransitive – e.g. *reply, email, shout.*

*James **replied that** he was feeling better.* (NOT ~~*James replied he was . . .*~~)

*She **shouted that** she was busy.* (NOT ~~*She shouted she was busy.*~~)

2 after adjectives: *I'm glad you're all right.*

We can leave out *that* in clauses after some common adjectives.

*I'm **glad (that)** you're all right.* *It's **funny (that)** he hasn't written.*

*We were **surprised (that)** she came.*

3 not dropped after nouns

That is not usually dropped after nouns.

*I did not believe his **claim that** he was ill.* (More natural than . . . *his claim he was ill.*)

*He disagreed with Copernicus' **view that** the earth went round the sun.* (NOT . . . ~~*Copernicus' view the earth went . . .*~~)

4 conjunctions

That can be left out in an informal style in some common two-word conjunctions, such as *so that, such . . . that, now that, providing that, provided that, supposing that, considering that, assuming that.*

*Come in quietly **so (that)** she doesn't hear you.*

*I was having **such** a nice time **(that)** I didn't want to leave.* →

The garden looks nice ***now (that)*** *we've got some flowers out.*
You can borrow it ***provided (that)*** *you bring it back tomorrow.*
Assuming (that) *nobody gets lost, we'll all meet again here at six o'clock.*

5 relative structures

We can usually leave out the relative pronoun *that* when it is the object in a relative clause (► 234.4).

Look! There are the people ***(that) we met in Brighton.***
Do it the way ***(that) I showed you.***

266 interrogative (question-word) clauses

Besides their use in indirect speech, clauses beginning with question-words (*who, what, where,* etc) can act as subjects, complements or adverbials. This structure is often rather informal (especially with *how*-clauses, ► 492).

Who you invite *is your business.* *A hot bath is* ***what I need.***
Where we stay *doesn't matter.* *This is* ***how much I've done.***
I'm surprised at ***how fast she can run.***
You can eat it ***how you like.*** (very informal)

The 'preparatory *it*' structure is often used with subject clauses (► 268).

It's your business who you invite. ***It doesn't matter where we stay.***

For *who, which,* etc in relative clauses (e.g. *the woman* ***who teaches me Spanish***), ► 233; for relative *what* (e.g. ***What she said*** *made me angry*), ► 236.

Section 25 Information Structure

INTRODUCTION

Sentences are not usually isolated: they mostly fit into longer pieces of communication, for example written texts or spoken exchanges. So the way we choose to organise the information in a clause or sentence will partly depend on things outside the sentence: for example what has been said before, or what is already known, or what the speaker or writer wants to emphasise. This is a complicated area of grammar in all languages. This Section looks at ways in which English allows speakers and writers to arrange information in sentences effectively, both by using normal sentence structure and by varying the normal order. The structure of longer texts and exchanges is looked at in Sections 26–27.

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- ✗ He made that he was not interested clear. ► 267.4
- ✗ It is not comfortable to sit on this chair. ► 268.7
- ✗ It was given the impression that travel expenses would be paid. ► 268.7
- ✗ I cannot bear it to see people crying. ► 269.1
- ✗ I would appreciate if you would send me a receipt. ► 269.3
- ✗ Under no circumstances we can accept late payment. ► 270.7
- ✗ Hardly I had arrived when trouble started. ► 270.7
- ✗ Here Freddy comes! ► 271.1
- ✗ Here your keys are. ► 271.1
- ✗ It were the students that were angry. ► 273.1
- ✗ It's Greek that her husband is. ► 273.1
- ✗ She didn't know where she was when woke up. ► 276.3
- ✗ Poor little! ► 278.1
- ✗ The most important is to keep calm. ► 278.1
- ✗ 'Let's go for a walk.' 'I don't want.' ► 280.3
- ✗ There are more flowers here than there used to. ► 280.1

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267 information structure: normal order and variations

1 normal order: important new information last

Most often, a clause or sentence moves from 'known' to 'new': from low to high information value. So we often choose as the subject a person or thing that is already being talked about or that has already been mentioned, or something that the speaker and hearer are both familiar with, or even some new information that is not the main point of the message. The important new information generally comes at the end of a clause or sentence.

*'How's Joe these days?' 'Oh, fine. He's **just got married to a very nice girl.***'
(More natural than . . . *A very nice girl's just got married to him.*)

*My father **was bitten by a dog last week.*** (More natural than *A dog bit my father last week.*)

*Our dog **bit somebody this morning.*** (More natural than *Somebody was bitten by our dog this morning.*)

*'I can't find my clothes.' 'Well, your shirt's **under my coat.***'
(More natural than . . . *My coat's on your shirt.*)

To avoid immediately beginning a clause with a completely new element, we can often use the *there is* structure. For details, ► 20.

There's a cat on the roof. (More natural than *A cat's on the roof.*)

For 'known' and 'new' information with *as, since* and *because*, ► 377.

2 choosing the right verb

We can often get the most suitable subject by choosing the right verb. Compare:

- ***The furniture factory employs** 7,000 people.*
  ***7,000 people work for** the furniture factory.*
- ***He led** the children through the silent streets.*
  ***The children followed** him through the silent streets.*

3 choosing the right structure

In many situations, there is an 'agent' (the person or thing who does something) and a 'patient' (the person or thing that something is done to). If we want to make the agent the subject, we can usually do this by choosing an active verb form (► 2).

***The gale blew** Charlotte's roof off.*
***Somebody's dropped** ketchup all over the floor.*

If we want to make the patient the subject, we can usually do this by choosing a passive verb form (► 57).

***Charlotte's roof was blown** off by the gale.*
***Ketchup has been dropped** all over the floor.*

If we want to make something else the subject, we can often do this by using a structure with ***have*** **+ object + past participle** (► 109.3).

***Charlotte had her roof blown** off by the gale.*
***The floor has had ketchup dropped** all over it.*

Structures with *have* are often used to 'personalise' a situation by making a person the subject.

***I've got** the house full of children.* (instead of *The house is full of children.* OR *There are children all over the house.*)

4 end-weight: *It worried me that she hadn't been in touch.*

Longer and heavier structures usually come last in a clause or sentence. (These usually have the highest 'information-value' in any case.)

*Children are sometimes discouraged by **the length of time it takes to learn a musical instrument.*** (More natural than *The length of time it takes to learn a musical instrument sometimes discourages children.*)

Because of this, we often use a structure with '**preparatory *it***' in order to move a clause subject or object to the end of a sentence. For details, ► 268–269.

It** worried me **that she hadn't been in touch for so long. (More natural than *That she hadn't been in touch for so long worried me.*)

It's** important **to tell us everything you know. (More natural than *To tell us everything you know is important.*)

*He made **it** clear **that he was not in the least interested.*** (NOT ~~*He made that he was not in the least interested clear.*~~)

Adverbials do not normally separate the verb from the object in an English clause (► 196.1). However, a very long and heavy object may come after a shorter adverbial. Compare:

*She plays the violin **very well*** (NOT ~~*She plays very well the violin.*~~)

*She plays **very well** almost any instrument that you can think of and several that you can't.*

End-weight can also affect the word order of indirect questions. Compare:

*I'm not sure what the point **is**.*

*I'm not sure what **is** the point of spending hours and hours discussing this.*

5 changing the order: inversion and fronting

If we move to the end of a sentence something that does not normally belong there, this can draw extra attention to it. Fronting (► 272, 299.3) has this effect.

*This question **we have already discussed.***

*People like that **I just can't stand.*** *He's a funny guy, **old Fred.***

Inversion (putting the verb before the subject: ► 271) is not only used for forming questions. It can also help to structure the flow of information.

*Along the road **came a strange procession.*** (highlighting 'a strange procession')

6 separating out what is important: cleft sentences

Cleft sentences (► 273–274) separate out one part of a clause for special attention and put it at the beginning or end. The rest is moved into the background, in a relative clause.

***It was your child** who broke the window.* (highlighting 'your child')

What** I need is **a good rest. (highlighting 'a good rest')

7 dropping what is unimportant: ellipses

If we leave out unnecessary words, this puts more emphasis on the rest, helping to show what is important. This can happen in various ways in speech and writing, ► 275–280.

268 preparatory *it*: subject

1 *It's nice to talk to you.*

When the subject of a clause is an infinitive expression, this does not normally come at the beginning. We usually prefer to start with the '**preparatory subject**' *it*, and to put the infinitive expression later (long or complicated items are often put towards the end of a sentence, ► 267). Preparatory *it* is common before *be* + **adjective/noun**.

It's nice ***to talk*** *to you.* (More natural than *To talk to you is nice.*)
It was good of you ***to phone.***
It was stupid of you ***to leave*** *the door unlocked.*
It's important ***to reserve*** *in advance.*
It's my ambition ***to run*** *a three-hour marathon.*
It was a pleasure ***to listen*** *to her.*
It upsets me ***to hear*** *people arguing all the time.*

It can also be a preparatory subject for ***for*** **+ object + infinitive** (► 113).

It will suit me best ***for you to arrive*** *at about ten o'clock.*
It's essential ***for the papers to be*** *ready before Thursday.*

2 *It's probable that we'll be late.*

We also use preparatory *it* when the subject of a clause is itself a clause beginning with *that, what, how,* etc.

It's probable ***that we'll be a little late.***
It doesn't interest me ***what you think.***
It's surprising ***how many unhappy marriages there are.***
It's exciting ***when a baby starts talking.***

3 *It was nice seeing you.*

It can be a preparatory subject for an *-ing* form. This is usually informal.

It was nice ***seeing*** *you.* *It's crazy her* ***going*** *off like that.*
It's worth ***going*** *to Wales if you have the time.*
It's no use ***trying*** *to explain – I'm not interested.*
It surprised me you not ***remembering*** *my name.*

For more information about structures with *worth*, ► 634.
For *there* as a preparatory subject with *any/no use*, ► 20.2.

4 *It takes . . .* + infinitive

Note the common use of this structure to say how much time is necessary (► 602).

It ***took*** *me months to get to know her.*
How long does ***it take*** *to get to London from here?*

5 *if, as if* and *as though*

It is used to introduce some clauses with *if, as if* and *as though.*

It looks ***as if*** *we're going to have trouble with Anna again.*
It's not ***as if*** *this was the first time she's been difficult.*
It will be a pity ***if*** *we have to ask her to leave.*
But it looks ***as though*** *we may have to.*

6 *It's amazing the way they work together.*

It is not normally used as a preparatory subject for noun phrases.

The new concert hall is wonderful. (NOT ~~*It's wonderful the new concert hall.*~~)

But in an informal style, *it* can be a preparatory subject for **noun + relative clause**.

***It's** wonderful **the enthusiasm that the children show**.*

This is very common with *the way . . .*

***It's** amazing **the way (that) they work together**.*

***It's** strange **the way you know what I'm thinking**.*

For passive structures with *it* as a preparatory subject, ► 63.

7 preparatory *it* not possible for complements

It can be used as a preparatory subject, or as a preparatory object (► 269), but not as a preparatory complement.

*This chair is comfortable **to sit on**.* BUT NOT ~~*It is comfortable to sit on this chair.*~~ (*to sit on* is the complement of *comfortable*.)

*The impression was given **that travel expenses would be paid**.* BUT NOT ~~*It was given the impression that travel expenses would be paid.*~~ (*that travel expenses . . .* is the complement of the *impression*.)

269 preparatory *it*: object

1 *I find it difficult to talk to you.*

We can sometimes use *it* as a '**preparatory object**'. This happens when the object of a verb is an infinitive or a clause, and when this has an adjective or noun complement. For example, instead of saying '*I find **to talk to you difficult***', we prefer '*I find **it** difficult **to talk to you***'.

subject + verb + *it* + complement + infinitive/clause

*We found **it** tiring **to listen to him**.* *My blister made **it** a problem **to walk**.*

*I thought **it** strange **that she hadn't written**.*

*George made **it** clear **what he wanted**.*

It is quite often dropped from *make (it) clear that . . .*

*The Prime Minister **has made clear that** he will not allow a free vote.*

Note that this structure is not normally used when there is no adjective or noun complement after the verb.

I cannot bear to see people crying. (NOT ~~*I cannot bear it to see people crying.*~~)

I remember that we were very happy. (NOT ~~*I remember it that . . .*~~)

But note the structure *I like/love/hate it when . . .*

***I love it when** you sing.* ***I hate it when** strangers use my first name.*

Note also the idiom *I take it that . . .* (= I assume that . . .).

***I take it that** you won't be working tomorrow.*

2 *I found it strange being . . .*

This structure is also possible with *-ing* form objects.

*I found **it** strange **being** in her house.* →

3 *I would appreciate it if . . .*

It is used as a preparatory object for an *if*-clause after *would appreciate.*

*I **would appreciate it if** you would keep me informed.* (NOT ~~*I would appreciate if you would . . .*~~)

4 *owe* and *leave*

Note the structures *owe it to somebody to . . .* and *leave it to somebody to . . .*

*We **owe it to society to** make our country a better place.*

*I'll **leave it to you to** decide.*

270 inversion: auxiliary verb before subject

We put an auxiliary verb (and non-auxiliary *have* and *be*) directly before the subject of a clause in several different structures.

1 questions

***Have your father and mother** arrived?* (NOT ~~*Have arrived your father and mother?*~~)

*Where **is the concert** taking place?* (NOT ~~*Where is taking place the concert?*~~ OR ~~*Where the concert is taking place?*~~)

Spoken questions do not always have this word order (► 302).

***You're** coming tomorrow?*

Indirect questions do not usually have this order (► 260).

*I wondered what time **the film was starting**.* (NOT . . . ~~*what time was the film starting.*~~)

However, in formal writing inversion is sometimes used with *be* in indirect questions after *how*, especially when the subject is long.

*I wondered how reliable **was the information** I had been given.*

2 exclamations

Exclamations (► 223) often have the form of negative questions (► 218).

***Isn't it** cold?* ***Hasn't she** got lovely eyes?*

In spoken American English, exclamations often have the same form as ordinary (non-negative) questions (but with different intonation).

***Have you** got a surprise coming!* ***Was I** mad!*

In a rather old-fashioned literary style, inversion is sometimes found in exclamations after *how* and *what.*

*How beautiful **are the flowers**!* *What a peaceful place **is Skegness**!*

3 with *may*

May can come before the subject in wishes.

***May all your wishes** come true!*

4 after *so, neither, nor*

In 'short answers' and similar structures, these words are followed by **auxiliary verb + subject**.

*'I'm hungry.' 'So **am I**.'* *'I don't like opera.' 'Neither/Nor **do I**.'*

For more details of these structures, ► 309.

5 after *as, than* and *so*

Inversion sometimes happens after *as*, *than* and *so* in a literary style.

She was very religious, ***as were most of her friends****.*
City dwellers have a higher death rate ***than do country people****.*
So *ridiculous* ***did she look*** *that everybody burst out laughing.*

6 conditional clauses: *Were she my daughter . . .*

In formal and literary conditional clauses, an auxiliary verb can be put before the subject instead of using *if* (► 244.5).

Were she *my daughter . . .* (= If she were my daughter . . .)
Had I *realised what you intended . . .* (= If I had realised . . .)

Negatives are not contracted in this case.

Had we not *spent all our money already, . . .* (NOT ~~*Hadn't we spent . . .*~~)

7 after negative and restrictive expressions: *At no time was he . . .*

If a negative adverb or adverbial expression is put at the beginning of a clause for emphasis, it is usually followed by **auxiliary verb + subject**. These structures are mostly rather formal.

Under no circumstances can we *accept late payment.*
At no time was the President *aware of what was happening.*
Not until much later did she *learn who her real father was.*

The same structure is possible after a complete clause beginning *not until . . .*

Not until he received her letter did he *fully understand her feelings.*

Inversion is also used after restrictive words like *hardly* (in BrE), *seldom, rarely, little* and *never*, and after ***only*** + **time expression**. This is formal or literary.

Hardly had I *arrived when trouble started.* (BrE)
Seldom have I *seen such a remarkable creature.*
Little did he *realise the danger he faced.*
Never . . . was so much *owed by so many to so few.* (Churchill)
Only then did I *understand what she meant.*
Only after her death was I *able to appreciate her.*
Not only did we *lose our money, but we were nearly killed.*
Not a single word did he *say.*

Inversion is not used after *not far . . .* and *not long . . .*

Not far *from here* ***you can*** *see foxes.* (NOT ~~*Not far from here can you . . .*~~)
Not long *after that* ***she got*** *married.*

271 inversion: full verb before subject

1 after adverbial expressions of place: *Along the road came . . .*

When an adverbial expression of place or direction comes at the beginning of a clause, intransitive verbs are often put before their subjects. This happens especially when a new indefinite subject is being introduced. The structure is most common in literary and descriptive writing.

Under a tree ***was lying one of the biggest men*** *I had ever seen.*
On the grass ***sat an enormous frog****.*
Directly in front of them ***stood a great castle****.*
Along the road ***came a strange procession****.* →

This structure is often used in speech with *here*, *there* and other short adverbs and adverb particles.

Here ***comes Freddy!*** (NOT ~~*Here Freddy comes!*~~)
There ***goes your brother.***
I stopped the car, and up ***walked a police officer.***
The door opened and out ***came Angela's boyfriend.***

If the subject is a pronoun, it goes before the verb.

Here ***she comes.*** (NOT ~~*Here comes she.*~~) *Off* ***we go!***

Inversion is normal in *here/there is/are . . .*

Here are *your keys.* (NOT ~~*Here your keys are.*~~)
Look – ***there's*** *the bus.*

In informal speech, *here's* and *there's* often introduce plural subjects (► 130.6).

Here's *those papers you wanted.*

2 reporting: *'What do you mean?' asked Henry.*

In story-telling, the subject often comes after reporting verbs like *said*, *asked*, *suggested*, etc when these follow direct speech.

'What do you mean?' ***asked Henry.*** (OR . . . *Henry asked.*)
'I love you,' ***whispered Jess.***

If the subject is a pronoun, it usually comes before the verb.

'What do you mean?' ***he asked.***

272 fronting: *This question we have already discussed.*

1 *People like that I just can't stand.*

Affirmative sentences most often begin with the grammatical subject.

I *just can't stand people like that.*

If we begin a sentence with something else ('fronting'), this is often to make it the topic – the thing we are talking about – even though it is not the grammatical subject. This can also move the main new information to the end – its most natural position (► 267).

This question *we have already discussed at some length.*
All the other information which you need *I am sending today.* (from a business letter)
Any video in our catalogue *we can supply, if available.* (notice in music shop)

Fronting is particularly common in speech.

People like that *I just can't stand.* ***These books*** *I'm just going to give away.*
(A) fat lot of good *that does me.* (= 'That doesn't do me much good', but putting strong emphasis on *me*.)

Question-word clauses (► 266) are often fronted.

What I'm going to do next *I just don't know.*
How she got the gun through customs *we never found out.*

2 *Very good lesson we had.*

Fronting words in short sentences can also give them extra emphasis. This happens mostly in speech.

Strange people *they are!* ***Very good lesson*** *we had yesterday.*

Last for ever these shoes will.

In a few exclamatory expressions, a noun is fronted before *that*, but this is uncommon in modern English.

***Fool** that I was!*

3 adverbs, etc: *Off we go!*

Many adverbs and adverbial expressions can go at the beginning of a clause (► 196–198). This often happens when we are using the adverbs to structure a piece of narrative or a description.

Once upon a time there were three little pigs. One day . . . Then . . . Soon after that . . . After dark, . . .

Inside the front door there is . . . Opposite the living room is . . . On the right you can see . . . At the top of the stairs . . .

Adverb particles are often fronted when giving instructions to small children.

***Off** we go!* ***Down** you come!*

Inversion (► 270–271) is necessary after some emphatic fronted adverbs and adverbial expressions.

*Under no circumstances **can tickets** be exchanged.* (NOT ~~*Under no circumstances tickets can . . .*~~)

*Round the corner **came Mrs Porter**.*

4 fronting with *as* or *though*

Fronted adjectives and adverbs are possible in a structure with *as* or *though* (► 255).

***Young as I was**, I realised what was happening.*

***Tired though she was**, she went on working.*

***Fast though she drove**, she could not catch them.*

***Much as I respect his work**, I cannot agree with him.*

See also entries on basic word order (► 215), normal order and variations (► 267), 'spacing out' information in speech (► 299.1), tags (► 299.3) and cleft sentences (► 273–274).
For the use of passive and other structures to bring objects to the front, ► 267.3, 67.1.

273 cleft sentences: *It was my secretary who . . .*

We can emphasise particular words and expressions by putting everything into a kind of relative clause except the words we want to emphasise: this makes them stand out. These structures are called 'cleft sentences' by grammarians (*cleft* means 'divided'). They are useful in writing (because we cannot use intonation for emphasis in written language), but they are also common in speech.
The emphasis is often contrastive – to contradict a false belief or expectation.

1 preparatory *it*

In one kind of cleft sentence, we use preparatory *it is/was* (► 268). The words to be emphasised are usually joined to the relative clause by *that*.
Compare:

My secretary sent the bill to Mr Harding yesterday.

***It was my secretary that** sent the bill to Mr Harding yesterday.*
(not somebody else)

*It **was the bill that** my secretary sent to Mr Harding yesterday.*
(not something else)
*It **was Mr Harding that** my secretary sent the bill to yesterday.*
(not to somebody else)
*It **was yesterday that** my secretary sent the bill to Mr Harding.*
(not another day)

Negative structures are also possible.

*It wasn't my **husband that** sent the bill . . .*

Who is possible instead of *that* when a personal subject is emphasised.

*It was my secretary **who** sent . . .*

When a plural subject is emphasised, the following verb is plural (but *it is/was* remains singular).

*It **is** the students that **are** angry.* (NOT . . . ~~*it that is angry.*~~)
*It **was** his parents who **paid** the fees.* (NOT ~~*It were his parents*~~ . . .)

The verb cannot be emphasised with this structure: we cannot say ~~*It was sent that my secretary the bill.*~~

Nor can a complement be emphasised: we cannot say ~~*It's Jenny that Mr Harding's secretary is.*~~

2 *It is I who . . . ; It is me that . . .*

When an emphasised subject is a pronoun, there are two possibilities. Compare:

– *It is **I who am** responsible.* (formal)
*It's **me that's/who's** responsible.* (informal)
– *It is **you who are** in the wrong.* (formal)
*It's **you that's** in the wrong.* (informal)

To avoid being either too formal or too informal in this case, we could say, for example, *I'm the person / the one who's responsible.*

274 cleft sentences: *What I need is a rest.*

1 *What I need is . . .*

In this kind of cleft sentence, the words to be emphasised are connected to a *what*-clause (or similar structure) by *is/was*.

***A rest is what** I need.*
***A motorbike is what** Emily kept in the garden shed.*

The words to be emphasised are often put last: this gives them even more force.

*What I need is **a rest**.*
*What Emily kept in the garden shed was **a motorbike**.*

This structure can be used to emphasise a complement.

***The secretary** is what Jake is, actually.* (OR *Actually, what Jake is **the secretary**.*)

To emphasise words that refer to people, we use structures like *the person who*.

***The person who** kept a motorbike in the garden shed was **Emily**.*

Instead of *what* or *the person*, we can use less general expressions.

*'Casablanca' is **a film (that)** I watch again and again.*
*You're **the woman (that)** I always see in my dreams.*

A *what*-clause is normally considered to be singular; if it begins a cleft sentence it is followed by *is/was*. But a plural verb is sometimes possible before a plural noun in an informal style.

*What we want **is/are** some of those cakes.*

For more information about *what*-clauses, ► 236.

2 *the place where . . .; the day when . . .; the reason why . . .*

We can use these expressions to emphasise a place, time or reason.

– *Jake spent Tuesday IN LONDON.*
*London was **the place where** Jake spent Tuesday.*
***The place where** Jake spent Tuesday was London.*
– *Jake went to London ON TUESDAY.*
*Tuesday was **the day when/that** Jake went to London.*
***The day when** Jake went to London was Tuesday.*
– *Jake went to London TO SEE TOM.*
*To see Tom was **the reason why** Jake went to London.*
***The reason why** Jake went to London was to see Tom.*

The place, the day or *the reason* can be dropped in an informal style, especially in the middle of a sentence.

*Spain's **where** we're going this year.*
***Why** I'm here is to talk about my plans.* (More formal: *The reason why I'm here is . . .*)

3 emphasising verbs: *What he did was . . .*

When we want to emphasise a verb (or an expression beginning with a verb), we have to use a more complicated structure with *what . . . do*. Infinitives with and without *to* are possible.

***What** he **did** was (to) scream.* ***What** she **does** is (to) write science fiction.*

Instead of an infinitive, we often use **subject + verb** in an informal style.

*What she does is, **she writes** science fiction.*
*What I'll do is, **I'll phone** Jack and ask his advice.*

In a very informal style, *is/was* may be dropped.

***What I'll do**, I'll have a word with Dan.*
***What they did**, they took his money and then just vanished.*

4 emphasising a whole sentence: *What happened was that . . .*

A whole sentence can be given extra emphasis by using a cleft structure with *what* and the verb *happen*. Compare:

The car broke down.
***What happened** was (that) the car broke down.*

5 other structures

All (that), and expressions with *thing*, can be used in cleft sentences.

***All** I want is a home somewhere.* ***All** you need is love.*
***All** (that) I did was (to) touch the window, and it broke.*
***The only thing** I remember is a terrible pain in my head.*
***The first thing** was to make some coffee.*
*My first journey abroad is **something** I shall never forget.* →

Time expressions can be emphasised with *It was not until . . .* and *It was only when . . .*

***It was not until** I met you that I knew real happiness.*

***It was only when** I read her email that I realised what was happening.*

At the beginning of a cleft sentence, *this* and *that* often replace emphasised *here* and *there*. Compare:

– *You pay here.*
  ***This** is where you pay.* (OR *Here is where you pay.*)
– *We live there.*
  ***That's** where we live.* (OR *There's where we live.*)

For more about question-word clauses, ► 266.
For more general information about sentence structure and the arrangement of information in sentences, ► 267.

275 ellipsis (leaving words out): introduction

We often leave out words to avoid repetition, or in other cases when the meaning can be understood without them. This is called 'ellipsis'.

1 replies

In replies we usually avoid repeating information that has just been given.

'*What time are you coming?*' '*About ten.*' (More likely than '*I'm coming about ten*'.)

'*Who said that?*' '*Jack.*' (More likely than '*Jack said that*'.)

'*How many chairs do you need?*' '*Three.*' (More likely than '*I need three chairs*'.)

'*She's out this evening?*' '*Yes, working.*' (More likely than '*Yes, she's working this evening*'.)

2 structures with *and, but* and *or*

Repeated words are often dropped in co-ordinate structures (► 276).

*a knife **and fork*** (= a knife and a fork)

*She was poor **but happy**.* (= . . . but she was happy.)

3 at the beginning of a sentence

In informal speech, unstressed words are often dropped at the beginning of a sentence, if the meaning is clear. For details, ► 277.

***Seen** Lucy?* (= Have you seen Lucy?)

***Doesn't** know what she's talking about.* (= She doesn't . . .)

4 at the end of a noun phrase

It is sometimes possible to drop nouns after adjectives, noun modifiers and/or determiners. For details, ► 278.

'*Do you want large eggs?*' '*No, I'll have **small**.*' (= . . . small eggs.)

*My car isn't working. I'll have to use **Emily's**.* (= . . . Emily's car.)

*We're going to hear the **London Philharmonic** tonight.* (= . . . the London Philharmonic Orchestra.)

'*Which shoes are you going to wear?*' '***These**.*' (= These shoes.)

5 at the end of a verb phrase

Auxiliary verbs are often used alone instead of full verbs. For details, ► 279.

*'I haven't paid.' 'I **haven't** either.'* (= . . . I haven't paid either.)

*She said she'd phone, but she **didn't**.* (= . . . didn't phone.)

This type of ellipsis can include complements that follow the verb.

*I was planning to go to Paris next week, but I **can't**.* (= . . . I can't go to Paris next week.)

The same structures are possible with non-auxiliary *be* and *have*.

*I thought she would be angry, and she **was**.*

*He says he hasn't any friends, but I know he **has**.*

6 infinitives

We can use *to* instead of repeating a whole infinitive. For details, ► 280.

*'Are you and Gillian getting married?' 'We hope **to**.'* (= We hope to get married.)

*I don't dance much now, but I used **to** a lot.*

Sometimes a whole infinitive, including *to*, is left out.

*Come when you **want**.* (= . . . when you want to come.)

*'Have a good time.' 'I'll **try**.'* (= I'll try to have a good time.)

7 comparative structures with *as* and *than*

We can leave out words after *as* and *than*, if the meaning is clear.

*The weather isn't as good **as last year**.* (= . . . as it was last year.)

*I found more blackberries **than you**.* (= . . . than you found.)

For missing subject or object after *as* and *than* (e.g. *as was expected*), ► 256.

8 question-word clauses

Clauses can be dropped after question words.

*Somebody has been stealing our flowers, but I don't know **who**.* (= . . . I don't know who has been stealing our flowers.)

*Become a successful writer. This book shows you **how**.*

9 *that* and relative pronouns

In an informal style, the conjunction *that* is often dropped (► 265); object relative pronouns can also be dropped (► 234.4).

*I knew (**that**) she didn't want to help me.*

*This is the restaurant (**which**) I was talking about.*

10 reduced relative structures: *the tickets available*, etc

We can sometimes leave out a relative pronoun and the verb *be* before participles, or adjectives such as *available, possible*. For details, ► 237.11.

*Who's the girl **dancing** with your brother?* (= . . . who is dancing . . .)

*It will not be possible to finish the job in the time **available**.* (= . . . that is available.)

11 *be* after conjunctions

Subject pronouns with forms of *be* can be left out after certain conjunctions, especially in a formal style.

*Start **when ready**.* (= . . . when you are ready.) →

***Though intelligent**, he was very poorly educated.*
(= Though he was intelligent . . .)
***When ordering**, please send £1.50 for postage and packing.*
*Phone me **if (it is) necessary**.* *He had a small heart attack **while asleep**.*
*I'm enclosing the signed contract, **as agreed**.*
*Leave in oven **until browned on top**.*

12 prepositions

In an informal style, prepositions can be dropped in a few time expressions (► 214.2–214.6).

*See you (**on**) Monday night.*
*We're staying here (**for**) another three months.*
What time shall I come? (More natural than *At what time . . .?*)

For cases like *We need a place to live (**in**)*, ► 554.

13 pronouns after prepositions

In British English, pronoun objects can sometimes be dropped after prepositions. This happens, for example, when *have* or *with* are used in descriptive structures.

*My socks have got holes **in** (them).*
*I'd like a piece of toast with butter **on** (it).*

14 abbreviated styles

In certain styles, many or all non-essential words can be dropped. For details, ► 291.

Take 500g butter and place in small saucepan.
Single man looking for flat Oxford area.
DOG FINDS ROMAN TREASURE

276 ellipsis with *and*, *but* and *or*

1 various kinds of word left out

When expressions are joined by *and*, *but* or *or*, we often leave out repeated words or phrases of various kinds.

*a knife **and** (a) fork* *antique (furniture) **or** modern furniture*
*these men **and** (these) women* *in France, (in) Germany **or** (in) Spain*
*ripe apples **and** (ripe) pears* *She can read, **but** (she) can't write.*
*The Minister likes golf **but** (the Minister) hates fishing.*
*We drove (across America), rode (across America), flew (across America) **and** walked across America.*
*She was poor **but** (she was) happy.*
*The food (is ready) **and** the drinks are ready.*
*Jake (washed the dishes) **and** Sophie washed the dishes.*

We can sometimes drop a verb that is repeated in a different form.

*I have always **paid** my bills and I always will (**pay** . . .).*

2 word order

Note that when two verbs, objects, etc are the same, it is not always the second that is left out. We may have to leave out the first to avoid confusion, or to produce a simpler word order and sentence structure.

Cats (catch mice) and dogs catch mice. (NOT ~~*Cats catch mice and dogs.*~~)
I can (go) and will go.

In informal speech and writing, ellipsis does not usually interrupt the normal word order of a clause or sentence. Sentences like the following are typical of a more formal style.

Daniel planned and Megan paid for the trip. (Less formal: *Daniel planned the trip and Megan paid for it.*)
Kevin likes dancing and Annie athletics. (Less formal: *Kevin likes dancing and Annie likes athletics.*)
The children will carry the small boxes and the adults the large ones.
Megan went to Greece and Alice to Rome.
You seem, and she certainly is, ill.

3 other conjunctions

Ellipsis is not normally possible after other conjunctions besides *and, but* and *or.*

She didn't know where she was ***when*** *she woke up.* (NOT . . . ~~*when woke up.*~~)

However, ellipsis of subject pronouns with forms of *be* is possible in some cases (e.g. *if possible, when arriving*), ► 115.6, 244.6, 251.5.

4 *(and) then*

In an informal style, ellipsis is sometimes possible after *then*, even if *and* is dropped.

Daniel started first, (and) ***then*** *Tom (started).*

For singular or plural verbs after expressions with *and* or *or*, ► 130.4.
For singular and plural verbs with *neither . . . nor*, ► 228.

277 ellipsis at the beginning of a sentence

1 words that can be left out

In informal spoken English we often leave out unstressed words at the beginning of a sentence if the meaning is clear without them. Words that can be left out include articles (*the, a/an*), possessives (*my, your*, etc), personal pronouns (*I, you*, etc), auxiliary verbs (*am, have*, etc) and the preparatory subject *there.*

Car's running badly. (= The car's . . .)
Wife's away. (= My wife's . . .)
Couldn't understand a word. (= I couldn't . . .)
Must dash. (= I must dash.)
Won't work, you know. (= It won't work . . .)
Seen Joe? (= Have you seen Joe?)
Keeping well, I hope? (= You're keeping well . . .)
Nobody at home. (= There's nobody at home.)
Careful what you say. (= Be careful . . .)

Catch up with you later. (= I'll catch up . . .)
Leave at half past? (= Should we leave . . .?)
Soon as I wake up, I check my messages. (= As soon as . . .)

This structure is common in advertisements. Two real examples:

Thinking of postgraduate study? Call for a place now. (= Are you thinking . . .?)
Speak a foreign language? Speak it better. (= Do you speak . . .?)

2 unstressed forms of *be, will, would, have*

We do not usually drop words so as to begin sentences with unstressed forms of *be, will, would* or auxiliary *have* (though this sometimes happens in messages, diary entries and other kinds of very informal writing).

***I'm coming** tomorrow.* OR ***Coming** tomorrow.* (NOT ~~*Am coming tomorrow.*~~ *Am* is not stressed.)
***I'll see** you soon.* OR ***See** you soon.* (NOT ~~*Will see you soon.*~~ *Will* is not stressed.)
***Haven't** seen him.* (BUT NOT ~~*Have seen him.*~~ *Have* is not stressed.)

3 before pronouns: *You ready?*

Auxiliary verbs can be left out before personal pronouns except *I* and *it.*

***You** ready?* (= Are you ready?)
***She** want something?* (= Does she want something?)
BUT NOT ~~*I late?*~~ ~~*It raining?*~~

4 *Dutch, aren't you?*

Ellipsis is very common in sentences that have some sort of tag (► 305–306, ► 299) on the end, especially in British English.

*Can't swim, **myself**.* *Like a cigar, **I do**.* *Dutch, **aren't you**?*
*Getting in your way, **am I**?* *Going camping, **your kids**?*

278 ellipsis in noun phrases

1 ellipsis after adjectives: *boiled, please*

A repeated noun can sometimes be dropped after an adjective, if the meaning is clear, especially when one is talking about common kinds of choice.

*'What kind of potatoes would you like?' '**Boiled** (potatoes), please.'*
*We haven't got any brown sugar. Only **white** (sugar).*

This often happens after superlatives.

*I think I'll buy the **cheapest**.*

For other structures in which adjectives are used without nouns, ► 188.

2 ellipsis after *this*, numbers, possessives, etc

Nouns can also be dropped after most determiners (► Sections 12–13), if the meaning is clear.

*This is Ella's coat, and **that** (coat) is mine.*

This also happens after numbers, nouns with possessive *'s, own* and *(an)other.*

*I'm not sure how many packets I need, but I'll take **two** (packets) to start with.*
*Our train's the **second** (train) from this platform.*
*You take Dan's car, and I'll take **Susie's** (car).*
*'Can I borrow your pen?' 'No, find your **own** (pen).'*
*'That beer went down fast.' 'Have **another** (beer).'*

3 well-known names

The last words of well-known names are often dropped.

She's playing the ***Beethoven*** *with the* ***Scottish National*** *tomorrow night.*
(= . . . the Beethoven violin concerto with the Scottish National Orchestra . . .)

He's staying at the ***Hilton.*** (= . . . the Hilton Hotel.)

We're going to see 'Hamlet' at the ***Mermaid.*** (= . . . the Mermaid Theatre.)

When we talk about people's homes, and about shops and offices, possessives are often used without following nouns.

We spent the weekend at ***Jack and Emily's.***

Could you pick up some chops from the ***butcher's?***

I'm going to call in at the ***doctor's*** *on the way home.*

4 other situations

Note that nouns are not normally dropped in other situations.

Poor little ***boy!*** (NOT ~~*Poor little!*~~)

The most important ***thing*** *is to keep calm.* (NOT ~~*The most important is to . . .*~~)

279 ellipsis after auxiliary verbs

1 auxiliary instead of complete verb phrase

We can avoid repetition by using an auxiliary verb instead of a complete verb phrase, if the meaning is clear. The auxiliary verb usually has a 'strong' pronunciation (► 315), and contractions (► 337) are not normally used except in negatives.

'Get up.' 'I ***am*** /æm/.' (= I am getting up.)

He said he'd write, but he ***hasn't.*** (= . . . hasn't written.)

I'll come and see you when I ***can.*** (= . . . can come and see you.)

'Shall I tell him what I think?' 'I ***wouldn't*** *if I were you.'*

Do can be used before ellipsis if there is no other auxiliary to repeat.

I may come to London. I'll phone you if I ***do.***

He said he would arrive before seven, and he ***did.***

Other words, as well as the rest of the verb phrase, can be left out after the auxiliary.

I can't see you today, but I ***can*** *tomorrow.* (= . . . I can see you . . .)

'I've forgotten the address.' 'I ***have*** *too.'*

'You're not trying very hard.' 'I ***am.'***

'You wouldn't have won if I hadn't helped you.' 'Yes, I ***would (have).'***

This also happens after non-auxiliary *be* and *have.*

'I'm tired.' 'I ***am*** *too.'* *'Who's the driver?' 'I* ***am.'***

'Who has a dictionary?' 'I ***have.'***

2 short answers, etc: *Yes, I have.*

Ellipsis is used regularly in short answers (► 308), reply questions (► 307) and question tags (► 305–306).

'Have you finished?' 'Yes, I ***have.'***

*'I can whistle through my fingers.' '****Can*** *you, dear?'*

You don't want to buy a car, ***do*** *you?*

→

3 *so am I*, etc

Ellipsis also happens after *so*, *neither* and *nor* (► 309). Note the word order.

*'I've forgotten the address.' 'So **have** I.'*

*She doesn't like olives, and neither **do** I.*

4 ellipsis before complete form: *If you can, call me . . .*

Ellipsis normally happens when an expression is used for a second time, after the complete form has already been used once (see above examples). However, it can sometimes happen the other way round. This is common in sentences beginning with *if*.

*If you **can**, call me when you arrive.*

*If you **could**, I'd like you to help me this evening.*

*If you **prefer**, we can go tomorrow instead.*

5 more than one auxiliary: *I could have been.*

When there is more than one auxiliary, ellipsis usually happens after the first.

*'You wouldn't have enjoyed the film.' 'Yes, I **would**.'* (= . . . I would have enjoyed the film.)

However, more auxiliaries can be included. The first is stressed.

*'Could you have been dreaming?' 'I suppose I **could** / **COULD have** / **COULD have been**.'*

We often include a second auxiliary verb if it has not appeared before in the same form.

*'I think Emily should **be** told.' 'She **has been**.'* (More natural than . . . *She has.*)

And we normally include a second auxiliary verb after a change of modal auxiliary.

*'Emily **should be** told.' 'She **must be**.'* (More natural than . . . *She must.*)

6 substitution with *do*: *He might do.*

In British English, a main verb that is left out after an auxiliary can be replaced by *do*. For details, ► 28.

*'Do you think he'll phone?' 'He might **do**.'* (AmE . . . *He might.*)

For *do so*, ► 29.

280 ellipsis: infinitives

1 *to* used instead of whole infinitive: *We hope to.*

We can use *to* instead of the whole infinitive of a repeated verb (and following words), if the meaning is clear.

*'Are you and Gillian getting married?' 'We hope **to**.'*

*'Let's go for a walk.' 'I don't want **to**.'*

*I don't dance much now, but I used **to** a lot.*

*Sorry I shouted at you. I didn't mean **to**.*

*'Somebody ought to clean up the bathroom.' 'I'll ask Jack **to**.'*

Be and *have* (used for possession) are not usually dropped.

There are more flowers than there used ***to be****.* (NOT . . . ~~*than there used to.*~~)

She hasn't been promoted yet, but she ought ***to be****.* (NOT . . . ~~*but she ought to.*~~)

You've got more freckles than you used ***to have****.* (NOT ~~*You've got more freckles than you used to.*~~)

2 ellipsis of whole infinitive: *I'll try.*

In some cases the whole infinitive can be left out. This happens after nouns and adjectives.

He'll never leave home; he hasn't got the ***courage*** *(to).*

You can't force him to leave home if he's not ***ready*** *(to).*

It also happens after verbs which can stand alone without a following infinitive.

'Can you start the car?' 'I'll ***try*** *(to).'*

3 *(would) like, want,* etc

We cannot usually leave out *to* after *would like/love/hate/prefer, want* and *choose.*

*'Are you interested in working abroad?' '****I'd like to****.'* (NOT . . . ~~*I'd like.*~~)

My parents encouraged me to study art, but I didn't ***want to****.*
(NOT . . . ~~*I didn't want.*~~)

However, *to* is often dropped after *want*, and almost always after *like*, when these are used after certain conjunctions – for instance *when, if, what, as.*

Come ***when*** *you* ***want*** *(to).* *I'll do* ***what*** *I* ***like****.*

Stay as long ***as*** *you* ***like****.*

Section 26 **Written Texts**

INTRODUCTION

spoken and written language

Writers can pause, reflect, recast and revise, producing if they wish material with a high level of complexity. Speakers, composing in real time, are limited by working memory capacity in their ability to build up and keep track of elaborate structures. Equally, readers are far better able than listeners to decode complex material: one can read as slowly as one likes, backtracking as necessary, but one cannot listen at one's own speed.

Because of this, writing tends towards 'architectural' structuring, with relatively dense packaging of information, while speech favours more linear, chained structures, with information-bearing elements more spaced out. The average length of an English clause in speech is seven words; in formal writing the average can be double this. Written noun phrases can become very complex, with determiners, adjectives, nouns and postmodifying structures all clustering round a head noun. Spoken noun phrases generally contain few modifiers; subjects most often consist of a single pronoun.

The gap between speech and writing has narrowed a great deal since the 19th century. In those days formal writing enjoyed very high prestige and could be extremely elaborate, while informal speech was seen as a kind of low-level badly-structured 'poor relation'. Since that time, growing democratisation has led to increased respect for the language of 'ordinary people'. Much modern writing is far closer to speech in its structure and vocabulary, and the growth of informal written communication through electronic media is helping to narrow the gap still further.

Nonetheless, speech and writing are separate channels of communication and each has its own necessary grammatical characteristics. For people – both native speakers of English and language learners – who need to be able to handle formal written texts, the conventions of formal writing still have to be learnt. This is especially the case for those who plan to use English in a university setting – academic English has its own characteristics.

This Section deals with some of the more important elements of formal writing, especially those which affect text construction and comprehension. Note that some of what is said here naturally applies also to more formal types of spoken text: for example the language of spoken reports, political speeches or lectures.

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- ✗ Dad's just cut Dad shaving. ▶ 282
- ✗ Lucy told Alice she had made a bad mistake. ▶ 282.2
- ✗ The wall, it needed painting. ▶ 282.3
- ✗ The results were disappointing for the third year running, consequently it was decided to close three of the smaller branches. ▶ 283.1
- ✗ He confessed to 114 murders; the police did not believe, however, his story. ▶ 283.3
- ✗ The banks have raised interest paid monthly rates. ▶ 285.1
- ✗ We planned wonderful plans. ▶ 287.1
- ✗ Dear Mr James Carter, . . . ▶ 289 Note 6
- ✗ Dear Ms Williams, How are you getting on? ▶ 289 Note 13
- ✗ She phoned me. As soon as she arrived. ▶ 293.1
- ✗ I asked her what time it was? ▶ 293.3
- ✗ The standard of living of the dock workers, was slowly improving. ▶ 296.1
- ✗ Many of them were able to begin buying, their own homes. ▶ 296.1
- ✗ The mainly foreign, labourers formed a large part of the work force. ▶ 296.4
- ✗ Many commentators declared, that the economy was in serious trouble. ▶ 296.6
- ✗ No one knew, how serious the situation would become. ▶ 296.6
- ✗ a green red and gold carpet ▶ 296.9
- ✗ Have you met our handsome, new, financial director? ▶ 296.9
- ✗ The truck weighs 3,5 tons. ▶ 296.11

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281 formality

1 formal and informal language

Most people speak and write in different ways on different occasions. In some languages, for example, there are very complicated rules about how to speak to older or more important people. English does not have a system of this kind. However, there are some words and structures which are mostly used in **formal** situations, when people are careful about how they express themselves: for example in official notices, business letters or reports, meetings or conferences, or polite conversations with strangers. And some words and structures are mostly used in **informal** situations: for example in conversations with friends, or emails to one's family. Writing is more often formal, and speech is more often informal, but informal writing and formal speech are used when the situation makes them preferable.

Customer toilets are at the rear of the building. (printed notice in an Oxfordshire petrol station)

The toilets are outside round the back. (handwritten notice in the same petrol station, put up perhaps because the manager felt this would be easier for some of his customers to understand)

Most words and expressions are neither formal nor informal, but neutral – English speakers do not have to know two ways of saying everything.

2 grammar

Some grammatical structures have different formal and informal versions. For example, contracted auxiliary verbs and negatives (► 337) are common in informal speech and writing. Compare:

FORMAL: ***It has** gone. It **is not** possible.*
INFORMAL: ***It's** gone. It **isn't** possible.*

Prepositions come at the end of certain structures in informal language (► 209). Compare:

FORMAL: ***In** which century did he live?*
INFORMAL: *Which century did he live **in**?*

Some relative structures are different (► 234). Compare:

FORMAL: *The man **whom** she married . . .*
INFORMAL: *The man she married . . .*

Some determiners are followed more often by singular verb forms in formal language, and by plural forms in informal language (► 156.2, 157.2). Compare:

FORMAL: *Neither of us **likes** him.*
INFORMAL: *Neither of us **like** him.*

Subject and object forms of pronouns (e.g. *I* and *me*) are used differently in formal and informal language (► 174). Compare:

- FORMAL: *It was **she who** first saw what to do.*
  INFORMAL: *It was **her that** first saw what to do.*
- FORMAL: ***Whom** did they elect?*
  INFORMAL: ***Who** did they elect?*

Ellipsis (leaving out words, ► 275–280) is more common in informal language. Compare:

– FORMAL: ***Have you seen** Mr Andrews?*
  INFORMAL: ***Seen** Jack?*
– FORMAL: *We think **that** it is possible.*
  INFORMAL: *We think it's possible.*

For a note on formal and informal vocabulary, ► 333
For structures used in polite requests and questions, ► 310–312.
For formal and informal ways of using people's names and titles, ► 326.
For the language used in particular social situations, ► 329.
For discriminatory and offensive language, ► 335. For slang, ► 334.
For the use of out-of-date grammar and vocabulary in ceremonies and other situations, ► 318.10.

282 pronouns and other proforms

1 avoiding unnatural/ungrammatical repetition

When we refer again to a person or thing that has already been mentioned, we normally use a pronoun (e.g. *he, she, it*) instead of repeating the original noun phrase. When the reference is very close to the original mention, repetition (unless there is a special reason for it) is usually not only unnatural, but ungrammatical.

*Rachel changed her job because **she** was unhappy with the conditions.*
(More normal than . . . *because Rachel was unhappy with the conditions.*)
*The suggestion was understandably ignored: the management disapproved of **it**.*
(More normal than . . . *the management disapproved of the suggestion.*)
*There were times when Cartwright hated **himself**.*
(NOT . . . ~~*Cartwright hated Cartwright.*~~)

This kind of thing happens with other words besides nouns.

*He did not smoke, but his wife **did**.* (More normal than . . . *but his wife smoked.*)
*They were not sure whether the road was open, but they believed **so**.*
(More normal than . . . *they believed that the road was open.*)
*The Royal Hotel was highly recommended, so the party agreed to stay **there**.*
(More normal than . . . *to stay at the Royal Hotel.*)

However, repetition is necessary and normal when alternatives are discussed.

*She was offered potatoes or rice, and decided on **rice**.*
*The only options were to dance or to go for a walk: they **went for a walk**.*

For more details, ► 275–280 (ellipsis) and ► 585 (*so*).

2 avoiding ambiguity

When pronouns such as *he, she, it* are used, it is important to make sure the reference is clear.

*Lucy told Alice **she** had made a bad mistake.* (Who made the mistake?)

Here is a note from the *Independent* newspaper apologising for confusing readers the day before. →

Pronoun soup again on Wednesday

CHRISTINA PATTERSON commented on a row between Iain Duncan Smith and George Osborne. "But he did, according to one source, tell the Chancellor that he was 'not prepared to tolerate' the 'appalling' way he treated his department, and that he should 'show more respect'. His staff, he said, 'did not deserve to be treated in such an arrogant way'."

The words 'he' and 'his' appear seven times. The first, second, fourth, sixth and seventh times, they mean Mr Duncan Smith; the third and fifth times, they mean Mr Osborne. More than once, the reader pauses to work out who 'he' is. ●

Guy Keleny, *The Independent* (adapted)

For more about the use of *this/that* and *it* (referring to things that have just been mentioned), ► 145.

3 avoiding duplication

In writing and more formal speech, English (unlike some languages) does not normally use a pronoun to repeat a noun phrase that comes in the same clause.

The wall needed painting. (NOT ~~*The wall, it needed painting.*~~)

Good morning, Jack. I spoke to Professor Anson yesterday.

(More natural than . . . *Professor Anson, I spoke to him yesterday.*)

However, this kind of repetition is common in informal speech, when people announce a topic and then make a sentence about it (► 272).

*That friend of your mother's – **she's** on the phone.*

*Your bicycle wheels – why don't we put **them** in the garden shed?*

283 linking with conjunctions and adverbials

1 the difference

Conjunctions (► Section 20) make **grammatical** and **meaning** connections: they join clauses into sentences, and show the relationship between them. Some conjunctions:

and, but, or, so, before, after, when, as soon as, because, since, although, if, that

When a conjunction comes between two clauses in writing, there is normally either **no punctuation** (if the clauses are short) or a **comma (,)** before the conjunction if they are longer.

*The Minister paused briefly **before** he started to speak.*

*The results were disappointing for the third year running, **so** it was decided to close three of the smaller branches.*

Adverbials can make **meaning** connections, but they do **not** make **grammatical** connections: they do not join clauses into sentences. Some adverbials:

however, then, therefore, meanwhile, consequently, in fact, also, as a result, on the other hand, indeed

When an adverbial comes between two clauses, there is normally either a **full stop (.)** or a **semi-colon (;)** before it in careful writing, because the clauses are still grammatically separate.

*The Minister paused briefly; **then** he started to speak.* (OR *The Minister paused briefly. **Then** he started to speak.*)

*The results were disappointing for the third year running; **consequently**, it was decided to close three of the smaller branches.* (OR *The results were disappointing for the third year running. **Consequently**, it was decided to close three of the smaller branches.*)

2 *but* and *however*

But is a **conjunction**; *however* is an **adverbial**. Note the difference in punctuation **before** these words.

*It was cold, **but** it was pleasant.*

*It was cold. **However**, it was pleasant.* OR *It was cold; **however**, it was pleasant.* (better than *It was cold, however . . .*)

Note that we also put a comma **after** *however*.

For more about *but*, *however*, *although* and *though*, ► 371.

3 position

Conjunctions always begin clauses. Adverbials can often go in different places in a clause (but not between the verb and the object). If an adverbial interrupts the normal word order of a clause, it may be separated by two commas.

*He confessed to 114 murders, **but** the police did not believe his story.*
(BUT NOT . . . ~~*the police but did not believe his story.*~~)

*He confessed to 114 murders; **however**, the police did not believe his story.*

*He confessed to 114 murders; the police, **however**, did not believe his story.*

*He confessed to 114 murders; the police did not, **however**, believe his story.*

*He confessed to 114 murders; the police did not believe his story, **however**.*
(BUT NOT . . . ~~*the police did not believe, however, his story.*~~)

Adverbials expressing **contrast** often have commas **after** them.

*They were becoming increasingly discouraged. **However,** they continued walking.*

*Income is satisfactory; **on the other hand,** expenditure has increased alarmingly.*

Yet is not usually followed by a comma.

*It was cold, **yet** it was pleasant.* (NOT . . . ~~*yet, it was pleasant.*~~)

4 one-clause sentences

Sometimes a single clause with a conjunction is written as a separate sentence. Some people feel this is incorrect, but it is normal in question-and-answer sequences, or when a writer wishes to give extra emphasis to a clause.

*Why are we in financial trouble? **Because** the banks lent money to the wrong people.*

*He was charming. **But** he was totally without a conscience.*

For *however* as a conjunction (e.g. ***However** we travel, we have to go through London*), ► 252.

284 discourse markers in writing

Discourse markers are words and expressions which help to structure spoken exchanges and written text (e.g. *first of all, on the other hand, in any case, to sum up*). English has a very large number of these. Some are used in all kinds of discourse, some mostly in formal writing, and others mainly in informal speech. Those that are most common in writing are discussed here; for discourse markers in speech, ► 301. Most discourse markers are adverbs or adverbial expressions; some are conjunctions. For differences in punctuation and other points, ► 283.

Discourse markers can communicate several things:

- **'What am I talking about?'** Discourse markers can introduce or clarify a topic, and show divisions and changes of topic.
- **'What am I doing?'** They can show the type of communication that is going on.
- **attitude** They can show a writer's attitude to what he or she is saying, or to the reader's expectations.

1 What am I talking about?

Some discourse markers say what a writer is about to focus on, and may show a link with previous discussion. Others show subdivisions and changes of topic.

focusing: *with reference to; regarding; as regards; as far as . . . is/are concerned*

***With reference to** your letter of 17 March, I am pleased to inform you . . .*
***Regarding** the proposal to reinvest all profits, it was felt that further discussion was needed.*
***As regards** other aspects of social policy, the government of the day was under great pressure to improve health care.*
***As far as** heart disease **is concerned**, saturated fats are considered to be a principal danger.*

subdividing: *first of all; firstly, secondly,* etc*; in the first place; before turning to; lastly; finally*

***First of all**, it is important to distinguish two main types of problem. **Secondly**, solutions to both need to be evaluated.*
***Before** turning to the question of finance, the directors discussed minimum staffing levels.*
***Finally**, it is appropriate to mention the contribution of his family to his success.*

new subject: *turning now to . . .*

***Turning now to** his years in America, we will trace his gradual acceptance by the scientific establishment.*

returning to previous subject: *to return to the previous point*

***To return to the previous point**, it would be a mistake to overlook the basic need for research.*

summing up: *in conclusion; to sum up; briefly; in short*

***In conclusion / To sum up**, it seems clear that none of the factors already discussed contributed to the spread of the epidemic.*
***Briefly**, three senators have been accused of fraud, bribery and tax evasion in the past three years, but they have all been cleared of these charges by other senators.*
***In short**, the decision to invade was a disastrous error of judgement.*

2 What am I doing?

Some discourse markers make it clear what kind of communication is going on.

generalising and exceptions: *on the whole; to a great extent; to some extent; in general; in all/most/many/some cases; broadly speaking; apart from; except for*

***On the whole / In general**, people like to help others.*
***On the whole / In general**, the higher an individual is in the social strata the less likely he or she is to be arrested, prosecuted and (if prosecuted) found guilty.*
***In some cases**, an unhappy childhood can lead to criminal behaviour.*
***To some extent**, people's religious views tend to reflect those of their parents.*
***Broadly speaking**, trees can be divided into two groups: evergreen and deciduous.*
*Central European languages, **except for / apart from** Hungarian, are related to each other.*

showing a logical or causal connection: *consequently; therefore; as a result; so; then*

*Atmospheric pressure is lower at altitude. **Consequently**, climbers can find it difficult to get enough oxygen.*
*Unfortunately, your examination marks did not reach the required standard. **Therefore** we are unable to offer you a place.*
*His first novel was a remarkable success. **As a result**, he was offered a contract to write a sequel.*

showing similarity: *similarly; in the same way; just as*

*Russia relies on its grain harvests to feed its population. **Similarly / In the same way**, India and China are dependent on rice.*
***Just as** some children have imaginary friends, others invent complicated past events that never happened.*

showing a contrast: *nevertheless; nonetheless; despite this/that; yet; however; in spite of this/that*

*The Greeks and Romans had no symbol for zero. **Nevertheless/Nonetheless**, they made remarkable progress in mathematics.*
*Their father died when they were small. **In spite of that / Despite that**, they had a happy childhood.*
*England has occasional heavy snowfalls in January and February. **However**, most winters are relatively mild.* →

balancing contrasting points: *on the one hand; whereas; while; on the other hand*

***On the one hand**, we need to reduce costs. **On the other hand**, investment in research is a crucial priority.*

*Arranged marriages are common in many Middle Eastern countries. In the West, **on the other hand**, they are unusual.* (NOT . . . ~~*on the contrary, they are unusual.*~~ ► 428)

*He liked the mountains, **whereas/while** his wife preferred the sea.*

persuading: *after all* (► 361)

*It is scarcely surprising that he chose a military career. **After all**, his father and both his grandfathers were professional soldiers.*

contradicting: *on the contrary; quite the opposite*

*The violin is not easy to play well. **On the contrary**, it is one of the most challenging instruments.*

*Do not be afraid that people will look down on you because of your regional accent. **Quite the opposite**, in some professions your accent may be your most interesting and valuable possession.*

concession: *it is true (that); certainly; granted; if; may; of course*

counter-argument: *nevertheless; nonetheless; however; even so; but; still; all the same*

These expressions are often used in a three-stage argument structure:
1. We say something that points in a certain direction.
2. We agree (the concession) that there are facts that point in the other direction.
3. But we finish (the counter-argument) by going back to the original position.

*. . . cannot agree with colonialism. **It is true** that the British **may** have done some good in India. **Even so**, colonialism is basically evil.*

*He was incapable of lasting relationships with women. **Certainly**, several women loved him, and he was married twice. **All the same**, the women closest to him were invariably deeply unhappy.*

*Very few people understood Einstein's theory. **Of course**, everybody had heard of him, and a fair number of people knew the word 'relativity'. **But** hardly anybody could tell you what he had actually said.*

*His poetry was popular, and, **if** difficult to understand, **nonetheless** had a good deal of charm.*

Note the use of *certainly* and *of course* in the above examples. When they are used in this way, an experienced reader knows that they will be followed by *but, all the same* or a similar expression.

adding: *moreover; furthermore; further; in addition; what is more; also; besides*

*Air travel is tiring. **Moreover/Furthermore**, it is generally uncomfortable and expensive.*

referring to the hearer's/reader's expectations: *in fact; actually*

These expressions introduce information that will contradict (usually) or perhaps confirm what the hearer or reader thinks.

It is generally believed that Marquez died in the civil war. ***In fact / Actually,*** *recent research shows that he survived and fled to Bolivia, where . . .*

4 reporting verbs showing attitude

Some reporting verbs can show the writer's attitude to what is being reported. *Suggest* and *imply* make it clear that he/she is not reporting definite facts. *Claim* often throws doubt on what follows.

These findings ***suggest/imply*** *that a cure for the common cold may be close.*

The Minister ***claims*** *that the new working practices will increase efficiency by 35%.*

Allege is common in reports of unproved criminal accusations.

It is ***alleged*** *that, during the night of June 17th, Hawkins broke into the factory.*

285 reading complicated structures

Language learners (and many native-speaker readers) can have trouble reading long and complicated sentences. Certain kinds of structure, in particular, can slow down unskilled readers, and perhaps cause them to get lost, so that they lose sight of 'where a sentence is going'. This is often the case when sentences begin with complex noun phrases.

1 complex noun phrases: premodification

Written noun phrases can be very elaborate, with various kinds of **premodifier** (determiners, adjectives, participles and nouns) coming before the head noun.

The only efficient functioning X-Ray *machine was in constant demand.*

Premodifiers can have their own premodifiers, which adds to the complexity.

The only ***really*** *efficient* ***fully****-functioning* ***high-speed*** *X-Ray machine was in constant demand.*

But note that premodifiers cannot usually be followed by their own postmodifiers.

a broken promise

a cynically broken promise (BUT NOT ~~*a broken for political advantage promise*~~)

interest rates

short-term interest rates (BUT NOT ~~*interest paid monthly rates*~~)

2 complex noun phrases: postmodification

Postmodifiers (e.g. prepositional phrases or relative clauses) can make noun phrases even more complex and difficult to process efficiently.

The only really efficient fully-functioning high-speed X-Ray machine ***in the hospital that nurses could use*** *was in constant demand.*

The strikes ***on a number of airlines in recent months, which have caused serious disruption to travellers,*** *are likely to continue if agreement is not reached.*

3 nominalisation and coordination: *Daniel's failure*

Writing often nominalises (expresses as nouns) elements which in speech would be expressed in other ways. This, too, makes for complex noun phrases.

Daniel's failure to gain a degree *caused his parents considerable concern.* (six-word noun phrase as subject)

The spoken equivalent might be, for example:

Daniel, you know, he didn't get a degree, and of course, his parents, they got really worried. (one-word noun phrase as subject)

Co-ordination can make things even more complex.

Daniel's failure to gain a degree, and his subsequent refusal to look for work, *caused his parents considerable concern.* (fourteen-word noun phrase as subject)

Possible spoken equivalent:

Daniel, you know, he didn't get a degree, and then he wouldn't do anything about getting a job, and of course, his parents, they got really worried.

4 clause subjects: *getting up early*

When the subject is a participle clause or a *what*-clause, this can also make the overall structure more difficult to follow.

Getting up very early in the morning *typically makes people feel quite unnecessarily superior.*

What Anna's little sister wanted *above everything else in the world was a horse.*

5 Why do these structures make reading difficult? breaking things up

Complex noun phrase structures can cause readers to lose sight of the basic subject-verb relationship. This is particularly the case with heavy post-modification: the head noun may be separated from its verb by other nouns and verbs, and a non-fluent reader may struggle to see which noun goes with which verb.

The strikes on a ***number*** *of* ***airlines*** *in recent* ***months****, which have* ***caused*** *serious* ***disruption to travellers****, are likely to continue if agreement is not reached.* (five other nouns and another verb between the head noun and its verb)

That picture of the ***children*** *standing in front of the* ***palace*** *talking to the* ***Prime Minister*** *impressed everybody.* (It was not the children, the palace or the Prime Minister that impressed everybody.)

Pasteur's discovery that microscopic bacteria caused diseases revolutionised medicine. (It was not the bacteria or the diseases that revolutionised medicine.)

A Liverpool man who ***lives*** *alone except for his* ***cat*** *has just won the lottery.* (The cat has not won the lottery.)

These structures can create confusing-looking pairs of verbs.

A bus which ran downhill out of control after its brakes ***failed*** ***crashed*** *into a factory wall, damaging the premises and slightly injuring several passengers.*

→

Unlike speech (► 299.1), formal writing does not allow subjects to be repeated by pronouns.

~~*That picture of the children standing in front of the palace talking to the Prime Minister, it impressed everybody.*~~

6 leaving out *that*: *people Martin knew well*

When *that* (or another relative pronoun) is left out, this can cause further problems for readers who are not used to formal written texts, especially if their language does not work in the same way. For example, it can bring two noun phrases together in confusing ways.

Several ***people Martin*** *knew well when he was at university years before had now become prominent members of the government.* (= . . . people **that** Martin knew . . .)

The man the terrorists *bought the guns from was an undercover police officer.*

Extra difficulty can be caused when relative clauses end in prepositions.

The spanner the service engineer was attempting to tighten the windscreen nuts ***with*** *was the wrong size.*

Dropping the conjunction *that* can also make the structure of a sentence less clear.

The woman insisted she thought the police officer understood she was lost. (*that* omitted three times)

7 reduced relative clauses: *the objects recovered*

Reduced relative clauses (► 237.10) can make sentences particularly hard to read.

Many of the objects ***recovered by the police*** *were found to have been stolen from homes in the neighbourhood.* (= '. . . the objects that were recovered . . .)

Two wolves ***seen roaming in the New Forest*** *are believed to have escaped from a nearby private zoo.* (= '. . . wolves that have been seen . . .')

Regular past participles look the same as past tenses, and this can cause confusion.

A number of the children ***asked*** *for comments on the proposals to expel some immigrants told the police they disagreed.* (The children didn't ask for comments: the meaning is '. . . the children who were asked . . . told . . .'.)

8 embedded adverbial clauses

Sometimes an adverbial clause is put into the middle of another clause, separating the subject from its verb.

Ann, ***when she finally managed to go to sleep,*** *had a series of bad dreams.*

The government, ***if recent reports can be trusted,*** *has decided not to raise interest rates.*

In these structures, confusingly, a noun may not be the subject of a verb that comes just after it.

Mr Andrews, when he saw the ***police officer, started running*** *as fast as he could.* (It was not the police officer who started running.)

The Managing Director, after he had completed his discussions with ***the bank manager, drew*** *a large sum of money out of the bank and caught the next plane to Paris.* (A learner might think that it was the bank manager who took the money and went to Paris.)

9 heavy indirect object

A heavy indirect object can create a large gap between the **verb** and its **direct object**, which can also make the structure difficult to follow.

She ***gave*** *all the people who had helped her with her research* ***copies of her book****.*

10 complicated negative structures

In both speech and writing, putting together several negative items can cause confusion.

It was ***not*** *that Emily did****n't*** *believe that Jack had* ***not*** *been telling the truth.* (Did she think he had or not?)

There is ***no*** *sound basis for* ***denying*** *reports that* ***no*** *members of the expedition* ***failed*** *to reach their goal.* (Did they all get there?)

11 reporting expressions: *the man who Anna had said would tell us*

Complicated structures can be produced when reporting expressions are included in sentences.

We were unable to find the man who ***Anna had said*** *would tell us about the church.*

They spent ***none of them could remember how much*** *money on their trip.*

12 more examples

Here are some more examples of the structures discussed in this entry, most of them taken from authentic written sources. It might be interesting to consider why each one might cause difficulty to an unskilled reader.

A picture a schoolboy bought for £5 has turned out to be worth £10,000.

Money makes money, and the money money makes makes money.
(Benjamin Franklin)

Pictures of the baby the judge ordered should not be identified by reporters appeared in a Sunday newspaper.

A young civil servant arrested after shootings on Tyneside left one person dead is to be charged with murder.

Police called to a house in Hampshire after neighbours reported cries for help found 18-year-old M F stuck in a small toilet window after being locked out of his home.

Three immigrants returned to their countries by the authorities are to appeal against their deportation.

A 24-year-old labourer who was arrested in Trafalgar Square when he allegedly attempted to knife a traffic warden is said to have injured three policemen.

The rebel leader found out that in spite of the precautions of the soldiers he had bought the guns from the police had planted an informer among them.

Police hunting thieves who dumped a ten-month-old baby in an alley after finding him inside a car they stole have charged two teenage boys. →

One way of deciding what to do if you have difficulty in deciding your next course of action is to toss a coin.

If predictions that the British National Party will gain at least one seat when the European Parliament election results are announced tonight are accurate, many Labour MPs will see it as a political disaster grave enough to spark a major revolt.

But what bothered him more than what the files that were in the drawer could contain was the feeling that something was certainly missing.

Taking one's break out of season when everyone else is working can save one a great deal of money.

Many of the gold and silver objects excavated from the 3000-year-old royal tombs resemble items of jewellery still made today by craftsmen trained in the traditional skills.

It is not unlikely that the ongoing investigation will show that the allegations of corruption against the President are not without foundation.
(Is the President probably corrupt?)

The report will look into claims the design of the courthouse the men escaped from was at fault.

Further details emerged shortly after the clergyman at the centre of the dispute about anti-capitalist protesters camped outside St Paul's Cathedral broke a week's silence to defend the decision to close the cathedral.

Millennium Dome chiefs have refused to discuss reports they ignored advice attendance figures at the attraction would be lower than hoped. The Sunday Times says the Millennium Commission warned Dome users the New Millennium Experience Company its own estimate was between 4.5m and 5m. NMEC repeatedly insisted there would be at least 7m visitors this year.
(from a report on the enormous loss of money by the Millennium Dome, built as a tourist attraction to celebrate the year 2000)

286 paragraphs

Written English text is usually divided into blocks called 'paragraphs', to make it easier to read. Paragraphs can vary in length, from several hundred words (for example in literary or academic writing), to a few sentences (for example in journalism or letters). A paragraph division is usually shown by starting the text on a new line and 'indenting' (leaving a space at the beginning of the line). The paragraph divisions break the material up into easily 'digestible' sections, providing places where the reader can pause and think for a moment if necessary. And good writers can show the structure of their texts by making paragraph divisions in suitable places, for example when they move to a new stage in a story, a new point in a discussion or a new part of a description.

Sam decided that it was too late to start slimming, and put some more sugar in his coffee. The way things were, he needed all the help he could get. Everything was going wrong at work, everything had already gone wrong at home, and the weather in Edinburgh in November was lousy. The only remaining question was: should he commit suicide now or wait until after payday and get drunk first?

Three months ago everything had seemed so perfect. His boss had told him that he had an excellent future with the firm.

a new stage in the story

There are a lot of advantages to working at home. You don't have to travel to your job, you can choose your own working hours, you can take a day off if you want to, you don't waste time in endless unnecessary meetings, and – perhaps most important of all – you don't have a boss constantly checking up on you.

On the other hand, it can be lonely working by yourself. Without colleagues around you . . .

a new point in the discussion

Another practice, common in typed letters and documents, is to leave a blank line without indenting.

Dear Sir/Madam

Three months ago I sent you an order for a set of glasses, together with full payment. You wrote acknowledging my order, and said that the glasses would be dispatched in 15 days.

I have still not received the glasses, and repeated telephone calls to your office have had no result . . .

287 repetition

1 avoidance of repetition

In English, unnecessary repetition is generally avoided. Careful writers try not to repeat words and structures in the same clauses and sentences without a good reason. For instance, we do not normally put related nouns and verbs together.

We made wonderful plans. OR *We planned wonderful things.*
(BUT NOT ~~*We planned wonderful plans.*~~)

She wrote an interesting piece. OR *She did an interesting piece of writing.*
(BUT NOT ~~*She wrote an interesting piece of writing.*~~)

There are some fixed expressions which are exceptions: for example *sing a song, live a good life, die a violent death.*

Most of the repetitions in the following text would be avoided by a careful writer, by varying the structure and by careful use of synonyms (e.g. *tried/attempted, summarise / describe briefly, forecast/predict*). →

In this report, I have tried to forecast likely developments over the next three years. In the first section, I have tried to summarise the results of the last two years, and I have tried to summarise the present situation. In the second section, I have tried to forecast the likely consequences of the present situation, and the consequences of the present financial policy.

Casual repetition is more common in informal language, but even in conversation people often sound monotonous or clumsy if they do not vary their sentence structure and vocabulary (► 300). Some kinds of repetition are actually ungrammatical in both writing and speech (► 282.1).

2 deliberate repetition

Writers (and speakers) can of course repeat vocabulary and structures deliberately. This may be done for emphasis.

*That was a **very, very** unfortunate decision.*

*The head doctor made a point of knowing the name of **every** patient in the hospital: **every** man, **every** woman and **every** child.*

Structural repetition can show how ideas are similar or related, by using the same structure for the same kind of item.

*First of all, I **wish to** congratulate you all on this year's splendid results. Secondly, I **wish to** give you some interesting news. And finally, I **wish to** thank you all . . .*

3 literary examples

Here are two contrasting examples of repetition used deliberately for literary purposes. In the first, by John Steinbeck, structures and key vocabulary (especially nouns and verbs) are repeated and rhythmically balanced in order to create an impressive (or mock-impressive) effect – to make the story and characters sound striking and important.

This is the story of Danny and of Danny's friends and of Danny's house. It is a story of how these three became one thing, so that in Tortilla Flat if you speak of Danny's house you do not mean a structure of wood flaked with old white-wash, overgrown with an ancient untrimmed rose of Castile. No, when you speak of Danny's house you are understood to mean a unit of which the parts are men, from which came sweetness and joy, philanthropy, and, in the end, a mystic sorrow. For Danny's house was not unlike the Round Table, and Danny's friends were not unlike the knights of it. And this is the story of how the group came into being, of how it flourished and grew to be an organisation beautiful and wise. This story deals with the adventuring of Danny's friends, with the good they did, with their thoughts and their endeavors. In the end, this story tells how the talisman was lost and how the group disintegrated.

(John Steinbeck, *Tortilla Flat*)

In contrast, the following text, by Ernest Hemingway, uses a kind of style which 'good' writers would normally avoid, repeating pronouns and simple structures in an apparently monotonous way. Hemingway's purpose is to show the simplicity of his hero, an uneducated old fisherman, by using a style that is supposed to reflect the way he thinks and speaks.

He did not remember when he had first started to talk aloud when he was by himself He had sung when he was by himself in the old days and he had sung at night sometimes when he was alone steering on his watch in the smacks or in the turtle boats. He had probably started to talk aloud, when alone, when the boy had left. But he did not remember.

(Ernest Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*)

288 academic writing

The writing found in academic journals and similar contexts (for example research reports, theoretical discussion and debate, historical accounts) is normally formal in tone, and follows the conventions of formal writing discussed in other parts of this Section. In particular:

1 vocabulary

Informal wording is usually avoided. Contractions are not used, and 'general-purpose' words like *do*, *have* and *get* are replaced by more specific terminology.

Further research will be ***carried out****.* (better than . . . *will be done*)

The team ***experienced a number of*** *problems.*
(better than . . . *had a lot of problems*)

Early investigators ***obtained*** *ambiguous results.*
(better than . . . *got ambiguous results*)

2 impersonal writing

Academic writing is most often impersonal, so for example the authors or researchers may not often appear as subjects of sentences.

This report questions *the conclusions of earlier researchers.*
(rather than *We question . . .*)

Passives are common.

All well-dated Neanderthal sites ***have been found*** *to be at least 39,000 years old.*

Impersonal structures with it are frequently used.

It *is clear that . . .* ***It*** *is likely that . . .* ***It*** *is important to . . .*

And academic writers may avoid presenting over-definite conclusions, by using verbs such as *may*, *suggest*, or adjectives such as *possible*, *arguable*.

Preliminary results ***suggest*** *that . . .* *It is* ***possible*** *that . . .*

3 nominalisation

Nominalisation (expressing actions by nouns, ► 285.3) can help to make writing impersonal.

The discovery of penicillin *transformed the treatment of bacterial infections.*
(rather than *When Fleming discovered penicillin . . .*)

Chemical analysis of their *bones shows that their diets differed from those of modern humans.* →

4 pre- and post-modifiers

Complex noun phrases may be used to package information, with several pre-modifiers and/or post-modifiers (► 285.1–285.2).

***accelerating climate** change* *a **clear evolutionary** pathway*
***important survival** information* ***ongoing hydrothermal** activity*
*the divergence **of the species from its apelike cousins***
*laws **of motion and gravitation that connected everything in the cosmos***
*evidence **for the way in which mirror cells work***
brain** areas **associated with reward
chemical** reactions **between rock and water

5 discourse markers

Academic writers use discourse markers (► 284) to make the structure of their text clear, for instance by signalling points which add to or contrast with what has come before.

***In addition**, MRI scans consistently showed tissue abnormalities.*
*These results, **however**, must be regarded as provisional pending further investigation.*

Note the use of *furthermore* and *what is more* to strengthen an argument. Compare:

*Participants completed tests of endurance. **In addition**, their lung capacity was measured.* (simply adding information)
*A clear relationship was found between lung capacity and endurance. **Furthermore** / **What is more**, training which increased endurance was shown to have a positive effect on lung capacity.* (adding another piece of evidence for the writer's claims)

Note also the use of *on the other hand* to emphasise a contrast. Compare:

*Several studies have provided evidence that playing classical music to cows increases their milk yield. **However**, no similar studies to date have been carried out on goats.* (a different point, but not an emphatic contrast)
*Playing classical music to cows has been shown to increase their milk production. Rock music, **on the other hand**, is found to result in significantly reduced yields.* (a more emphatic contrast)

6 collocations and formulaic language

Academic writing involves two kinds of formulaic language (► 332). One type consists of the fixed expressions that are commonly used in the particular area of study concerned, and which anyone writing academic material in that area needs to be familiar with.

to take a blood sample (medicine)
to draw out / trace out a floor plan (architecture)
communicative competence (linguistics)

The other kind of fixed expressions are those that are used, in any subject of study, when discussing research, evaluating evidence, developing an argument, agreeing and disagreeing with published views, and so on. A few examples:

to conduct / carry out research
to compile/analyse/present data *to raise an issue*
to put forward / question / take issue with / challenge / contest / dismiss: a view / an argument / a theory / a hypothesis / a claim

to make/reject a claim / an assumption
to claim that . . . *to assert that . . .* *to suggest that . . .*
to draw a conclusion *to prove/disprove* *solid theoretical reasoning*
proof/evidence for/that *powerful/persuasive/compelling evidence*
sound empirical evidence *lack of evidence* *little evidence for . . .*
research findings *a strong implication* *a logical conclusion*
on both theoretical and practical grounds
based on unproved hypotheses
broad agreement *to take something into account*

English, like any language, contains a very large number of formulaic expressions. The most important thing for students of academic writing is to note, and learn, those that are commonly used for their subject matter, but to understand that they cannot realistically expect to master all of the formulaic vocabulary of English in a limited time.

289 correspondence: letters

Traditionally-constructed letters are now much less common than other forms of correspondence such as emails. However, it is useful to know the normal conventions used in English-speaking cultures – for instance, in letters of application.

1 Put your own postal address at the top on the right or in the centre. Addresses generally follow the rule of 'smallest first': house number, then street, then town (and sometimes county) plus postcode. Telephone numbers and electronic addresses come last. Don't put your name with the address.

2 In formal letters and business letters, put the name and address of the person you are writing to on the left side of the page, starting on the line after your own address.

3 Put the date on the right, on the line after the address of the person you are writing to. A common way to write the date is to put the number of the day, followed by the month and year (e.g. *17 May 2005*). For other ways (and differences between British and American customs), ► 324.

4 Different styles are common in formal letters on paper which has the address ready-printed at the top of the page. For example, the date may be put on the left, and the address of the person written to may come at the end of the letter or of the first page.

5 Begin the letter (*Dear X*) on the left. Common ways of addressing people are:
- by first name (informal): *Dear Penny*
- by title and surname (more formal): *Dear Ms Hopkins*
- especially to somebody whose name is not known: *Dear Sir or Madam*, *Dear Sir/Madam*, *Dear Sir*, *Dear Madam*, *Dear Sirs* (to a company)

6 Some people like to use the first name and surname (*Dear Penny Hopkins*) when writing to strangers or people that they do not know well.
Do not use a title like *Mr* together with a first name (NOT ~~*Dear Mr James Carter*~~ OR ~~*Dear Mr James*~~). →

7 After *Dear X*, put a comma or nothing at all, not an exclamation mark (!). A colon (:) is used in American business letters. **Either** leave an empty line after *Dear X* and start again on the left, **or** start again on the next line, a few spaces from the left. Do the same for each new paragraph. (The first method is now the most common in Britain.)

8 Letters which begin with formulae like *Dear Sir(s)* or *Dear Madam* usually finish *Yours faithfully* in British English. Formal letters which begin with the person's name (e.g. *Dear Ms Hawkins, Dear Peter Lewis*) usually finish *Yours sincerely*. In American English, common endings are *Sincerely, Sincerely yours, Yours truly* and *Cordially*. Other less common formulae are *(With) best wishes* and *(With) kind regards*.

9 Sign with your first name (informal) or your full name (formal), but without writing any title (*Mr/Ms/Dr*, etc). Ways of writing one's full name: *Luke Forbes, L Forbes, L J Forbes*.
In a formal printed letter, add your full printed name after your handwritten signature. Friendly business letters are often signed with the first name only above the full printed name:

Yours sincerely
Luke

Luke Forbes

10 On the envelope, put the first name before the surname. People usually write a title (*Mr, Mrs*, etc) before the name. You can write the first name in full (*Mrs Angela Brookes*), or you can write one or more initials (*Mrs A E Brookes*).

11 British people now usually write abbreviated titles, initials, addresses, dates, and opening and closing formulae without commas or full stops.

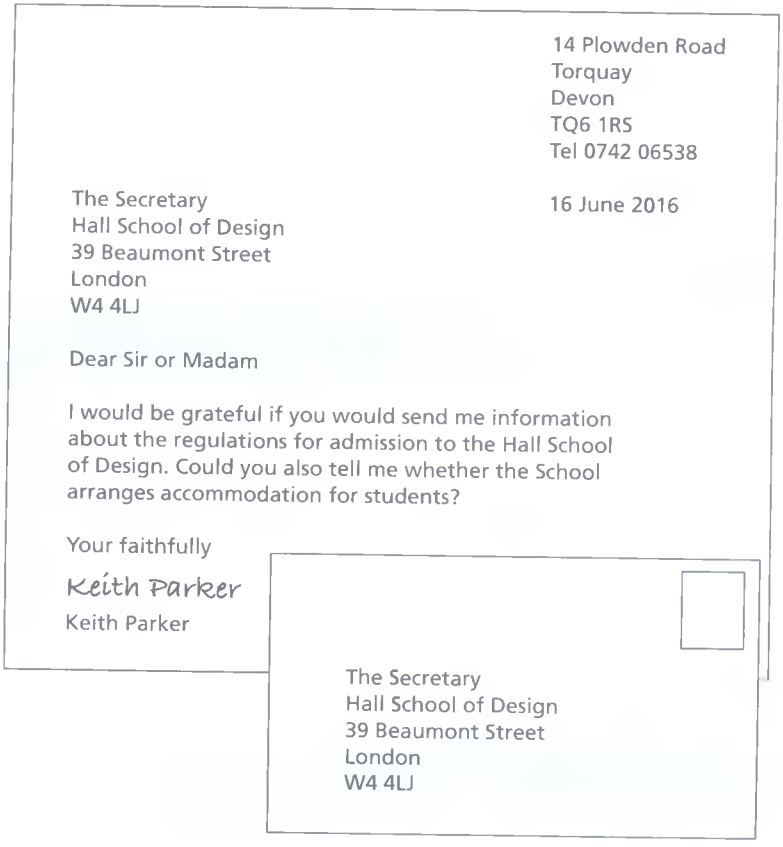
12 American usage is different from British in some ways:
- Dates are written differently (month before day) ► 324.
- Americans are often addressed (and sign their names) with the first name in full, followed by the initial of a middle name (*Luke J. Parker*). This is less usual in Britain.

13 Letter to strangers often being with an explanation of the reason for writing.
Dear X
I am writing to ask . . .

One does not normally begin a letter to a stranger with an enquiry about health. (NOT ~~*Dear X, How are you geeting on?*~~)

For more information about names and titles, ► 326.
For more information about the use of commas and full stops, ► 293, 296.
For more information about paragraphing, ► 286.

Example of a formal letter and envelope



14 Plowden Road
Torquay
Devon
TQ6 1RS
Tel 0742 06538

16 June 2016

The Secretary
Hall School of Design
39 Beaumont Street
London
W4 4LJ

Dear Sir or Madam

I would be grateful if you would send me information about the regulations for admission to the Hall School of Design. Could you also tell me whether the School arranges accommodation for students?

Your faithfully

Keith Parker

Keith Parker

The Secretary
Hall School of Design
39 Beaumont Street
London
W4 4LJ

290 correspondence: emails, text messages, etc

1 formal emails: style and layout

Formal emails are similar in style to letters on paper. The writer's postal address and phone numbers, if they are included, follow the signature.

2 personal messages

Personal messages sent by email, by (SMS) text messages and other social media (such as WhatsApp, Twitter, Tumblr, online chatrooms) are usually much more informal in style than letters on paper. Instead of *Dear X*, they might begin for example *X, Hi, Hi X, Hello X, Good morning X*, or with no salutation at all. Sentence structure may be reduced: for example *Can't come because work.* Afterthoughts that are added after the signature (or in following messages) are often introduced by *PS* (AmE *P.S.*), an abbreviation of Latin *post scriptum* (= 'written afterwards'). People who have forgotten to include an attachment often send it in a follow-up message beginning 'Oops!'. →

3 addresses

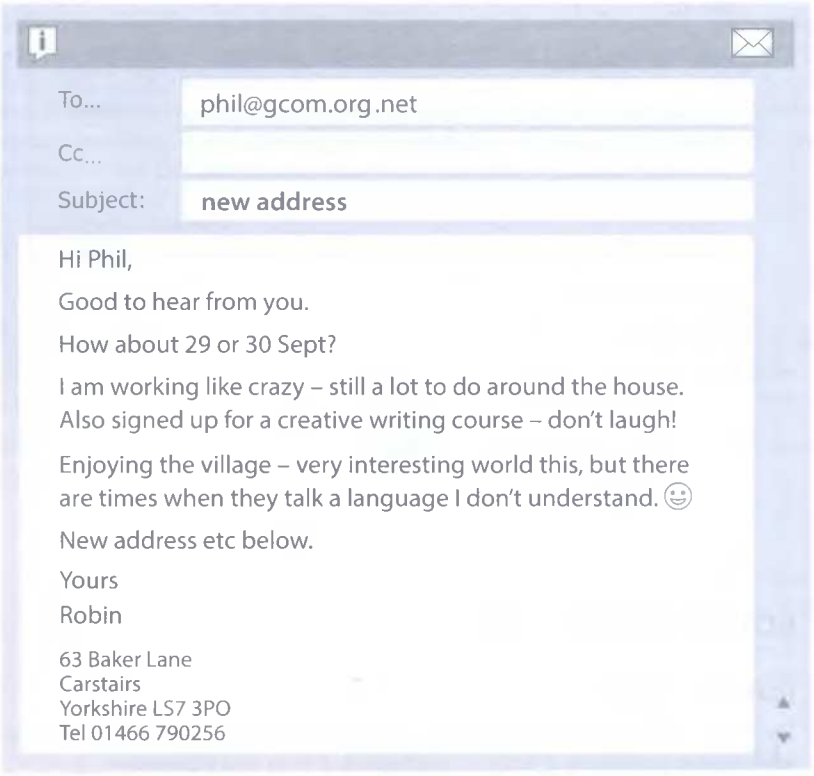
email addresses are read as follows:

j.harris@funbiz.co.uk	'j dot harris at funbiz dot co dot u k'
emily@log-farm.com	'emily at log dash farm dot com'
the_rabbit@coolmail.gr	'the underscore rabbit at coolmail dot g r'

Note also the names of symbols in 'urls' (internet addresses):

/ 'forward slash' \ 'backslash' : 'colon'

Example of an informal email



4 txt msgs (text messages)

A number of abbreviations are commonly used in text messages, especially by younger people. A few examples:

2bsy	too busy	*afk*	away from keyboard
asap	as soon as possible	*atm*	at the moment
btw	by the way	*cu*	see you
fyi	for your information	*gd*	good
gr8	great	*idm*	I don't mind

jk	just kidding	*l8r*	later
lol	laugh out loud	*ngl*	not gonna lie
nm	never mind	*np*	no problem
omg	Oh, my God!	*rn*	right now
ruok?	Are you OK?	*tbh*	to be honest
tx, thx	thanks		

291 abbreviated styles

Some styles of writing and speech have their own special grammar rules, often because of the need to save space or time.

1 advertisements and instructions

Small ads and instructions often leave out articles, subject or object pronouns, forms of *be* and prepositions.

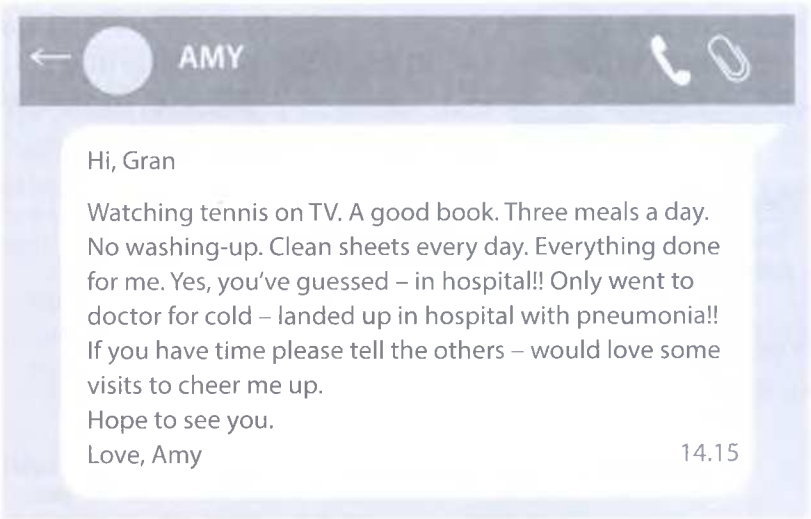
Single man looking for flat Oxford area. Phone 806127 weekends.
Job needed urgently. Will do anything legal. Call 312654.
Pour mixture into large saucepan, heat until boiling, then add three pounds sugar and leave on low heat for 45 minutes.

2 notes

Informal notes, to-do lists, diary entries, etc often follow similar rules.

Gone to hairdresser. Back 12.30. *Get tickets* *phone Anna*
see Josh 11.00 *meeting Emma lunch*

The same style is common in postcards, emails and text messages.





3 commentaries

Commentaries on fast-moving events like football matches also have their own kind of grammar. Auxiliaries and other less important verbs are often left out.

Goal kick . . . And the score still Spurs 1, Arsenal 3 . . . that's Pearce . . . Pearce to Coates . . . good ball . . . Sawyer running wide . . . Billings takes it, through to Matthews, Matthews with a cross, oh, and Billings in beautifully, a good chance there – and it's a goal!

4 titles, notices, etc

Titles, labels, headings, notices and slogans usually consist of short phrases, not complete sentences. Articles are often left out, especially in the names of buildings and institutions.

ROYAL HOTEL *INFORMATION OFFICE* *MORE MONEY FOR NURSES!*

5 headlines

News headlines have their own special grammar and vocabulary. For details, ► 292.

RECORD DRUGS HAUL AT AIRPORT: SIX HELD *FOUR DIE IN M6 BLAZE*

For other rules about leaving words out ('ellipsis'), ► 275–280.

292 headlines

1 special language

Headlines are the short titles above news reports (e.g. *DOG FINDS ROMAN TREASURE*). English news headlines can be very difficult to understand. One reason for this is that headlines are often written in a special style, which is very different from ordinary English. In this style there are some special rules of grammar, and words are often used in unusual ways.

2 grammar

a Headlines are not always complete sentences. Many headlines consist of noun phrases with no verb.

MORE WAGE CUTS *LUXURY HOTEL DEATH*
EXETER MAN'S DOUBLE MARRIAGE BID

b Headlines often contain strings of three, four or more nouns; nouns earlier in the string modify those that follow.

FURNITURE FACTORY PAY CUT PROTEST

Headlines like these can be difficult to understand. It sometimes helps to read them backwards. *FURNITURE FACTORY PAY CUT PROTEST* refers to a *PROTEST* about a *CUT* (reduction) in *PAY* at a *FACTORY* that makes *FURNITURE*.

c Headlines often leave out articles and the verb *be*.

SHAKESPEARE PLAY IMMORAL SAYS HEADMASTER
SCHOOLBOY WALKS IN SPACE

d In headlines, simple tenses are often used instead of progressive or perfect forms. The simple present is used for both present and past events.

STUDENTS FIGHT FOR COURSE CHANGES (= . . . are fighting . . .)
BLIND GIRL CLIMBS EVEREST (= . . . has climbed . . .)

The present progressive is used to talk about changes. *Be* is usually dropped.

BRITAIN GETTING WARMER, SAY SCIENTISTS *TRADE FIGURES IMPROVING*

e Many headline words are used as both nouns and verbs, and nouns are often used to modify other nouns (paragraph b above). So it is not always easy to work out the structure of a sentence. Compare:

US CUTS AID TO THIRD WORLD (= The US reduces its help . . . *CUTS* is a verb, *AID* is a noun.)
AID CUTS PROTEST (= There has been a protest about the reduction in aid. *AID* and *CUTS* are both nouns.)
CUTS AID REBELS (= The reduction is helping the revolutionaries. *CUTS* is a noun, *AID* is a verb.)

f Headlines often use infinitives to refer to the future.

PM TO VISIT AUSTRALIA *HOSPITALS TO TAKE FEWER PATIENTS*

For is also used to refer to future movements or plans.

TROOPS FOR GLASGOW? (= Are soldiers going to be sent to Glasgow?) →

g Auxiliary verbs are usually dropped from passive structures.

MURDER HUNT: MAN HELD (= . . . a man is being held by police.)

SIX KILLED IN EXPLOSION (= Six people have been killed . . .)

Note that forms like *HELD, ATTACKED* are usually past participles with passive meanings, not past tenses (which are rare in headlines). Compare:

– *AID PROTEST: PRESIDENT ATTACKED* (= . . . the President has been attacked.)
AID PROTEST: PRESIDENT ATTACKS CRITICS (= . . . the President has attacked her critics.)

– *BOY FOUND SAFE* (= The missing boy has been found safe; he is safe.)
BOY FINDS SAFE (= A boy has found a safe.)

h *As* and *in* are often used instead of longer connecting expressions.

HOSPITAL BOSS AXED AS PATIENTS DIE (= . . . because patients have died.)

FOOTBALL MANAGER IN CAR CRASH

i A colon (:) is often used to separate the subject of a headline from what is said about it.

STRIKES: PM TO ACT *MOTORWAY CRASH: DEATH TOLL RISES*

Quotation marks ('. . .') are used to show that words were said by somebody else, and that the report does not necessarily claim that they are true.

CRASH DRIVER 'HAD BEEN DRINKING'

A question mark (?) is often used when something is not certain.

CRISIS OVER BY SEPTEMBER?

For other styles with special grammar, ► 291.

3 vocabulary

Short words save space, and so they are very common in headlines. Some of the short words in headlines are unusual in ordinary language (e.g. *curb*, meaning 'restrict' or 'restriction'), and some are used in special senses which they do not often have in ordinary language (e.g. *bid*, meaning 'attempt'). Other words are chosen not because they are short, but because they sound dramatic (e.g. *blaze*, which means 'big fire', and is used in headlines to refer to any fire). The following is a list of common headline vocabulary.

act take action; do something
FOOD CRISIS: GOVERNMENT TO ACT

aid military or financial help; to help
MORE AID FOR POOR COUNTRIES
UNIONS AID HOSPITAL STRIKERS

alert alarm, warning
FLOOD ALERT ON EAST COAST

allege make an accusation
WOMAN ALLEGES UNFAIR TREATMENT

appear appear in court accused of a crime
MP TO APPEAR ON DRUGS CHARGES

axe abolish, close down; abolition, closure
COUNTRY BUS SERVICES AXED
SMALL SCHOOLS FACE AXE

BA British Airways
BA MAKES RECORD LOSS

back support
AMERICA BACKS BRITISH PEACE MOVE

ban forbid, refuse to allow something; prohibition
US BANS STEEL IMPORTS
NEW BAN ON DEMONSTRATIONS

bar refuse/refusal to allow entry
HOTEL BARS FOOTBALL FANS
NEW BAR ON IMMIGRANTS

bid attempt
JAPANESE WOMEN IN NEW EVEREST BID

blast explosion; criticise violently
BLAST AT PALACE
PM BLASTS CRITICS

blaze fire
SIX DIE IN HOTEL BLAZE

block stop, delay
TORIES BLOCK TEACHERS' PAY DEAL

blow bad news; discouragement; unfortunate happening
SMITH ILL: BLOW TO WORLD CUP HOPES

bolster give support/encouragement to
EXPORT FIGURES BOLSTER CITY CONFIDENCE

bond political/business association
NEW TRADE BONDS WITH ICELAND

boom big increase; prosperous period
SPENDING BOOM OVER, SAYS MINISTER

boost encourage(ment); increase (noun or verb)
PLAN TO BOOST EXPORTS

brink edge (of disaster)
WORLD ON BRINK OF WAR

Brussels the European Union administration
BRUSSELS BANS BRITISH BLACKBERRY WINE

call (for) demand/appeal (for)
CALL FOR STRIKE TALKS
HOSPITAL SCANDAL: MP CALLS FOR ENQUIRY

campaign organised effort to achieve social or political result
MP LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN FOR PRISON REFORM

cash money
MORE CASH NEEDED FOR SCHOOLS

charge accusation (by police)
THREE MEN HELD ON BOMB CHARGE

chop abolition, closure
300 BANK BRANCHES FACE CHOP

City London's financial institutions
NEW TRADE FIGURES PLEASE CITY →

claim (make) a statement that something is true (especially when there may be disagreement); **pay claim** demand for higher wages
SCIENTIST CLAIMS CANCER BREAKTHROUGH
NEW POLICE RACISM CLAIM
TEACHERS' PAY CLAIM REJECTED

clamp down on deal firmly with (usually something illegal)
POLICE TO CLAMP DOWN ON SPEEDING

clash quarrel, fight (noun or verb)
PM IN CLASH OVER ARMS SALES
STUDENTS CLASH WITH POLICE

clear find innocent
DOCTOR CLEARED OF DRUGS CHARGE

Commons the House of Commons (in Parliament)
MINISTERS IN COMMONS CLASH OVER HOUSING

con swindle
TEENAGERS CON WIDOW OUT OF LIFE SAVINGS

crackdown firm application of the law
GOVERNMENT PROMISES CRACKDOWN ON DRUGS DEALERS

crash financial failure
BANK CRASH THREATENS TO BRING DOWN GOVERNMENT

curb restrict; restriction
NEW PRICE CURBS

cut reduce; reduction
BRITAIN CUTS OVERSEAS AID
NEW HEALTH SERVICE CUTS

cutback reduction (usually financial)
TEACHERS SLAM SCHOOL CUTBACKS

dash (make) quick journey
PM IN DASH TO BLAST HOSPITAL

deadlock disagreement that cannot be solved
DEADLOCK IN PEACE TALKS

deal agreement, bargain
TEACHERS REJECT NEW PAY DEAL

demo demonstration
30 ARRESTED IN ANTI-TAX DEMO

ditch abandon
EDUCATION MINISTER DITCHES FEES CUT PLAN

dole (BrE) unemployment pay
DOLE QUEUES LENGTHEN

drama dramatic event; tense situation
PRINCE IN AIRPORT DRAMA

drive united effort
DRIVE TO SAVE WATER

drop give up, get rid of; fall (noun)
GOVERNMENT TO DROP CHILD LABOUR PLAN
BIG DROP IN INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENT

due expected to arrive
QUEEN DUE IN BERLIN TODAY

duo two people
DISABLED DUO ROW ACROSS ATLANTIC

EU the European Union
EU TRADE MINISTERS TO MEET

edge move gradually
WORLD EDGES TOWARDS WAR

envoy ambassador
FRENCH ENVOY DISAPPEARS

face be threatened by
HOSPITALS FACE MORE CUTS
STRIKERS FACE SACK

feud long-lasting quarrel or dispute
FAMILY FEUD EXPLODES INTO VIOLENCE: SIX HELD

find (noun) something that is found
BEACH FIND MAY BE BONES OF UNKNOWN DINOSAUR

firm determined not to change
PM FIRM ON TAX LEVELS

flak heavy criticism
GOVERNMENT FACES FLAK OVER VAT

flare begin violently
RIOTS FLARE IN ULSTER

foil prevent somebody from succeeding
TWELVE-YEAR-OLD FOILS BANK RAIDERS

fraud swindle, deceit
JAIL FOR TICKET FRAUD MEN

freeze keep(ing) prices, etc at their present level; block(ing) a bank account
MINISTER WANTS TWO-YEAR PAY FREEZE
DRUG PROFITS FROZEN

fuel provide reason for growth (of anger, protest, etc)
PAY FREEZE FUELS UNION ANGER

gag censor(ship), prevent(ion) from speaking
AFRICAN PRESIDENT ACTS TO GAG PRESS
FURY AT PRESS GAG

gems jewels
£2M GEMS STOLEN

go resign; be lost, disappear
PM TO GO?
4,000 JOBS TO GO IN NORTH

go for be sold for
PICASSO DRAWING GOES FOR £5M

go-ahead approval
SCOTTISH ROAD PLAN GETS GO-AHEAD

grab take quickly or violently
INVESTORS GRAB SHARES IN SCOTTISH COMPANIES →

grip tight hold; hold tightly
REBELS TIGHTEN GRIP ON SOUTH
COLD WAVE GRIPS COUNTRY

gun down shoot
TERRORISTS GUN DOWN PRIEST

hail welcome, praise
PM HAILS PEACE PLAN

halt stop (noun or verb)
CAR PLANT TO HALT PRODUCTION

haul amount stolen in robbery, or seized by police or customs
TRAIN ROBBERY: BIG GOLD HAUL
RECORD DRUGS HAUL AT AIRPORT

head lead; leader
PM TO HEAD TRADE MISSION
COMMONWEALTH HEADS TO MEET IN OTTAWA

head for/ to move towards
ECONOMY HEADING FOR DISASTER, EXPERTS WARN

heed pay attention to
GOVERNMENT MUST HEED HOUSING CRISIS, SAYS BISHOP

hike (AmE) rise in costs, prices, etc
INTEREST HIKE WILL HIT BUSINESS

hit affect badly
SNOWSTORMS HIT TRANSPORT

hit out at attack (with words)
PM HITS OUT AT CRITICS

hitch problem that causes delay
LAST-MINUTE HITCH DELAYS SATELLITE LAUNCH

hold arrest; keep under arrest
MAN HELD AFTER STATION BLAST
POLICE HOLD TERROR SUSPECT

in (the) red in debt; making a financial loss
BRITISH STEEL IN RED

jail prison
JAIL FOR PEACE MARCHERS

jobless unemployed (people)
THREE MILLION JOBLESS BY APRIL?

key important, vital
KEY WITNESS VANISHES

landslide victory by large majority in election
LANDSLIDE FOR NATIONALISTS

launch send(ing) (satellite, etc) into space; begin(ning) (campaign, etc); put(ting) (new product) on market
ENVIRONMENT MINISTER LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN FOR CLEANER BEACHES
BRITISH COMPANY LAUNCHES THROW-AWAY CHAIRS
SPACE TELESCOPE LAUNCH DELAYED

lead clue (in police enquiry)
NEW LEAD IN NIGHTCLUB MURDER CASE

leak unofficial publication of secret information
PM FURIOUS OVER TAX PLAN LEAKS

leap big increase
LEAP IN IMPORTS

life imprisonment 'for life'
LIFE FOR AXE MURDERER

link connection, contact
NEW TRADE LINKS WITH PERU

loom threaten to happen
VAT ON FOOD: NEW PROTESTS LOOM

Lords the House of Lords (in Parliament)
LORDS VOTE ON DOG REGISTRATION

lotto the national lottery
DANCING GRANDMOTHER IN RECORD LOTTO WIN

mar spoil
CROWD VIOLENCE MARS CUP FINAL

media newspapers, radio and TV
GOVERNMENT TIGHTENS GRIP ON MEDIA

mercy intended to save lives
DOCTOR IN MERCY DASH TO EVEREST

mission delegation (official group sent to conference, etc)
SHOTS FIRED AT UN MISSION

mob angry crowd; (AmE) organised crime / Mafia
MOBS RAMPAGE THROUGH CITY STREETS
MOB LEADERS HELD

move step towards a particular result (often political)
MOVE TO BOOST TRADE LINKS WITH JAPAN

MEP Member of the European Parliament
MEPS WANT MORE PAY

MP Member of Parliament
MP DENIES DRUGS CHARGE

nail force somebody to admit the truth
MP NAILS MINISTER ON PIT CLOSURE PLANS

net win, capture
TWO SISTERS NET £3M IN POOLS WIN

No 10 Number 10 Downing Street (the Prime Minister's residence)
ANOTHER PETITION HANDED IN AT NO 10

OAP (BrE) old-age pensioner; anybody over retirement age
OAPS MARCH AGAINST WAR PLANS

odds chances, probability
JONES RE-ELECTED AGAINST THE ODDS

on about, on the subject of, concerning
NEW MOVE ON PENSIONS

opt for choose
WALES OPTS FOR INDEPENDENCE

→

oust drive out, replace
MODERATES OUSTED IN UNION ELECTIONS

out to intending to
NATIONALISTS OUT TO CAPTURE MASS VOTE

over about, on the subject of, because of
PROTESTS OVER AID CUTS

pact agreement
DEFENCE PACT RUNS INTO TROUBLE

pay wages
TRANSPORT PAY TALKS BREAK DOWN

PC (BrE) police constable
PC SHOT IN BANK RAID

peak high point
BANK LENDING HITS NEW PEAK

peer lord; Member of the House of Lords
PEERS REJECT GOVERNMENT WAGE-FREEZE BAN

peg (BrE) hold (prices, etc) at present level
BANKS PEG INTEREST RATES

pensioner (BrE) old age pensioner; anybody over retirement age
PENSIONER SKIS DOWN MONT BLANC

peril danger
FLOOD PERIL IN THAMES VALLEY

pit coal mine
PIT TURNED INTO MUSEUM

plant factory
STEEL PLANT BLAZE

plea call for help
BIG RESPONSE TO PLEA FOR FLOOD AID

pledge promise
GOVERNMENT GIVES PLEDGE ON JOBLESS

PM Prime Minister
EGG THROWN AT PM

poised to ready to, about to
TORIES POISED TO MAKE ELECTION GAINS

poll public opinion survey
TORIES AHEAD IN POLLS

pools football pools: a form of gambling in which people guess the results of football matches
SISTERS SHARE BIG POOLS WIN

premier prime minister
GREEK PREMIER TO VISIT UK

press the newspapers
BID TO GAG PRESS OVER DEFENCE SPENDING

press (for) urge, encourage, ask for urgently
MINISTER PRESSED TO ACT ON HOUSING
OPPOSITION PRESS FOR ENQUIRY ON AIR CRASHES

probe investigation; investigate
CALL FOR STUDENT DRUGS PROBE
POLICE PROBE RACING SCANDAL

pull out withdraw; **pull-out** withdrawal
US PULLS OUT OF ARMS TALKS
MINISTER URGES PULL-OUT FROM OLYMPICS

push for ask for, encourage
SCHOOLS PUSH FOR MORE CASH

quake earthquake
HOUSES DAMAGED IN WELSH QUAKE

quit resign, leave
CHURCH LEADER QUITS
MINISTER TO QUIT GOVERNMENT

quiz question (verb)
POLICE QUIZ MILLIONAIRE SUPERMARKET BOSS

raid enter and search; attack (noun and verb), rob, robbery
POLICE RAID DUCHESS'S FLAT
BIG GEMS RAID

rampage riot
FOOTBALL FANS RAMPAGE THROUGH SEASIDE TOWNS

rap criticise
DOCTORS RAP NEW MINISTRY PLANS

rates (bank) interest rates
RATES RISE EXPECTED

record bigger than ever before
RECORD LOSS BY INSURANCE COMPANY

riddle mystery
MISSING ENVOY RIDDLE: WOMAN HELD

rift division, disagreement
LABOUR RIFT OVER DEFENCE POLICY

rock shock, shake
BANK SEX SCANDAL ROCKS CITY
IRELAND ROCKED BY QUAKE

row (BrE) noisy disagreement, quarrel
NEW ROW OVER PENSION CUTS

rule out reject the possibility of
PM RULES OUT AUTUMN ELECTION

sack (BrE) dismiss(al) from job
STRIKING TRAIN DRIVERS FACE SACK

saga long-running news story
NEW REVELATIONS IN RUNAWAY DUKE SAGA

scare public alarm, alarming rumour
TYPHOID SCARE IN SOUTHWEST

scoop win (prize, etc)
PENSIONER SCOOPS LOTTO FORTUNE

scrap throw out (as useless)
GOVERNMENT SCRAPS NEW ROAD PLANS

seek look for
POLICE SEEK WITNESS TO KILLING →

seize take (especially in police and customs searches)
POLICE SEIZE ARMS AFTER CAR CHASE
£3M DRUGS SEIZED AT AIRPORT

set to ready to; about to
INTEREST RATES SET TO RISE

shed get rid of
CAR MAKERS TO SHED 5,000 JOBS

slam criticise violently
GENERAL SLAMS DEFENCE POLICY

slash cut, reduce drastically
GOVERNMENT TO SLASH HEALTH EXPENDITURE

slate criticise
PM SLATES BISHOP

slay (AmE) murder
FREEWAY KILLER SLAYS SIX

slump fall (economic)
EXPORTS SLUMP
CITY FEARS NEW SLUMP

snatch steal, robbery
BIG WAGES SNATCH IN WEST END
TEENAGE ROBBERS SNATCH POLICE CAR

soar rise dramatically
IMPORTS SOAR FOR THIRD MONTH

spark cause (trouble) to start
REFEREE'S DECISION SPARKS RIOT

split disagree(ment)
CABINET SPLIT ON PRICES POLICY

spree wild spending expedition
BUS DRIVER SPENDS £30,000 IN THREE-DAY CREDIT CARD SPREE

stake financial interest
JAPANESE BUY STAKE IN BRITISH AIRWAYS

storm angry public disagreement
STORM OVER NEW STRIKE LAW

storm out of leave angrily
TEACHERS' LEADERS STORM OUT OF MEETING

stun surprise, shock
JOBLESS FIGURES STUN CITY

surge sudden increase; rise suddenly
SURGE IN JOBLESS FIGURES

swap exchange
HEART SWAP BOY BETTER

sway persuade
HOSPITAL PROTEST SWAYS MINISTERS

switch change (noun or verb)
DEFENCE POLICY SWITCH
MORE HOMES SWITCH ELECTRICITY SUPPLIERS

swoop to raid; a police raid
POLICE IN DAWN SWOOP ON DRUGS GANG

threat	danger *THREAT OF FLU EPIDEMIC*
toll	number killed *QUAKE TOLL MAY BE 5,000*
top	(adj) senior, most important *TOP BANKER KIDNAPPED*
top	(verb) exceed *IMPORTS TOP LAST YEAR'S FIGURES*
Tory	Conservative *VICTORY FOR TORY MODERATES*
trio	three people *JAILBREAK TRIO RECAPTURED*
troops	soldiers *MORE TROOPS FOR BORDER AREA*
UK	the United Kingdom (of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) *BRUSSELS CRITICISES UK JAIL CONDITIONS*
UN	the United Nations *UN IN RED: CANNOT BALANCE BUDGET*
urge	encourage *GOVERNMENT URGED TO ACT ON POLLUTION*
US	the United States of America *US URGED TO PULL OUT OF MIDDLE EAST*
VAT	value added tax *NEXT, VAT ON BABY FOOD?*
vow	promise *EXILED PRESIDENT VOWS TO RETURN*
walk out	leave in protest *CAR WORKERS WALK OUT OVER WAGE FREEZE*
wed	marry *BISHOP TO WED ACTRESS*

293 **punctuation**: full stop, question mark and exclamation mark

1 sentence division

Full stops (AmE **periods**), **question marks** and **exclamation marks** (AmE **exclamation points**) are used to close sentences. After one of these, a new sentence has a capital letter.

I looked out of the window. It was snowing again.
Why do we try to reach the stars? What is it all for?
We need more houses! Not one day, not next year – now!

We do not normally use full stops, question or exclamation marks to close grammatically incomplete sentences.

She phoned me as soon as she arrived. (NOT ~~*She phoned me. As soon as she arrived.*~~)

→

In his job he has to deal with different kinds of people. (NOT ~~*In his job. He has to deal with different kinds of people.*~~)

Did you understand why I was upset? (NOT ~~*Did you understand? Why I was upset?*~~)

However, sometimes we can emphasise a clause or phrase by separating it with a full stop and capital letter.

People are sleeping out on the streets. In Britain. In the 21st century. Because there are not enough houses.

2 abbreviations

Full stops can be used after many abbreviations (► 336). But they are often dropped in modern British English.

Dr. Andrew C. Burke, M.A. (OR *Dr Andrew C Burke, MA*)

3 indirect questions

We do not use question marks after indirect questions (► 260).

I asked her what time it was. (NOT . . . ~~*what time it was?*~~)

294 punctuation: colon

1 explanations

A colon (:) usually introduces an explanation or further details.

We decided not to go to Mexico: we had too little money.

There was a problem with the car: it was losing oil.

2 lists

A colon can introduce a list.

The main points are as follows: (1) . . . , (2) . . . , (3) . . . .

We need three kinds of support: economic, moral and political.

3 subdivisions

A colon can introduce a subdivision of a subject in a title or heading.

PUNCTUATION: COLON

4 capitals

In British English, it is unusual for a capital letter to follow a colon (except at the beginning of a quotation). However, this can happen if a colon is followed by several complete sentences.

My main objections are as follows:

First of all, no complete budget has been drawn up.

Secondly, there is no guarantee that . . .

In American English, colons are more often followed by capital letters.

5 letters

Americans usually put a colon after the opening salutation (*Dear . . .*) in a business letter.

Dear Mr. Callan:

I am writing to . . .

British usage prefers a comma or no punctuation mark at all in this case.

6 direct speech

Normally, direct speech is introduced by a comma in writing.

***Stewart opened his eyes and said**, 'Who's your beautiful friend?'*

But a long passage of direct speech may be introduced by a colon.

*Introducing his report for the year, **the Chairman said:** 'A number of factors have contributed to the company's very gratifying results. First of all, . . .'*

And a colon is used when direct speech is introduced by a name or short phrase (as in the text of a play, or when famous sayings are quoted).

POLONIUS: *What do you read, my lord?*
HAMLET: *Words, words, words.*

***In the words of Murphy's Law:** 'Anything that can go wrong will go wrong.'*

295 punctuation: semi-colon

1 instead of full stops

Semi-colons (;) are sometimes used instead of full stops, in cases where sentences are grammatically independent but the meaning is closely connected. Semi-colons are not nearly as common as full stops or commas.

Some people work best in the mornings; others do better in the evenings.
It is a fine idea; let us hope that it is going to work.

Commas are not usually possible in cases like these (► 296.7).

2 in lists

Semi-colons can also be used to separate items in a list, particularly when these are grammatically complex.

You may use the sports facilities on condition that your subscription is paid regularly; that you arrange for all necessary cleaning to be carried out; that you undertake to make good any damage; . . .

For commas in lists, ► 296.

296 punctuation: comma

1 the basic sentence

We do not use commas to separate the basic parts of a sentence (subject and verb, verb and object).

The standard of living of the dock workers was slowly improving.
(NOT ~~*The standard of living of the dock workers, was slowly improving.*~~)
Many of them were able to begin buying their own homes.
(NOT ~~*Many of them were able to begin buying, their own homes.*~~)

2 before and after the basic sentence

If we put long adverbial expressions **before** the basic sentence, we often use a comma. Compare:

***At that time** the standard of living of the dock workers was slowly improving.*
***During the late 1920s and early 1930s**, the standard of living of the dock workers was slowly improving.* →

We do not so often put commas when adverbial expressions come **after** the basic sentence.

*The standard of living of the dock workers was slowly **improving during the late 1920s and early 1930s**.*

3 inside the basic sentence

When adverbial expressions come between or inside parts of the basic sentence, we may put commas **before** and **after** them.

*The standard of living of the dock workers, **during the late 1920s and early 1930s,** was steadily improving.*

4 noun phrases

We do not usually separate a noun from the adjectives or other expressions that go with it.

the mainly foreign labourers (NOT ~~*the mainly foreign, labourers*~~)

the mainly foreign labourers in the north-eastern docks (NOT ~~*the mainly foreign labourers, in the north eastern docks*~~)

However, we do use commas to separate **non-identifying expressions** (► 234).

*Andreas Bergmeister, **who established the dock workers' union,** . . .*

5 sentences with conjunctions

We often put commas in sentences with conjunctions, especially in longer sentences. Compare:

*The situation changed **when** the export markets began to contract.*

*The situation changed noticeably for the worse after 1932, **when** the export markets began to contract.*

We usually use a comma if we start with the conjunction.

***When** the export markets began to contract, the situation changed.*

6 indirect speech

We do not put commas after verbs of saying, thinking, etc in indirect speech.

Many commentators declared that the economy was in serious trouble. (NOT ~~*Many commentators declared, that the economy*~~ . . .)

No one knew how serious the situation would become. (NOT ~~*No one knew, how serious*~~ . . .)

A useful rule: we do not put a comma before ***that*** (conjunction or relative pronoun).

*They did not understand **that** the economic conditions **that** had existed earlier had disappeared for good.*

7 between grammatically separate sentences

Between grammatically separate sentences (with no conjunction), we use a full stop or a semi-colon, but not a comma. Compare:

Orders began to dry up, and most companies reduced their work force. (comma and conjunction)

Orders began to dry up. Most companies started to reduce their work force. OR *Orders began to dry up; most companies started to reduce their work force.* (BUT NOT ~~*Orders began to dry up, most companies started*~~ . . .)

8 conjunctions and adverbs

Note that some linking words (e.g. ***consequently***, ***however***, ***therefore***) are adverbs, not conjunctions. A sentence beginning with an adverb is grammatically separate from the sentence before it; consequently, a full stop or semi-colon is necessary between the sentences (► 283).

Orders began to dry up. Consequently, most companies started to reduce their work force. (NOT ~~*Orders began to dry up, consequently, most companies*~~ . . .)

Orders began to dry up; however, some companies tried to carry on as before. (NOT ~~*Orders began to dry up, however, some companies*~~ . . .)

9 commas between adjectives

Before a noun, we use commas mostly to separate adjectives that give the same or related kinds of information.

a ***tall, impressive*** *figure* *a* ***long, boring*** *speech*

an expensive, ill-planned, wasteful *project*

Commas are sometimes dropped between short adjectives.

a ***tall(,) dark(,) handsome*** *cowboy*

Commas are not dropped when adjectives or other modifiers refer to different parts of something.

a ***green, red*** *and gold carpet* (NOT ~~*a green red and gold carpet*~~)

concrete, glass *and plastic buildings*

Before a noun, commas are not normally used when adjectives give different kinds of information.

Have you met our ***handsome new financial*** *director?* (NOT . . . ~~*our handsome, new, financial director*~~)

surprising new *developments* ***gloomy economic*** *forecasts*

After ***be*** and other linking verbs, adjectives are punctuated like a list (see below).

His speech was ***long, boring, detailed and irrelevant.***

The cowboy was ***tall, dark and handsome.***

10 lists

We use commas to separate the different things in a list (but not usually before ***and*** unless the last item is long). Compare:

The developing crisis affected manufacturers, distributors, marketing organisations, banks ***and*** *credit agencies.*

. . . marketing organisations, banks, ***and*** *some of the major credit agencies.*

11 numbers

Commas are used to divide large numbers into groups of three figures, by separating off the thousands and millions.

6,435 (NOT ~~*6.435*~~) *7,456,189*

We do not always use commas in four-figure numbers, and they are never used in dates.

3,164 OR *3164* *the year 1946*

Spaces are sometimes used instead of commas.

There are 1000 millimetres in 1 metre.

We do not use commas in decimals (► 322.1).

3.5 = three point five OR *three and a half* (NOT ~~*three comma five*~~)

297 punctuation: dash

Dashes (–) are especially common in informal writing. They can be used in the same way as colons, semi-colons or brackets.

There are three things I can never remember – names, faces, and I've forgotten the other.

We had a great time in Greece – the kids really loved it.

My mother – who rarely gets angry – really lost her temper.

A dash can introduce an afterthought, or something unexpected and surprising.

We'll be arriving on Monday morning – at least, I think so.

And then we met Joseph – with Lisa, believe it or not!

For the use of hyphens (as in *hard-working* or *co-operative*), ► 342.

298 punctuation: quotation marks

Quotation marks can be single ('. . .') or double ("". . .""). They are also called 'inverted commas' in British English.

1 direct speech

We use quotation marks (single or double) when we quote direct speech. For quotations inside quotations, we use double quotation marks inside single (or single inside double).

'His last words,' said Albert, 'were "Close that window".'

American usage often prefers single quotation marks inside double in these cases.

2 special use of words

We often put quotation marks (usually single) round words which are used in special ways – for example when we talk about them or when we give them special meanings.

People disagree about how to use the word 'disinterested'.

A textbook can be a 'wall' between the teacher and the class.

American usage often prefers double quotation marks in these cases.

Section 27 Speech and Spoken Exchanges

INTRODUCTION

Informal spoken sentences are generally simpler than written sentences. They have fewer subordinate clauses, and mostly use a small number of common conjunctions (e.g. ***and, but, that, so, if, because, when***). Noun phrases are usually short: a subject is often a single pronoun. More formal grammatical structures (► 281) and vocabulary (► 333) are unusual. While many spoken utterances are similar in structure to written sentences, word order is less fixed. Information may be 'spaced out' more by putting some of it before or after the main sentence (► 299). Some speech does not fit into the 'complete sentence' pattern of writing at all.

Lovely, the way she talks about her mother. *That car, is it yours?*
How long you been waiting here, then?
'Maybe call in on Emma on the way out?' 'Not today I can't.'
'What time?' 'Half past eight.' 'At your place?' 'No, Andy's.'

This Section cannot of course offer a complete analysis of spoken language. The following entries describe a few common features of informal speech.

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- ✗ Those people that we met them in Greece, shall we call them? ► 299.2
- ✗ Where you are going? ► 302
- ✗ 'What are you doing?' 'What I'm doing? Nothing.' ► 304.3
- ✗ Are you the new secretary, aren't you? ► 305.2
- ✗ You never say what you're thinking, don't you? ► 305.4
- ✗ 'Are you ready?' 'Yes, I'm.' ► 308
- ✗ 'Louise can dance beautifully.' 'So can her sister dance.' ► 309.1
- ✗ 'I'm getting bored.' 'I also.' ► 309.1
- ✗ Joe didn't phone, and neither didn't Kate. ► 309.2
- ✗ Couldn't you babysit this evening. please? ► 310.4

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299 spoken sentence structure

1 spacing out information: *a course with three levels, it's carefully put together*

In writing, information is often packed tightly into complex structures (see Introduction to Section 26). In speech, information is generally separated out and given piece by piece, to make it easier to take in. One can read at one's own speed, backtracking as necessary, but one cannot listen at one's own speed.

FORMAL WRITING: *a carefully constructed progressive three-level course incorporating built-in oral and written revision tests*

INFORMAL SPEECH: *a course with three levels, it's carefully put together, progressive, it's got revision tests, they're oral and written*

2 fronting and topicalisation: *Your friend Alex, now he speaks German.*

Spoken sentences may be built up quite differently from written sentences, not necessarily with the order subject-verb-object. **Fronting** (► 272) is common in speech: objects, adverbials or other elements may be moved to the front to give them more importance.

***People like that** I just can't stand.*
***Only this morning** she was saying she had a problem.*
***What I'm going to do next** I really don't know.*

Often, a word or group of words may be moved right out of the sentence structure and announced at the beginning as the topic, with a more or less complete sentence following. These **topicalisation** structures are common in both speech and writing in many languages; in English they are unusual in writing.

***Your friend Alex**, now he speaks German, maybe he can help us.* (topicalised subject)
***Your mother**, can I see her if she's in?* (topicalised object)
***The people next door**, we don't need to send them a card, do we?* (topicalised indirect object)
***That meeting**, I thought I was going to scream.* (topicalised adverbial)
***What they did**, they invited everybody and then forgot the date.* (topicalised verb phrase)
***Lovely**, the way she talks about her mother.* (topicalised complement)

Topicalised subjects and objects are repeated by pronouns in these structures (*Your friend Alex . . . **he***; *Your mother . . . **her***). But note that English does not normally allow these 'resumptive' pronouns inside relative clauses, even in speech.

*Those people **that we met in Greece**, let's send **them** a card.* (BUT NOT ~~*Those people that we met them in Greece, . . .*~~)

3 tags: *They work very hard, most of them.*

We can space out information by putting some of it in a complete sentence and then adding more details at the end. The extra words at the end are called a 'tag' or 'tail'.

Those kids work very hard, ***most of them.***
That's the doorbell, ***I think.*** *I don't mind,* ***to be honest.***

It is possible to 'announce' the subject with a pronoun, and put the full subject in a tag. These structures are more common in British than American English.

He *hasn't a chance,* ***Fred.*** ***He*** *likes his beer,* ***Jack.***
They're *very polite,* ***your children.***

In sentences like these, we often drop the pronoun at the beginning. We can also drop unstressed forms of *be.* (For more detailed information about 'ellipsis' of this kind, ► 277.)

Hasn't a chance, Fred. *Likes his beer, Jack.* *Very polite, your children.*
Living in the clouds, you lot. *Crazy, that driver.*

The tag can repeat the verb by using an auxiliary.

(He) hasn't a chance, Fred ***hasn't.*** *(He) likes his beer, Jack* ***does.***
(She) really got on my nerves, Sylvia ***did.***

4 emphasising tags: *You've gone mad, you have.*

Sometimes a tag gives no new information, but simply repeats and emphasises the subject and verb.

You've gone mad, ***you have.*** *I'm getting fed up,* ***I am.***
He likes his beer, ***he does.***

Pronouns are not usually used alone in tags, except for reflexives.

(I) don't think much of the party, ***myself.***

For more about dropping words ('ellipsis') at the beginning of a sentence, ► 277.
For other uses of tags and similar structures, ► 305–306 (question tags), ► 307 (reply questions) and ► 308 (short answers).

300 avoiding repetition: *Wonderful, isn't it?*

Speech is more tolerant of repetition than formal writing (► 287), but even in spoken exchanges people often prefer to avoid repeating each other's words without a good reason. There is a common kind of exchange where one speaker gives his/her opinion of something, and the other agrees by saying the same thing in other words which are at least as emphatic. Repetition is carefully avoided.

'Glorious day.' *'****Wonderful****, isn't it?'* (NOT USUALLY *Glorious, isn't it?*)
'Terrible weather.' *'****Dreadful****.'*
'United didn't play very well, then.' *'Absolute* ***rubbish****.'*

Speakers can of course repeat vocabulary and structures deliberately. This can be done for emphasis.

I'm very ***very*** *angry.* *You'll eat every mouthful.* ***Every*** *single* ***mouthful.***

Repeating somebody else's words can show surprise or disbelief.

'I'm getting married.' *'You're* ***getting married?*** *Who to?'*

For more about 'echo questions' of this kind, ► 304.

301 discourse markers in speech

Discourse markers are words and expressions which help to structure spoken exchanges and written text. (e.g. *first of all, by the way, on the other hand, in any case, to sum up*). English has a very large number of these. Some are used in all kinds of discourse, some mostly in formal writing, and others mainly in informal speech. Those that are most common in speech are discussed here; some of these (but not all) are also used in formal writing, ► 284. Discourse markers can communicate several things:

- **'What are we talking about?'** They can introduce or clarify a topic, and show divisions and changes of topic.
- **'What are we doing?'** They can show the type of communication that is going on.
- **attitude** They can show a speaker's attitude to what he or she is saying, or to the listener's expectations.

1 What are we talking about?

Some discourse markers say what a speaker is going to focus on, and may show a link with previous discussion. Others show subdivisions and changes of topic.

focusing: *talking/speaking of/about; regarding; as regards; as far as . . . is/are concerned; as for*

*'I saw Max and Emma today. You know she –' '**Talking of** Max, you know he's leaving?'*
*And **speaking of** Australia, did you see that documentary . . .?*
***Regarding** that car you were thinking of selling – how much do you want for it?*
***As far as** the kids **are concerned**, let's ask them what they think.*
***As for** that business of going to the police, I'm sorry I mentioned it.*
*I've invited Andy and Joseph. **As for** Joshua, I never want to see him again.*

subdividing: *first; firstly; first of all; in the first place; to start with; for one thing; and then*

*I don't think I can help you. **First(ly)** / **First of all** / **For one thing** / **In the first place**, I haven't got the time. **And then** I'm going to be away all next week.*
***To start with**, let me remind you that I'm the one who's paying for all this.*

brief change of subject: *incidentally; by the way*

*I was talking to Annie yesterday. **Incidentally** / **By the way**, did you know she's got a new job? And she said that Jake told her . . .*

returning to previous subject: *as I was saying*

*. . . on the roof – Jeremy, put the cat down, please. **As I was saying**, if Jack gets up on the roof and looks at the tiles . . .*

introducing a new subject (for example in lectures): *now; all right; right; OK*

***OK. Now** a word about iron oxide. There's two basic types . . .*
*Any questions? **Right**, let's have a word about tomorrow's arrangements.*

summing up: *all in all; in a word*

And the car broke down. And Jodie got mugged. And then Sophie was ill. ***All in all****, it wasn't the best trip we've had.*
He gets up at midday. He won't look for a job. He doesn't help around the house. ***In a word****, he's bone idle.*

2 What are we doing?

Some discourse markers make it clear what kind of communication is going on.

generalising: *on the whole; to some extent; in general; in all/most/many/some cases; broadly speaking*

On the whole */* ***In general****, people like to help others.*
'Do you think TV is bad for kids?' 'Well, ***in some cases****, maybe.'*
To some extent*, it's an interesting job. But there are some pretty dull patches.*
Broadly speaking*, I get on pretty well with people.*

exceptions: *apart from; except for*

I'll eat anything, ***apart from*** */* ***except for*** *chillies.*

making contrasting points: *still; all the same; even so; mind you; on the other hand; but; yet; however; in spite of this/that*

I'm glad to have a place of my own. OK, it's a long way from the centre, and it needs redecorating. ***Still****, it's home.*
I was a bit bored and lonely, yes, but I had a reasonably pleasant time ***all the same****.*
Jenkins wasn't on top form. ***Even so****, he got two goals.*
Bankers are generally nice people. ***Mind you****, I wouldn't want my daughter to marry one.*
She can be really irritating. ***On the other hand****, she's got a heart of gold.*
OK, we've got to cut down expenses. ***But*** *we can't get rid of the car.*
He's 85. ***Yet*** *he still takes care of the farm.*
I'll do a lot for my family. ***However****, there are limits.*
The train was two hours late. ***In spite of that****, we got to the match on time.*

contradicting: *on the contrary; quite the opposite*

I don't dislike him at all. ***On the contrary*** */* ***Quite the opposite****, I'm very fond of him.*

showing a logical or causal connection: *so; then* (► 583)

They didn't think I had enough experience, ***so*** *I didn't get the job.*
*'I don't like this stew.' '****Then/So*** *don't eat it.'*

persuading: *after all* (► 361)*; look at it this way; look;* question tags (► 305); negative questions (► 218)

Why shouldn't she buy a horse if she wants to? ***After all****, it's her money.*
Look at it this way*. Suppose you were in the same position as me. How would you feel?* →

We can't go to the gym now. ***Look****, they close in an hour.*
You're taking this too seriously, ***aren't you****?*
It's a bit expensive, ***don't you think****?*

adding: *also; on top of that; as well as that; another thing is; besides; I mean* (► 526.4)

I don't like his attitude. ***Also****, I don't believe he's actually got the qualifications he says he has.*
They're cutting unemployment benefits. And ***on top of that****, they're putting up VAT.*
The place is close to the sea. And ***another thing is****, the people are really friendly.*
I don't like her going out alone at night. You don't know what sort of people she's going to meet. And ***besides*** */* ***I mean****, she's far too young.*

giving examples: *in particular; for instance; for example*

I'd like to have time to talk to some of the others. ***In particular****, I want to find out what Joshua thinks.*
We could invite some of the neighbours, ***for instance*** */* ***for example****, Jess and Simon.*

For other uses of *still*, ► 595. For a comparison of *on the contrary* and *on the other hand*, ► 428.1.

3 attitude

Some discourse markers express the speaker's attitude to what he/she is saying, or modify what is being said to make the communication more effective.

showing speaker's attitude: *no doubt; honestly; frankly*

No ***doubt*** *you will be paying your rent by the end of the week, Mr Jenkins?* (*No doubt* is often ironic: the speaker may not be at all sure of Mr Jenkins' intentions.)
Honestly*, I think your poetry is remarkable.*
*'What do you think of my hair?' '****Frankly****, darling, it's a disaster.'*

making things clear: *that is to say; in other words; I mean; I guess*

There's a problem about tomorrow. ***That is to say****, I don't think we can come.*
I've got a funny feeling about him. ***In other words*** */* ***I mean****, I don't trust him.*
I guess*, looking back on it, I was her toy boy.*

softening and correcting: *in my view/opinion; apparently; so to speak; that is to say; more or less; I think/feel/suppose/reckon/guess; sort of; kind of; really; well, at least; I'm afraid* (► 359.2)*; actually* (► 358)*; or rather; I mean*

A lot of people say he's a bad manager. ***In my view/opinion****, he's OK.*
'I've heard there's been a fire at the office.' 'Yes, ***apparently*** *so.'*
Dan's the family conscience, ***so to speak****. He's always telling us what's right.*
Leave me out. ***That is to say*** */* ***I mean****, I'm not sure your plan will work.*

'Are you still looking for work?' 'Yes. ***Well, sort of, more or less.'***
He's not always very good at organising his life. ***At least****, that's my impression.*
*'****I sort of*** *wondered if you could help me with this.' 'Sorry,* ***I'm afraid*** *I'm not free.'*
I can't get to the hospital to see Julie. ***I mean****, not this week, anyway.*
She lives at 19 Gordon Terrace – ***or rather****, Gordon Close.*
(NOT . . . ~~*or better*~~ . . .)
My brother didn't do well at school, though ***actually****, he did get a prize for art.*

dismissing what was said before: *in any case; anyhow; anyway; at any rate*

These expressions mean 'What was said before doesn't matter – this is the real point.'

Maybe it was Daniel, or maybe it was Joe. Or Jack. ***Anyway****, it was one of them.*
I can't get to the hospital to see Julie. I mean, not this week, ***anyhow****.*
The hotel's probably OK. It's cheap, and the place seems clean. ***At any rate****, it's better than sleeping in the car.*
I'm not sure what time I'll arrive, maybe seven or eight. ***In any case****, I'll certainly be there before 8.30.*

referring to the hearer's expectations: *in fact; actually; as a matter of fact; to tell the truth; well; actually*

These expressions introduce information that will contradict (usually) or perhaps confirm what the hearer or reader thinks.

*'So what do you think?' '****To tell the truth****, I wasn't really listening to what everyone was saying.'*
*'How are your medical studies going?' '****As a matter of fact****, I've decided to drop out for a year and get a job.'*
*'Hello, Adrian.' '****Actually****, my name's Richard.'*
'Was the skiing good?' 'Yes, ***actually****, it was wonderful.'*
*'How did the team do?' '****Well****, they lost.'*

gaining time: *let me see; let's see; let me think; well; you know; I don't know; I mean; kind of; sort of*

*'How much is it going to cost?' '****Let me see.*** *There's materials. And transport. And . . .'*
*'When can you pay me back?' '****Well, you know, let me think, I don't know, I mean****, things are* ***kind of*** *tight just now, . . .'*

checking common ground: *you know; (you) know what I mean?; of course* (► 540)*; you see*

A speaker says 'you know' to tell the hearer (or to pretend) that they share the same piece of information.

I was talking to Marty – ***you know****, the guy who works with Alex – and he thinks we can . . .*
We were in Haworth – ***you know****, the village where the Brontës lived. And . . .*
He never called her. Because unattractive men don't want unattractive girls; ***(you) know what I mean?*** →

Of course implies that everybody knows something (and can be used to make the hearer feel inferior for not knowing it!).

*It's a lovely piece, isn't it? **Of course**, it was originally written for violin and piano, . . .*

You see introduces information that the speaker thinks the hearer does not share.

*It's no good using this battery charger. **You see**, it's 12 volts, and your battery is 6 volts.*

*I'm sorry, but you can't come in here. **You see**, it's for members only.*

302 declarative questions: *That's the boss?*

In spoken questions, we do not always put an auxiliary verb before the subject.

***You're** working late tonight?*

These 'declarative questions' are often used when the speaker thinks he/she knows or has understood something, but wants to make sure or express surprise. A rising intonation is common.

***This is** your car?* (= I suppose this is your car, isn't it?)

***That's** the boss? I thought he was the cleaner.*

*'We're going to Hull for the weekend.' '**You're going** to Hull?'*

This word order is not normally possible after a question word.

***Where are you** going?* (NOT ~~*Where you are going?*~~)

303 rhetorical questions: *Who cares?*

1 questions that do not expect an answer

Questions do not always ask for information. In many languages, a question with an obvious answer can be used simply as a way of drawing attention to something. Questions of this kind are called 'rhetorical questions'.

***Do you know** what time it is?* (= You're late.)

***Who's** a lovely baby?* (= You're a lovely baby.)

*'I can't find my coat.' '**What's this**, then?'* (= Here it is, stupid.)

Very often, a rhetorical question draws attention to a negative situation – the answer is obviously *No*, or there is no answer to the question.

***What's the use** of asking her?* (= It's no use asking her.)

***How do you expect** me to find milk on a Sunday night? **Where am I going** to find a shop open?* (= You can't reasonably expect . . . There aren't any shops open.)

***Where's** my money?* (= You haven't paid me.)

*'I can run faster than you.' '**Who cares?**'* (= Nobody cares.)

***Are we going** to let them do this to us?* (= We aren't . . .)

***Have you lost** your tongue?* (= Why don't you say anything?)

***What do you think** you're doing?* (= You can't justify what you're doing.)

***Who do you think** you are?* (= You aren't as important as your behaviour suggests.)

***Why don't you** take a taxi?* (= There's no reason not to.)

2 *Why/How should . . .?*

Why should . . .? can be used aggressively to reject suggestions, requests and instructions.

*'Anna's very unhappy.' '**Why should** I care?'*
*'Could your wife help us in the office tomorrow?' '**Why should** she? She doesn't work for you.'*

How should/would I know? is an aggressive reply to a question.

*'What time does the film start?' '**How should** I know?'*

3 negative *yes/no* questions

Negative *yes/no* questions (► 218) often suggest that the speaker wants the answer *Yes*, or some other positive response.

***Haven't I done** enough for you?* (= I have done enough for you.)
***Didn't I tell** you it would rain?* (= I told you . . .)
*'Don't touch that!' '**Why shouldn't I?**'* (= I have a perfect right to.)

304 echo questions: *She's invited how many?*

1 *You're getting married?*

To question what has been said, a speaker may simply repeat ('echo') what he/she has heard. A rising intonation is common.

*'I'm getting married.' '**You're getting married?**'*

2 *Take a look at what?*

To question one part of a sentence, we can repeat the rest of the sentence, and put a stressed question word in place of the part we are asking about.

*'Just take a look at that.' 'Take a look at **what?**'*
*'She's invited thirteen people to dinner.' 'She's invited **how many?**'*
*'We're going to Tierra del Fuego for a month.' 'You're going **where?**'*
*'I've broken the fettle gauge.' 'You've broken the **what?**'*

To question a verb, or the part of a sentence beginning with the verb, *do what* is used.

*'She set fire to the garage.' '**She did what** (to the garage)?'*

3 repeating a question: *Where am I going? Home.*

A speaker may question a question, by repeating it with a rising intonation. Note that we use normal question structures with inverted word order, not indirect question structures, in this case.

*'Where are you going?' '**Where am I going?** Home.'*
(NOT . . . ~~*Where I'm going?*~~ . . .)
*'What does he want?' '**What does he want?** Money, as usual.'*
(NOT . . . ~~*What he wants?*~~ . . .)
*'Are you tired?' '**Am I tired?** Of course not.'* (NOT . . . ~~*Whether I'm tired?*~~ . . .)
*'Do squirrels eat insects?' '**Do squirrels eat insects?** I'm not sure.'*
(NOT . . . ~~*Whether squirrels eat insects?*~~ . . .)

305 question tags: basic information

1 What are question tags?

'Question tags' (also called 'tag questions') are the small questions that often come at the ends of sentences in speech, and sometimes in informal writing.

The film wasn't very good, ***was it?***

Negatives are usually contracted. Full forms are possible in formal speech.

That's the doorbell, ***isn't it?*** *You take sugar in tea,* ***don't you?***

They promised to repay us within six months, ***did they not?*** (formal)

Question tags can be used to check whether something is true, or to ask for agreement.

2 negative after affirmative, and vice versa

Question tags are used after affirmative and negative sentences, but not after questions.

You're *the new secretary,* ***aren't you?***

You're not *the new secretary,* ***are you?***

(BUT NOT ~~*Are you the new secretary, aren't you?*~~)

To check information or ask for agreement, we most often put negative tags after affirmative sentences, and non-negative tags after negative sentences.

+	−

It's cold, ***isn't it?***

−	+

It's not warm, ***is it?***

For 'same-way' tags, ► 306.7

3 auxiliaries

If the main sentence has an auxiliary verb (or non-auxiliary *be*), this is repeated in the question tag.

Sophia ***can*** *speak French,* ***can't*** *she?*

The meeting's at ten, ***isn't*** *it?*

You ***didn't*** *speak to Luke,* ***did*** *you?*

You ***wouldn't*** *like a puppy,* ***would*** *you?*

If the main sentence has no auxiliary, the question tag has *do*.

You like oysters, ***don't*** *you?*

Harry gave you my address, ***didn't*** *he?*

4 negative words

Non-negative tags are used after sentences containing negative words like *never, no, nobody, hardly, scarcely* and *little*.

*You **never** say what you're thinking, **do you?*** (NOT . . . ~~*don't you?*~~)
*It's **no** good, **is it?*** (NOT . . . ~~*isn't it?*~~)
*It's **hardly** rained at all this summer, **has it?***
*There's **little** we can do about it, **is there?***

5 meaning and intonation

In speech, we can show the exact meaning of a question tag by the intonation. If the tag is a real question – if we really want to know something and are not sure of the answer – we use a rising intonation: the voice goes up.

*The meetings at four o'clock, **isn't it?***

If the tag is not a real question – if we are sure of the answer – we use a falling intonation: the voice goes down.

*It's a beautiful day, **isn't it?***

In writing, the exact meaning of a question tag is normally clear from the context.

6 requests: *You couldn't . . ., could you?*

We often ask for help or information by using the structure **negative statement + question tag**.

*You **couldn't** lend me a pound, **could you?***
*You **haven't** seen my watch anywhere, **have you?***

For details of other kinds of tags, ► 299.

306 question tags: advanced points

1 *aren't I?*

The question tag for *I am* is *aren't I?*

*I'm late, **aren't I?***

Am I not? is also possible in very formal contexts.

2 imperatives: *Come in, won't you?*

After imperatives, *won't you?* can be used to invite people politely to do things (especially in British English).

*Come in, **won't you?***

Will/would/can/could you? can all be used to tell or ask people to do things.

*Give me a hand, **will you?*** *Open a window, **would you?***

Can't you expresses impatience.

*Shut up, **can't you?***

After a negative imperative, we use *will you?*

Don't** forget, **will you?

→

3 *Let's . . ., shall we?*

After *let's . . .* (in suggestions, etc, ► 225), we use *shall we?*

Let's have a party, ***shall we?***

4 *There's . . ., isn't there?*

There can be used in question tags.

There's something wrong, ***isn't there?***

There weren't any problems, ***were there?***

When *there's* introduces a plural noun phrase (► 130.6), the tag is *aren't there?*

There's** some more **chairs** upstairs,* ***aren't there?

5 *it* and *they* with *nothing, nobody, somebody,* etc

We use *it* in question tags to refer to *nothing* and *everything.*

Nothing** can happen, can* ***it?

We use *they* (► 175) to refer to *nobody, somebody* and *everybody* (and *no one,* etc).

Nobody** phoned,* ***did they?

Somebody** wanted a drink, didn't* ***they? *Who was it?*

6 non-auxiliary *have*

After non-auxiliary *have* (referring to states), question tags with *have* and *do* are often both possible. (*Do* is normal in American English.)

Your father ***has** a bad back,* ***hasn't/doesn't he?***

For more about the use of *do* with *have,* ► 23–24.

7 'same-way' question tags: *You're getting married, are you?*

Non-negative question tags are quite common after affirmative sentences. These are often used as responses to something that is said: the speaker repeats what he/she has just learnt, and uses the tag to express interest, surprise, concern or some other reaction.

So ***you're** getting married,* ***are you?*** *How nice!*

So ***she thinks** she's going to become a doctor,* ***does she?*** *Well, well.*

You think** you're funny,* ***do you?

'Same-way' tags can also be used to ask questions. In this structure, we use the main sentence to make a guess, and then ask (in the tag) if it was correct.

Your mother's** at home,* ***is she? ***This is** the last bus,* ***is it?***

You can** eat shellfish,* ***can you?

I'll . . ., shall I? can be used to make offers.

I'll hold** that for you,* ***shall I?

Negative 'same-way' tags are occasionally heard; they usually sound aggressive.

I see. You ***don't** like my cooking,* ***don't you?***

8 ellipsis: *Nice day, isn't it?*

In sentences with question tags, it is quite common to leave out pronoun subjects and auxiliary verbs. (This is called 'ellipsis'. For details, ► 277.)

***(It's a)** nice day, isn't it?* ***(She was)** talking to my husband, was she?*

In very informal speech, a question tag can sometimes be used after a question with ellipsis.

*Have a good time, **did you?*** *Your mother at home, **is she?***
*Jack be here tomorrow, **will he?***

9 *I (don't) think*

Note the use of question tags in sentences beginning with *I (don't) think* and similar expressions (► 277).

*I think he's Norwegian, **isn't he?*** (NOT . . . ~~*don't I?*~~)
*I don't think it will rain, **will it?*** (NOT . . . ~~*do I?*~~)
*I suppose you're hungry, **aren't you?***

10 simpler question tags

In informal speech, simpler tags such as *No?* (after affirmatives) and *Right?* are very often used to check information or ask for agreement.

*We're seeing her tomorrow, **no?*** *They all speak English, **right?***
*You haven't got a ticket, **right?***

Right can also be used, rather aggressively, to mean 'Is that clear to you?'

*This is your last chance, **right?*** *I'm not working extra hours, **right?***

In non-standard speech, *isn't it?* / *innit?* is common as a universal question tag.

*You wants them bricks today, **innit?***

For details of other kinds of tags, ► 299.

307 reply questions: *Was it? Did you, dear?*

Short questions are often used in conversation to show that the listener is paying attention and interested. They are constructed with auxiliary verb + pronoun, like question tags (► 305).

*'It was a terrible party.' '**Was it?**' 'Yes . . .'*

Note that these questions do not ask for information – they simply show that the listener is reacting to what has been said. More examples:

*'We had a lovely trip.' '**Did you?**' 'Yes, we went . . .'*
*'I've got a headache.' '**Have you**, dear? I'll get you an aspirin.'*
*'Jack likes that girl next door.' 'Oh, **does he?**'*
*'I don't understand.' '**Don't you?** I'm sorry.'*

Negative questions in reply to affirmative statements express emphatic agreement (like negative-question exclamations, ► 223.4).

*'It was a lovely concert.' 'Yes, **wasn't it?** I did enjoy it.'*
*'She's put on a lot of weight.' 'Yes, **hasn't she?**'*

308 short answers: *Yes, he can*, etc

Answers are often grammatically incomplete, because they do not need to repeat words that have just been said. A common 'short answer' pattern is **subject + auxiliary verb**, together with whatever other words are really necessary.

*'Can he swim?' 'Yes, **he can**.'* (More natural than *Yes, he can swim.*)
*'Has it stopped raining?' 'No, **it hasn't**.'*
*'Are you enjoying yourself?' 'I certainly **am**.'*
*'Don't forget to write.' 'I **won't**.'*
*'You didn't phone Debbie last night.' 'No, but I **did** this morning.'*

We use *do* if there is no other auxiliary.

*'She likes cakes.' 'She really **does**.'*
*'That surprised you.' 'It certainly **did**.'*

Non-auxiliary *be* and *have* can be used in short answers.

*'Is she happy?' 'I think she **is**.'*
*'Have they any money?' 'Yes, they **have**.'*

Short answers can be followed by tags (► 305–306).

*'Nice day.' 'Yes, it is, **isn't it?**'*

Note that stressed, non-contracted affirmative forms are used in short answers.

*Yes, **I am**.* (NOT ~~*Yes, I'm.*~~)

For similar structures, ► 307 (reply questions), ► 305–306 (question tags) and ► 279 (ellipsis).

309 *so am I, neither do they*, etc

1 *so* + auxiliary + subject

We can use *so* to mean 'similarly, also', before **auxiliary verb + subject**. The structure is used to answer or add to what came before. Note the word order.

*Louise can dance beautifully, and **so can her sister**.*
*'I've lost their address.' '**So have I**.'*

The same structure is possible with non-auxiliary *be* and *have*.

*I was tired, and **so were the others**.*
*'I have a headache.' '**So have I**.'*

After a clause with no auxiliary verb, we use *do/does/did*.

*'He just wants the best for his country.' '**So did Hitler**.'*

We do not normally use a more complete verb phrase in this structure. We can say, for example, *So can her sister*, but not ~~*So can her sister dance*~~.

A more informal alternative to *So am I*, etc is *Me too*.

*'I'm getting bored.' '**Me too**.'* (NOT ~~*I also.*~~)

2 *neither do I, I can't either*, etc

We can use *neither* and *nor* as adverbs to mean 'also not'. *Neither* and *nor* come at the beginning of a clause, and are followed by inverted word order (► 270): **auxiliary verb + subject**.

*'I can't swim.' '**Neither/nor can I**.'* (NOT ~~*I also can't.*~~)
*Ruth didn't turn up, and **neither/nor did Kate**.* (NOT . . . ~~*and Kate didn't too.*~~)

In American English, *nor* is not normally used after *and*.

We can also use *not . . . either* with the same meaning and normal word order.
*'I can't swim.' '**I can't either.**'*
*Ruth didn't turn up, and **Kate didn't either.***
In very informal speech, *me neither* (and occasionally *me either*, especially in American English) can be used instead of *I . . .n't either.*
*'I can't swim.' '**Me neither.**'*
Only one negative word (*not* or *neither*) is necessary to give a negative meaning.
***Neither** did Kate* OR *Kate **didn't** either.*
(NOT ~~*Neither didn't Kate*~~ OR ~~*Kate didn't neither*~~)

For the pronunciation of *either*, ► 156. For the pronunciation of *neither*, ► 157.
For *neither . . . nor*, ► 228.3. For other uses of *either* and *neither*, ► 156–157.
For *not . . . or* and *not . . . nor*, ► 227.

3 *so* + subject + auxiliary: *So it is!*

So is used in another short structure before **subject** + **auxiliary verb** (note the word order) to express surprised agreement.
*'It's raining.' 'Why, **so it is!**'*
*'You've just put the teapot in the fridge.' '**So I have!**'*

310 politeness: using questions

1 requests: *Could you . . .?*

We usually ask people to do things for us by means of *yes/no* questions. (This suggests that the hearer can choose whether to agree or not.)
***Could you** tell me the time, please?* (much more polite than *Please tell me the time.*)
Some other typical structures used in requests:
***Could you possibly** tell me the way to the station?* (very polite)
***Would you mind** switching on the TV?*
***Would you like** to help me for a few minutes?*
You couldn't** lend me some money, **could you? (informal)
Indirect *yes/no* questions are also used in polite requests.
***I wonder if you could** (possibly) help me for a few minutes.*

2 other structures: telling people to do things

If we use other structures (for example imperatives, *should*, *had better*), we are not asking people to do things, but telling or advising them to do things. These structures can therefore seem rude if we use them in requests, especially in conversation with strangers or people we do not know well. *Please* makes an order or instruction a little more polite, but does not turn it into a request. The following structures can be used perfectly correctly to give orders, instructions or advice, but they are not polite ways of requesting people to do things.

Please help me for a few minutes.
Help me, would you?
Carry this for me, please.
You ought to tell me your plans.
You should shut the door.
You had better help me.

→

3 shops, restaurants, etc

Requests in shops, restaurants, etc are usually more direct, and are not always expressed as questions. Typical structures:

***Can I** have one of those, please?* ***I'd like** to see the wine list, please.*
***Could I** have a look at the red ones?* ***I would prefer** a small one.*

Give me . . ., please and *I want . . ., please* are not normally considered polite. But in places where only a few kinds of thing are sold and not much needs to be said, it is enough just to say what is wanted and add *please.*

'The Times', please. *Two cheeseburgers, please.*
Black coffee, please. *Return to Lancaster, please.*

4 negative questions

Negative questions (► 218) are not used in polite requests.

***Could you** give me a light?* (NOT ~~*Couldn't you give me a light?*~~ – this sounds like a complaint.)

But negative statements with question tags are common in informal requests in British English.

You couldn't** babysit this evening, **could you?
I don't suppose** you could babysit this evening, **could you? (very polite)

5 expressions of opinion

Expressions of opinion can also be made less direct by turning them into questions. Compare:

***It would be better** to paint it green.* (direct expression of opinion)
***Wouldn't it be better** to paint it green?* (less direct: negative question asking for agreement)
***Would it be better** to paint it green?* (open question – very indirect)

For other rules of 'social language', ► 329.

311 politeness: distancing verb forms

1 past tenses: *How much did you want to spend?*

We can make requests (and also questions, suggestions and statements) less direct (and so more polite) by using verb forms that suggest 'distance' from the immediate present reality. Past tenses are often used to do this.

*How much **did** you **want** to spend, sir?* (meaning 'How much do you want to spend?')
*How many days **did** you **intend** to stay?* (meaning '. . . do you intend . . .')
*I **wondered** if you **were** free this evening.*

2 progressives: *I'm hoping . . .*

Progressive forms can be used in the same way. They sound more casual and less definite than simple forms, because they suggest something temporary and incomplete.

*I'm **hoping** you can lend me £10.* (Less definite than *I hope . . .*)
*What time **are** you **planning** to arrive?* (More casual-sounding than *Please let us know what time you plan to arrive.*)
*I'm **looking forward** to seeing you again.* (More casual than *I look forward . . .*)
*I'm afraid we must **be going**.*

Past progressives give two levels of distancing.

*Good morning. I **was wondering**: do you need help moving that stuff?*
*Were you **looking** for anything special?* (in a shop)
*I **was thinking** – what about borrowing Jake's car?*

3 future: *You'll need to . . .*

Another way to distance something is to displace it into the future. *Will need / have to* can be used to soften instructions and orders.

*I'll **have to** ask you to wait a minute.*

And *will* is sometimes used to say how much money is owed.

*That **will be** £1.65, please.*

Future progressive verbs are often used to enquire politely about people's plans (► 41).

*Will you **be going** away this summer?*

4 modal verbs: *would, could* and *might*

The modal verbs *would, could* and *might* also make questions, requests and suggestions less direct.

*I thought it **would** be nice to have a picnic.*
*Hi! I thought **I'd** come over and introduce myself. My name's Andy.*
***Could** you give me a hand?*
***Could** I ask you to translate this for me?*
*We **could** ask Daniel to help us.*
*I was wondering if you **might** be interested in a game of tennis.*
*'I came in and ordered some shoes from you.' 'Oh yes, sir. When **would** that have been, exactly?'*

Would is very often used to form requests and offers with verbs like *like* and *prefer*.

*What **would** you **like** to drink?*

Note the common use of *would* before verbs of saying and thinking, to make a statement sound less definite.

*I **would say** we'd do better to catch the earlier train.*
*This is what I **would call** annoying.*
*I **would think** we might stop for lunch soon.*
*I'm surprised you didn't like the film. I **would have thought** it was just your kind of thing.*
*We **would ask** passengers to have their tickets ready for inspection.*

5 conditional and negative expressions

Another way of distancing suggestions from reality is to make them conditional or negative.

*It would be better **if** we turned it the other way up.*
*What **if** we stayed at home for a change?* ***Suppose** I gave Alice a call?*
***If** you would come this way . . .* *I wonder **if** you could lend me £5?*
*I **don't suppose** you want to buy a car, do you?*
*You **wouldn't like** to come out with us, by any chance?*
*You **couldn't take** the children to school, could you?* (BUT NOT ~~*Couldn't you take the children to school?*~~ This sounds like a complaint, ► 310.4.)

312 politeness: softening expressions

1 *quite, maybe, I think,* etc

We can express our opinions and intentions less directly (and therefore more politely) by using softening expressions like *quite, rather, kind of, a bit, maybe, seem, at all* (► 387).

He's ***quite*** *difficult to understand, isn't he?*
I find her ***rather*** *bossy, don't you?*
The food's ***a bit*** *expensive.*
This music's ***kind of*** *boring.*
Maybe *I'll go for a walk now.*
They don't ***seem*** *very friendly.*
Will you be seeing Denise ***at all****?*

For more examples, ► 301.3.

2 *I think I'll . . .*

We can say that we are thinking of doing things, instead of expressing our intentions directly.

I ***think*** *I'll go to bed in a few minutes.*
*I'****m thinking*** *of going to London tomorrow.*
I'd quite like to start ***thinking*** *about going home.*

3 *We would like to . . .*

In a formal style, requests, invitations, suggestions, etc are often introduced by *would like* instead of being expressed directly.

We ***would like*** *to invite you to give a talk to our members on June 14th.*
*I'****d like*** *to suggest that we take a vote.*
I ***would like*** *to congratulate you on your examination results.*

313 pronunciation: stress and rhythm

Stress and rhythm are important elements in English pronunciation. If learners pronounce all the syllables in a sentence too regularly, with the same force and at the same speed, they can be quite hard for English speakers to understand. And if learners are not sensitive to English stress and rhythm, they may not perceive unstressed syllables (especially 'weak forms', ► 315) at all, and this may make it difficult for them to follow natural English speech.

1 stress

Stress is the word for the 'strength' with which syllables are pronounced. In speech, some parts of English words and sentences sound louder than others. For example, the first syllable of *CARpet*, the second syllable of *inSPECtion* or the last syllable of *conFUSE* are usually stressed, while the other syllables in these words are not. In the sentence *Don't look at* HIM *–* HE *didn't do it*, the words *him* and *he* are stressed in order to emphasise them. Stressed syllables are not only louder; they may also have longer vowels, and they may be pronounced on a higher musical pitch.

2 word stress

English words with more than one syllable mostly have a fixed stress pattern. There are not many rules to show which syllable of a word will be stressed: one usually has to learn the stress pattern of a word along with its meaning, spelling and pronunciation. Examples:

Stressed on first syllable:

AFter, CApital, HAPpen, EXercise, EAsy

Stressed on second syllable:

inSTEAD, proNOUNCE, aGREEment, parTIcularly

Stressed on third syllable:

enterTAIN, underSTAND, concenTRAtion

The stressed syllable of a word is the one that can carry an intonation movement (► 314 below).

Many short phrases also have a fixed stress pattern.

front DOOR (not FRONT door) *LIVing room (not living ROOM)*

Related words can have different stress patterns.

to inCREASE *an INcrease*

PHOtograph *phoTOgrapher* *photoGRAphic*

A good dictionary will show how words and common phrases are stressed.

3 variable stress

Some words have variable stress. In these, the stress is at or near the end when the word is spoken alone, but it can move to an earlier position when the word is in a sentence, especially if another stressed word follows. Compare:

- *afterNOON* (stress at the end)
  It's time for my AFternoon NAP. (stress at the beginning)
- *JapanESE*
  JApanese COOking
- *nineTEEN*
  The year NINEteen TWENty

Many short phrases – for instance, two-word verbs – have variable stress.

- *Their marriage broke UP.*
  Money problems BROKE up their marriage.
- *Do sit DOWN.*
  She SAT down and cried.
- *It's dark BLUE.*
  a DARK blue SUIT

4 stress and pronunciation

Unstressed syllables nearly always have one of two vowels: /ɪ/ (in unstressed prefixes written with *e*, like *de-*, *re-*, *pre-*, *ex-*) or /ə/ (in other cases).

Compare the first syllables in the following pairs of words:

- *PREference* (/'prefrəns/)
  preFER (/prɪ'fɜː(r)/)
- *EXpert* (/'ekspɜːt/)
  exPERience (/ɪk'spɪərɪəns/)
- *CONfident* (/'kɒnfɪdənt/)
  conFUSED (/kən'fjuːzd/)
- *PARticle* (/'pɑːtɪkl/)
  parTIcular (/pə'tɪkjələ(r)/) →

Many short words (mostly pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions and auxiliary verbs) have two quite different pronunciations: a normal 'weak' unstressed form, and a 'strong' form used when the word has special stress. (For details, ► 315.)

'I was (/wəz/) here first.' 'No you weren't.' 'Yes I ***was*** *(/wɒz/).'*

5 emotive and contrastive stress

We can use stress to emphasise (strengthen) a particular word or expression. There are two main reasons for this. We may wish to show that we feel strongly about what we are saying ('emotive emphasis').

I feel GREAT! *Your hair looks* SO *good like that!*

This is your LAST *chance.*

Or we may wish to show a contrast between, for example, true and false, or present and past, or a rule and an exception ('contrastive emphasis').

'Why weren't you at the meeting?' 'I WAS *at the meeting.'*

I don't do much sport now, but I DID *play football when I was younger.*

I don't see my family much, but I visit my MOTHER *occasionally.*

Emphasis can also show that something expected actually happened, or is the case.

I thought I'd pass the exam, and I DID *pass.*

We often stress auxiliary verbs to show emphasis. This can make a whole sentence sound emphatic, or it can indicate a contrast. Most auxiliary verbs change their pronunciation when they are stressed (► 315).

You HAVE *grown! I* AM *telling the truth! You* MUST *believe me!*

In emphatic sentences without auxiliary verbs, we add *do* to carry stress.

DO sit down. She DOES *like you.*

If he DOES *decide to come, let me know, will you?*

With stressed auxiliary verbs, word order can change (► 200.3). Compare:

I'm really tired. I really AM *tired.*

Changes in stress can affect the meaning of a sentence. Compare:

MEGAN called me yesterday. (She was the one who called.)

Megan CALLED *me yesterday.* (But she didn't come and see me.)

Megan called ME *yesterday.* (But she didn't call you, did she?)

Megan called me YESTERDAY. (Not today.)

6 stress in sentences; rhythm

Rhythm is the word for the way stressed and unstressed syllables make patterns in speech. In sentences, we usually give more stress to nouns, ordinary verbs, adjectives and adverbs, and less stress to pronouns, determiners, prepositions, conjunctions and auxiliary verbs.

She was SURE *that the* BACK *of the* CAR *had been* DAMaged.

Stressed syllables are pronounced more slowly and clearly, and (in the opinion of some linguists) follow each other at roughly regular intervals. Unstressed syllables are pronounced more quickly and less clearly, and are fitted in between the stressed syllables. Compare the following two sentences. The second does not take much longer to say than the first: although it has three more unstressed syllables, it has the same number of stressed syllables.

She KNEW *the* DOCtor. *She* KNEW *that there was a* DOCtor.

314 pronunciation: intonation

Intonation is the word for the 'melody' of spoken language: the way the musical pitch of the voice rises and falls. Intonation systems in languages are very complicated and difficult to analyse, and linguists do not all agree about how English intonation works.

1 intonation in conversation

One use of intonation is to show how a piece of information fits in with what comes before and after. For instance, a speaker may raise his or her voice when taking over the conversation from somebody else, or to indicate a change of subject. A rise or fall on a particular word may show that this is the 'centre' of the message – the place where the new information is being given; or it may signal a contrast or a special emphasis. A rising tone at the end of a sentence may suggest that there is more to be said and perhaps invite another speaker to take over.

2 attitude

Intonation (together with speed, voice quality and loudness) can also say things about the speaker's attitude. For instance, when people are excited or angry they often raise and lower their voices more.

3 three patterns

There are three particularly common intonation patterns in English speech.

a falling intonation

A falling intonation can suggest that we are saying something definite, complete. The voice falls on the last stressed syllable of a group of words.

I'm tired.

Here's your dictionary.

Sophie couldn't find him.

A falling intonation is also common in *wh*-questions.

What time's the last bus?

Where's the secretary?

b rising intonation

A rising intonation is common in *yes/no* questions. The voice rises at the end of a group of words, beginning on the last stressed syllable. →

Are you tired?

Is that the secretary?

Did he sign it?

In 'alternative questions' with *or*, the voice rises on the first part of the question and falls on the second part.

Are you staying or going?

c fall-rise

A fall-rise intonation suggests that something is incomplete, or uncertain, or that there is more to be said.

I'm tired. (perhaps suggesting *But maybe I'll go out with you anyway.*)

I don't play tennis. (perhaps suggesting *But I do play other games.*)

She's quite a good teacher. (perhaps suggesting *But I'm not completely happy with her.*)

The first week was good. (perhaps suggesting *But not the second.*)

Is this all you've written? (perhaps suggesting *I was expecting more.*)

A fall-rise makes questions sound more interested or friendly. It is common in polite requests and invitations.

Where's the secretary?

Please come in.

Is this your car?

What's your name?

Some more potatoes?

4 intonation and misunderstandings

If a statement is made on a rising intonation, it may be misunderstood as a question.

'That's our train.' *'I don't know.'* *'Yes, it is, I'm telling you.'*

If a declarative question (► 302) is made on a falling intonation, it may be misunderstood as a statement.

'That's our train?' *'Is it?'* *'No, I'm asking you.'*

A falling intonation can also turn a polite request into an order.

'Can I have some more coffee?' *'At once, Your Majesty.'*

A fall-rise in the wrong place can be misunderstood as suggesting more than is said.

'I'd like to play tennis.' *'So, what's the problem?'* *'There's no problem.'*

For intonation in question tags, ► 305.

315 pronunciation: weak and strong forms

1 What are weak and strong forms?

Some English words – for example *at, for, have, and, us* – have two pronunciations: one is used when they are not stressed, and the other when they are. Compare:

I'm looking ***at*** /ət/ *you.* *What are you looking* ***at*** /æt/*?*

2 stressed or not?

Most words with two pronunciations are prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions, articles and auxiliary verbs. Such words are not usually stressed, because they are generally found together with other more important words which carry the stress. So the unstressed ('weak') pronunciation is the normal one. This usually has the vowel /ə/ or no vowel; a few weak forms are pronounced with /ɪ/. →

However, these words can be stressed when they are emphasised, or when there is no other word to carry the stress. In these cases the 'strong' pronunciation is used. This has the vowel that corresponds to the spelling. Compare:

- *I must* /məs/ *go now.*
  I really ***must*** /mʌst/ *stop smoking.* (stressed for emphasis)
- *I was* /wəz/ *late.*
  It was /wəz/ *raining.*
  Yes, it ***was*** /wɒz/. (stressed at end of sentence: there is no other word to be stressed)
- *Where have* /əv/ *you been?*
  You might have /əv/ *told me.*
  What did you ***have*** /hæv/ *for breakfast?* (non-auxiliary verb)

Contracted negatives always have a strong pronunciation.
can't /kɑːnt/ *mustn't* /ˈmʌsnt/ *wasn't* /ˈwɒznt/

3 list of words with weak and strong forms

The most important words which have weak and strong forms are:

	Weak form	Strong form
a	/ə/	/eɪ/ (unusual)
am	/(ə)m/	/æm/
an	/ən/	/æn/ (unusual)
and	/(ə)n(d)/	/ænd/
are	/ə(r)/	/ɑː(r)/
as	/əz/	/æz/
at	/ət/	/æt/
be	/bɪ/	/biː/
been	/bɪn/	/biːn/
but	/bət/	/bʌt/
can	/k(ə)n/	/kæn/
could	/kəd/	/kʊd/
do	/d(ə)/	/duː/
does	/dəz/	/dʌz/
for	/fə(r)/	/fɔː(r)/
from	/frəm/	/frɒm/
had	/(h)əd/	/hæd/
has	/(h)əz/	/hæz/
have	/(h)əv/	/hæv/
he	/(h)ɪ/	/hiː/
her	/(h)ə(r)/	/hɜː(r)/
him	/(h)ɪm/	/hɪm/
his	/(h)ɪz/	/hɪz/
is	/z, s/	/ɪz/
must	/m(ə)s(t)/	/mʌst/
not	/nt/	/nɒt/
of	/əv/	/ɒv/
our	/ɑː(r)/	/aʊə(r)/
saint	/s(ə)nt/ (BrE only)	/seɪnt/
shall	/ʃ(ə)l/	/ʃæl/

	Weak form	Strong form
she	/ʃɪ/	/ʃiː/
should	/ʃ(ə)d/	/ʃʊd/
sir	/sə(r)/	/sɜː(r)/
some (► 158)	/s(ə)m/	/sʌm/
than	/ð(ə)n/	/ðæn/ (rare)
that (conj.)	/ð(ə)t/	/ðæt/
the	/ðə, ðɪ/	/ðiː/
them	/ð(ə)m/	/ðem/
there (► 605)	/ðə(r)/	/ðeə(r)/
to	/tə/	/tuː/
us	/əs/	/ʌs/
was	/w(ə)z/	/wɒz/
we	/wɪ/	/wiː/
were	/wə(r)/	/wɜː(r)/
who	/hʊ/	/huː/
will	/w(ə)l, l/	/wɪl/
would	/wəd, (ə)d/	/wʊd/
you	/jʊ/	/juː/
your	/jə(r)/	/jɔː(r)/

Section 28 **Varieties of English**

INTRODUCTION

Many people believe that there is one form of their language that is more correct than others. They may believe for instance that British English is more correct than other varieties; or that written English is more correct than spoken English; or that standard spoken forms are more correct than dialect forms. Often this belief is supported by reference to grammars, usage guides or dictionaries: if something conflicts with a rule in a grammar, or if a word isn't in the dictionary, it 'must be wrong'. Since the reference books are most often based on observation of the standard written language (and not by reference to a great grammar book in the sky), the argument is really circular: these books will naturally describe standard usage, because that is what they are for; but this does not mean that there is anything wrong with other kinds of usage that are less often described.

A better way of looking at things is to say that usage is 'correct in its place'. Standard American English is correct in an American context, British English in a British context, Indian English in an Indian context, spoken grammar in casual speech, formal written grammar in formal writing, dialect forms in the appropriate dialect. The only forms that are wrong in all contexts are learners' errors (~~*I have forgetting the your address*~~), obsolete forms and structures (~~*I had rather not answer you*~~) and slips (~~*One of our chairs are broken*~~). This means that there is no one answer to the question: 'What kind of English should learners study?' It depends on their purposes. Someone who wants to use English mostly in, for example, Australia, South Africa, India or Canada, will do well to study the standard variety of that region. For many learners, however, the best model is one or other of the two main standard varieties: British or American English. Neither of these is 'better' than the other, and they are both used and understood worldwide. The differences are generally unimportant: for details, ► 319.

People are also worried by language change. If younger people 'break' the rules that older people have learnt, or use language in new ways, older people often feel disturbed: they are concerned that younger people no longer know their grammar, and that the language is going downhill. This is a needless worry: change is natural and inevitable, it cannot be halted, and it does not generally affect a language's efficiency as a communicative tool. A great deal of modern English grammar would have been wrong three hundred years ago, and will perhaps be wrong again three hundred years from now.

What do you think? Are these correct or not in standard British English?

The company has doubled it's profits this year. ► 317.1
I could not understanding the lecture. ► 317.1
I ain't done nothing. ► 317.2
I wants a drink. ► 317.2
Jack and me went to the cinema. ► 317.3
They're different to us. ► 317.3
There are less people here than usual. ► 317.3
Somebody's dropped their keys. ► 317.3
What are you waiting for? ► 317.4
You need to really concentrate. ► 317.4
I'm making a concerted effort to eat less. ► 317.5
Here's your papers. ► 318.6
The data is unclear. ► 318.7
Who do you trust? ► 318.9
If I was younger I'd do it myself. ► 318.9
You pronounced it wrong. ► 318.9
Be not afraid. ► 318.10
I lost my coin-purse. ► 319.2
You're tired, is it? ► 320.2
Will I call back later? ► 320.3
Can be that Ahmed calling. ► 320.3

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316 standard English and dialects

'A language is a dialect that has an army and a navy.' (Max Weinreich)

'Dialect: A language variety that has everything going for it, except the government, the schools, the middle class, the law and the armed forces.' (Tom McArthur)

1 What is 'standard English'?

In the 9th century, southern England was under attack from Viking invaders from Scandinavia, who had already come to dominate much of the north of Britain. In a decisive battle in 878, southern forces under King Alfred defeated a northern army and secured the independence of the south. A long-term result of this victory was that the government of Southern England came to be established in London, which later became the capital of the whole of Britain. The English spoken in London and the East Midlands was therefore gradually adopted as the official variety of English, rather than the very different varieties spoken in the West and North. This dialect (and its later developments, profoundly influenced by Norman French) thus became the 'standard' language – the form of English generally used for government, the law, business, education and literature. Standard British English, like all standard languages, is therefore largely the result of historical accident. If the Vikings had defeated Alfred's army, the capital of modern Britain might well be York, and *Practical English Usage* would be written in (and about) a very different variety of English.

In fact, it is slightly misleading to talk as if British English had only one standard variety. While standard written English varies very little throughout the British Isles, standard speech differs somewhat, with Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic in particular having not only their own pronunciation, but also some regional features of grammar and vocabulary.

2 What is a dialect?

Many people think that dialects are corrupted forms of a language, spoken by ignorant people who make mistakes because they have not learnt correct grammar. This is not at all true (for more about correctness, ► 317). A standard language is not linguistically 'better' than other dialects; it is simply the dialect that has been adopted for official purposes such as government and education. All English dialects have a long history, going back to the distinct forms of speech of the Germanic and Scandinavian invaders who came from various parts of northern Europe to occupy Britain during the early Middle Ages. And each of these dialects has a grammar that is as rich and systematic as standard English, even though it may be very different. Some examples of British English dialect forms:

I bain't ready. (= I'm not ready.)
He don't like it. *I wants a rest.*
Where's them papers what I give you?
Can ye no help me? *They're not believing it.*
She's after telling me. (= She's told me.)
Are youse coming or not? (= Are you – plural – coming or not?)
I ain't done nothing. (= I haven't done anything.)

American English, like British English, has many dialects, some of them very different indeed from the standard language. An extreme case is so-called 'black English' or 'AAVE' (Afro-American vernacular English, a dialect widely used informally by black Americans, largely in working-class urban environments). The grammar of AAVE is different in many ways from General American. A few examples:

He been married. (He has been, and still is, married.)
She done eat. (She has eaten.)
She be talking all the time. (She talks all the time.)
You gon be sorry. (You'll be sorry.)
I ain't believe you that day, man. (I didn't believe you . . .)

AAVE is similar in some ways to Southern US dialects. Its origins go back to the early days of slavery, but the main influences on its development are not well understood.

As in many countries, however, dialects are disappearing or changing under the influence of the standard language. The language of most British speakers is far closer to standard English than it would have been a century ago.

3 pronunciation: dialect and accent; 'received pronunciation'

A dialect is not the same as a regional accent (though they often go together). Many British people speak standard English, but with the typical accent of their part of the country. Other British people, however, combine standard English with a non-regional standard pronunciation. This (the so-called 'received pronunciation' or 'RP') is the pronunciation that has traditionally been used by a majority of British upper- and upper-middle-class people, though it has changed a good deal over the years. For a long time RP was considered more 'correct' than other accents, and its social dominance was reinforced by education and the media. This attitude is now changing, and there is less social prejudice in Britain than before against regional accents. Very few people, in fact, now have an RP accent. RP is increasingly being replaced as a standard by so-called 'Estuary English', an accent somewhere between RP and working-class London speech, originating in South East England along the River Thames and its estuary.

4 showing accent in writing: *'e's gone 'ome*

Writers may spell words in special ways to show a non-standard or conversational pronunciation – for example, apostrophes may be used in place of letters that are not pronounced. These spellings are common in cartoon strips. Some examples (mostly British English):

'e's gone 'ome. (= He's gone home.)
'elp yerself. (= Help yourself.)
Yer gettin' old. (= You're getting old.)
If I get me 'ands on yer. . . (= If I get my hands on you . . .)
Where d'she put 'em? (= Where did she put them?)
C'mon, we're late. (= Come on . . .)
C'n I 'ave a glass o' water? (= Can I have a glass of water?) →

fish 'n' chips. (= fish and chips)
Come wi' me. (= Come with me.)
I dunno. (= I don't know.)
I gotta go. (= I've got to go.)
It's gonna rain. (= It's going to rain.)
I don't wanna play. (= I don't want to play.)

5 the languages of Britain

Two hundred years ago six native languages besides English were spoken in Britain. Of these, four still survive. Three are Celtic languages, very different from English. Gaelic is spoken in parts of Scotland; Irish, similar to Gaelic, is spoken in parts of Ireland; Welsh is spoken in parts of Wales and is more closely related to the Breton of north-western France. Two other Celtic languages, Manx and Cornish (the original languages of the Isle of Man and Cornwall) no longer have native speakers, though enthusiasts are attempting to revive them. The other surviving British language is Scots (also called 'Lallans'), spoken by some people in Scotland. This is a distinct language which is different from the Scottish variety of English, although closely related.

Scots wis aince the state language o Scotland an is aye a grace til oor national leiterature. It lies at the hert o Scotland's heirskep as ane o wir three indigenous leids alang wi Gaelic an Scottish Inglis.
(from a publication of the Scots Leid Associe – the Scots Language Society)

A translation: *Scots was once the state language of Scotland and is still an ornament to our national literature. It lies at the heart of Scotland's heritage as one of our three indigenous languages along with Gaelic and Scottish English.*

317 correctness

When people say that somebody's language is 'not correct', they may mean several different things.

1 slips and mistakes: *He works in wildlife conversation.*

People sometimes make slips of the tongue when they are talking.
He works in Wildlife Conversation – I mean Conservation.
Somebody can use a word wrongly because he or she is unsure of its meaning, or confuses it with another word.
You're being very authoritative. (mistake for 'authoritarian')
And many people have trouble with spelling and punctuation.
The company has doubled it's profits this year. (should be *its profits*)
Foreign learners may also make mistakes with points of grammar that do not cause problems for native speakers.
I could not understanding the lecture. (instead of *I could not understand . . .*)

2 dialect forms: *I ain't done nothing.*

Dialect forms are not incorrect, though some people believe they are (► 316.2); they are simply different. Teachers in British schools often tell children whose dialects have multiple negation, for example, that they are making mistakes if they say things like 'I ain't done nothing', because 'two negatives make a positive' (so *I ain't done nothing* is supposed to mean 'I have done something'). This is not, of course, the case: in the child's dialect, the sentence means 'I haven't done anything' (like the equivalent in older English and many modern languages). Indeed, if 'two negatives make a positive', then the teacher ought to be quite happy if the child says 'I ain't done nothing to nobody', since logically three negatives must make a negative!

Dialect forms are not, therefore, incorrect in themselves. They are, however, out of place in styles where only the standard language is normally used. It would be inappropriate – in fact, incorrect – to use *I wants, he don't* or a double negative in a school essay, a job application, a newspaper article or a speech at a business conference. In fact, British dialects are rarely written (though Scotland has a tradition of dialect literature which is still very much alive).

3 divided usage: *different from; different to*

Speakers of a standard language often differ about small points of usage. Where two different forms are common, people who use one form may claim that theirs is the only 'correct' usage, and that people who use the other form are making mistakes. Some examples from modern English:

so-called 'only correct form'	**so-called 'mistake'**
Jack and I went to the cinema.	*Jack and me went to the cinema.*
They're different from us.	*They're different to us.*
fewer people	*less people*
Somebody's dropped his or her keys.	*Somebody's dropped their keys.*

In fact, all of the so-called 'mistakes' listed above have been normal in standard English for centuries, and are not wrong at all (though some of them are more informal than the so-called 'only correct forms', and would be out of place in a formal style). For details, ► 174.1 (*I* and *me*), ► 433 (*different*), ► 169 (*less*) and ► 175 (*their*). →

4 prescriptive and descriptive rules

If people say that *less people* or *different to* is wrong, they are following a prescriptive rule. Prescriptive rules are made by people who believe that they can improve a language, or protect it against change. A lot of prescriptive rules were made by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British grammarians, often because they thought that English grammar should imitate Latin, which was considered a superior language. A typical example is the older condemnation of 'split infinitives' like *to boldly go*, where an adverb is put between *to* and the verb (a Latin infinitive is a single word, so cannot be split). Many people still believe this, and try to avoid split infinitives, although the rule is unrealistic (► 89.7). A similar rule said that sentences should not end in prepositions (as in *What are you waiting for?* or *I don't like being shouted at*). In fact, it is quite normal for English sentences to end in prepositions (► 209). Most prescriptive rules give misleading information, and have little effect on the development of a language.

Descriptive rules simply say what happens in one form of a language (for example standard written British English, standard spoken American English, Yorkshire English, Dublin English or Singapore English), and not what some people feel ought to happen. The rules in *Practical English Usage* are primarily descriptive of standard British English (spoken and written), but include notes on American–British differences where necessary.

5 When do mistakes become correct? *a concerted effort*

When somebody misuses a word or expression, this may influence other people to make the same mistake. Sometimes a mistake becomes so widespread that it turns into part of the language (this is one way in which languages develop), and we can no longer realistically call it a 'mistake'. The expression *oblivious of*, for example, originally meant 'forgetful of', but came to be used to mean 'unconscious of'. A hundred years ago this was still a mistake; now it is the normal use. The same thing is happening today with the expression *a concerted effort*. This literally means 'an effort by people working together', but its original meaning is getting lost. Since very many people now use it to mean 'a strong effort', this should probably no longer be considered a mistake.

318 changes in English

Languages change over time. Younger people adopt newer forms of expression, while older people often resist change; so even people who speak the same standard language do not speak it in exactly the same way. There are several reasons for change.

1 communicative need

Several centuries ago, standard English had two second-person pronouns: *thou* (singular) and *ye* (plural). Standard modern English uses *you* for both. But people still feel the need to distinguish singular and plural, and so expressions like *you guys* (used for both men and women) are beginning to function as second person plural pronouns.

2 influence from other varieties

Modern British English is heavily influenced by American English. Some structures which were not used by British speakers half a century ago are now as common as their older British equivalents.

*I **feel like** I'm getting a cold.* (informal) (formal British still: *I feel **as if** I'm getting a cold.*)

***Do you have** today's newspaper?* (older British form: ***Have you (got)** today's newspaper?*)

3 Languages simplify themselves.

As languages develop, complicated structures often become simpler and more regular. This may be happening with English conditional sentences – structures with *would* or *would have* in both clauses are quite common in speech.

*If you'd **have** asked I'd **have** told you.*

4 Small, less important distinctions are confused or disappear.

Some irregular verb forms like *sank/sunk, sang/sung* or *lay/laid* are quite often confused in speech. Examples from the British radio:

*He wrote eight operas, all of which **sunk** without trace.*

*. . . a song she **sung** in yesterday's concert.*

Infinitives and *-ing* forms after verbs also sometimes get mixed up. An example from a British letter:

*I now have pleasure **to enclose** the correct proposal form.*
(instead of . . . *pleasure in enclosing* . . .)

When confusions like these become widespread, they can lead to language change. This may well happen with the possessive *'s* form: more and more people are leaving out the apostrophe or putting it in the 'wrong' place, so that this spelling convention might one day lose its importance and even disappear.

5 New forms and uses spread through the language.

Progressive verb forms came into English a few hundred years ago, and gradually became used more and more widely. There are still a few verbs that are not generally used in progressive forms (► 4), but even these are losing their resistance. Some typical modern examples:

*I'**m understanding** Italian a lot better now.*

*How many eggs **were** you **wanting?** I'**m loving** it.*

6 'Underground' forms become respectable.

Some forms have always existed in the language, but have been 'driven underground' by prescriptive rules (► 317.4), so that they have been avoided by careful speakers. People are now more tolerant of such forms, so they are becoming more common. Some examples:

***Here's** your papers.* (instead of *Here are* . . . ► 130.6)

*Somebody's left **their** umbrella behind.* (instead of . . . *his or her umbrella,* ► 175)

***Alice and me** went to the same primary school.* (► 174.1)

*between **you and I*** (► 174.1)

→

319 American and British English

Standard American English ('General American') and standard British English are very similar. There are a few differences in the use of structures and in spelling rules, and rather more differences of vocabulary and idiom. Modern British English is heavily influenced by American English, so some contrasts are disappearing. Pronunciation is sometimes very different, but most American and British speakers can understand each other easily.

An excellent, very detailed guide to grammatical differences, particularly differences in the grammar of individual words, is John Algeo's *British or American English?* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Note that the term 'American English' is used here for the standard English of the United States, but that some of the statements apply more widely to North American English in general.

1 grammar: *I've never gotten . . . / I've never got . . .*

Here are examples of the most important differences. Some other differences are dealt with in other entries. In many cases, two different forms are possible in one variety of English, while only one of the forms is possible or normal in the other variety.

American English	British English
*He **just went** home.* (OR *He's **just gone** home.*)	*He's **just gone** home.* (▶ 503.2)
*I've never really **gotten** to know her.*	*I've never really **got** to know her.* (▶ 472.6)
*I **(can) see** a car coming.*	*I **can see** a car coming.* (▶ 84.1)
*It's important that he **be** told.*	*It's important that he **should be** told.* (▶ 232)
*'Will you buy it?' 'I **may**.'*	*. . . I **may (do)**.* (▶ 28)
*The committee **meets** tomorrow.*	*The committee **meet/meets** tomorrow.* (▶ 128.1)
(on the phone) *Hello, is **this** Susan?*	*Hello, is **that** Susan?* (▶ 144.6)
*He looked at me **real strange**.* (very informal) (OR *He looked at me **really strangely**.*)	*He looked at me **really strangely**.* (▶ 194)
*He **probably has** arrived by now.* (OR *He **has probably** arrived . . .*)	*He **has probably** arrived by now.* (▶ 200.4)
***Should** I call the hospital?*	***Shall/Should** I call the hospital?*

Besides *get*, some other verbs have different forms in British and American English. (▶ 1.3)

For the Southern US second person plural pronoun *you all*, ▶ 174.8.

2 vocabulary: *sidewalk/pavement*

There are very many differences. Sometimes the same word has different meanings (BrE *mad* = crazy; AmE *mad* = angry). And very often, different words are used for the same idea (BrE *lorry* = AmE *truck*). Here are a few examples, with very brief information about the words and their meanings. A very useful guide to vocabulary differences is *Mighty Fine Words and Smashing Expressions – Making Sense of Transatlantic English*, edited by Orin Hargraves, Oxford University Press.

American English	British English
airplane	aeroplane
anyplace, anywhere	anywhere
apartment	flat, apartment
attorney, lawyer	barrister, solicitor, lawyer
biscuit	scone
busy (*phone*)	engaged
call collect (*phone*)	reverse the charges
can	tin, can
candy	sweets
check/bill (*in a restaurant*)	bill
coin-purse	purse
cookie, cracker	biscuit
corn	sweetcorn, maize
crazy	mad, crazy
crib	cot
crosswalk	pedestrian/zebra crossing
cuffs (*on trousers*)	turn-ups
diaper	nappy
doctor's office	doctor's surgery
drapes	curtains
elevator	lift
eraser	rubber, eraser
fall, autumn	autumn
faucet (*indoors*), spigot, tap (*outdoors*)	tap (*indoors and outdoors*)
fired (*from a job*)	sacked, fired
first floor, second floor, etc	ground floor, first floor, etc
flashlight	torch
flat (tire)	flat tyre, puncture
French fries	chips
garbage, trash	rubbish
garbage can, trashcan	dustbin, rubbish bin
gas(oline)	petrol
gear shift (*on a car*)	gear lever
highway, freeway	main road, motorway
hood (*on a car*)	bonnet
intersection	crossroads

→

American English	British English
jello	jelly
jelly	jam
jug	pitcher
mad	angry
math	maths
mean	nasty, mean
movie, film	film
one-way (ticket)	single (ticket)
pants, trousers	trousers
parking lot	car park
pavement	road surface
period	full stop
pharmacy	chemist's
pitcher	jug
(potato) chips	crisps
purse, (hand)bag	handbag
railroad	railway
raise (*in salary*)	rise
rest room, bathroom	(public) toilet
résumé	CV (curriculum vitae)
round trip	return (journey/ticket)
schedule, timetable	timetable
sidewalk	pavement
sneakers (= *sports shoes*)	trainers
stand in line	queue (up)
stingy, cheap (*opposite of generous*)	mean
subway	underground, (London) Tube, metro, subway
take-out	takeaway
truck	lorry, van
trunk (*of a car*)	boot
two weeks	fortnight, two weeks
vacation	holiday(s)
windshield (*on a car*)	windscreen
yard	garden
zee (*the name of the letter 'z'*)	zed
zipper	zip

Expressions with prepositions and particles

American English	British English
check something **(out)**	**check** something
different **from/than**	different **from/to** (► 433)
do something **over/again**	do something **again**
in a course	**on** a course
live **on** X street	live **in** X street
look **around** the church	look **(a)round** the church (► 376)

American English	British English
meet with somebody (*planned*)	**meet (with)** somebody
Monday **through/to** Friday	Monday **to** Friday
on a team	**in** a team
on the weekend	**at** the weekend
ten **after/past** four (*time*)	ten **past** four
ten **to/of/before/till** four	ten **to** four

3 spelling: *color/colour*

A number of words end in *-or* in American English and *-our* in British English (e.g. *color/colour*). Some words end in *-er* in American English and *-re* in British English (e.g. *center/centre*). Many verbs which end in *-ize* in American English (e.g. *realize*) can be spelt in British English with *-ise* or *-ize* (► 343). Some of the commonest words with different forms are:

American English	British English
aluminum	aluminium
analyze	analyse
catalog(ue)	catalogue
center	centre
check	cheque (*paid by a bank*)
color	colour
defense	defence
disk	disc, disk
enroll	enrol
fulfill	fulfil
honor	honour
inquire	enquire, inquire
jewelry	jewellery
labor	labour
license (*noun*)	licence
liter	litre
meter (*measure*)	metre
neighbor	neighbour
organize	organise/organize
pajamas	pyjamas
paralyze	paralyse
practice (*verb*)	practise
program	programme
realize	realise/realize
skillful	skilful
theater/theatre	theatre
tire	tyre (*on a wheel*)
trave(l)ler	traveller (► 347.6)
whiskey	(Scotch) whisky, (Irish) whiskey →

4 pronunciation

There are, of course, many different regional accents in both Britain and America. The most important general differences between American and British speech are as follows:

a Certain vowels are nasal (pronounced through the nose and mouth at the same time) in some varieties of American English, but not in most British accents.

b British English has one more vowel than American English. This is the rounded short *o* (/ɒ/) used in words like *cot, dog, got, gone, off, stop, lost*. In American English these words are pronounced either with /ɑː/, like the first vowel in *father*, or with /ɔː/, like the vowel in *caught*. (This vowel is also pronounced rather differently in British and American English.)

c Some words written with ***a*** + **consonant** (e.g. *fast, after*) have different pronunciations: with /ɑː/ in standard southern British English, and with /æ/ in American and some other varieties of English.

d The vowel in *home, go, open* is pronounced /əʊ/ in standard southern British English, and /oʊ/ in American English. The two vowels sound very different.

e In standard southern British English, *r* is only pronounced before a vowel sound. In most kinds of American English (and most other British varieties), *r* is pronounced in all positions where it is written in a word, and it changes the quality of a vowel that comes before it. So words like *car, turn, offer* sound very different in British and American speech.

f In many varieties of American English, *t* and *d* both have a very light voiced pronunciation (/d/) between vowels – so *writer* and *rider*, for example, can sound the same. In British English they are quite different: /ˈraɪtə(r)/ and /ˈraɪdə(r)/.

g Some words which are pronounced with /uː/ in most varieties of American English have /juː/ in British English. These are words in which *th, d, t* or *n* (and sometimes *s* or *l*) are followed by *u* or *ew* in writing.

enthusiastic	AmE /ɪnˌθuːziˈæstɪk/	BrE /ɪnˌθjuːziˈæstɪk/
duty	AmE /ˈduːti/	BrE /ˈdjuːti/
tune	AmE /tuːn/	BrE /tjuːn/
new	AmE /nuː/	BrE /njuː/

h Words ending in unstressed *-ile* (e.g. *fertile, missile*) are pronounced with /aɪl/ in British English; some are pronounced with /l/ in American English.

fertile AmE /ˈfɜːrtl/ (rhyming with *turtle*)
BrE /ˈfɜːtaɪl/ (rhyming with *her tile*)

i Some long words ending in *-ary*, *-ery* or *-ory* are pronounced differently, with one more syllable in American English.
secretary AmE /'sekrəteri/ BrE /'sekrətri/

j *Borough* and *thorough* are pronounced differently.
AmE /'bʌroʊ, 'θʌroʊ/
BrE /'bʌrə, 'θʌrə/

k Words borrowed from French are often stressed differently, especially if their pronunciation ends with a vowel sound. The final vowel is usually stressed in American English but not in British English.
pâté AmE /pɑː'teɪ/ BrE /'pæteɪ/
ballet AmE /bæ'leɪ/ BrE /'bæleɪ/

320 other varieties of English

The British and American standards are historically the most influential varieties, but of course Britain and the US do not own the English language. In a number of countries round the world, English is either a national language or an important second language. These countries have their own varieties of English, which broadly speaking fall into two groups.

1 native-speaker varieties

In countries such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, English arrived with the early British colonists, and in time became the language, or one of the languages, of the new nation. In the first three of these countries English is the mother tongue of a large part of the population. (South Africa is a different case: see below.) Over the years these varieties have developed in their own ways, as has British English, so that distinct differences have grown up between them. The differences are most noticeable in pronunciation, but each variety has a good deal of home-grown vocabulary, as well as some grammatical features of its own. Local vocabulary and grammar show up especially in informal speech; more formal speech is closer to the written standards, which themselves are strongly influenced by British and American models.

2 non-native varieties

In many countries, while English is not the mother tongue of most of the population, it serves as an important additional language. The historical or practical reasons for this vary, as does the exact role of English in these countries. In many cases, but not all, it has some official status. Some of these varieties are relatively new; others, like Indian English, have a long history. Their origins vary. Indian and Singapore-Malaysian English, for example, have developed out of British English; African lingua franca English is also British-based; the Philippines variety has its source in American English; Fijian English owes much of its character to Australian / New Zealand English. →

All such varieties show the influence of other regional languages: when people habitually use two or more forms of speech, each one affects the grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation of the other(s). Common simplifications and regularisations typical of 'learner English' may also become fixed in one variety or another: for example countable uses of nouns which are uncountable in the source languages (*furnitures*), dropping of grammatical endings (*three brother*, *she think*), merging of *which* and *who* (*the people which were there*), reduction of tense distinctions (*they arrive yesterday*), omission of *be* (*he the driver*, *they studying*), and the use of *is it?* or *isn't it?* as universal question tags (*You're tired, is it?*).

In such multilingual situations, there are often great variations in the kind of English used, so that it is not possible to give a straightforward description of, say, Indian, Malaysian or Jamaican English. More accomplished speakers will generally adopt a variety that is relatively close to a British, American or other national standard with some local colouring, while others, like language learners the world over, may speak a far less fluent and more basic kind of English. In certain countries something like a national standard has developed, though the definition of 'standard' is more controversial than in the case of a native-speaker variety.

3 notes on some varieties

a *Australian and New Zealand English*

These varieties are similar in many ways to British English, but each naturally has a good deal of regional vocabulary. Australian English has taken many words for natural features from the Aboriginal languages of Australia: for example *kangaroo*, *billabong* (a pool or a tributary of a river), *dingo* (a wild dog), *mulga* (a tree, wilderness). Similarly, New Zealand English has incorporated words from the indigenous language Maori: for example *pukeku* and *takahe* (names of birds), *mana* (power, honour). Both Australian and New Zealand English have a rich store of informal and slang words and expressions, many of them shared between the two varieties – for instance *bludger* (a lazy person), *dinkum* (genuine), *bonzer* (excellent), *my shout* (my turn to buy the drinks). The few grammatical differences from British English include a preference for singular verbs with group nouns, where British English might use a plural verb (***The team is** confident of winning*); the New Zealand use of *Will I . . .?* in questions like ***Will I** call back later?*, where British English has *Shall I . . .?*; and conversational *she* instead of *it*, as in ***She'll** be right* (It will be OK). Informal Australian English frequently shortens nouns and adds an *-ie* or *-o* suffix: for example *barbie* (barbeque), *mushie* (mushroom), *sunnies* (sunglasses), *brekkie* (breakfast), *Tassie* (Tasmania), *arvo* (afternoon). Australian and New Zealand pronunciation have many common features, and are closer to British than to American English. Standard written English is almost identical with the British standard, regional vocabulary aside. As with other varieties, however, there is growing influence from American English.

b *Canadian English*

Canadian English is in some ways midway between the British and American varieties. The written standard is very close to that of British English, but American spellings are quite common. Informal speech has a distinctly American flavour, and pronunciation is fairly close to that of the northern United States. Canadian vocabulary naturally includes words reflecting the local environment and culture, many of them taken from the native American languages spoken in Canada: for instance *husky*, *moose*, *toboggan*, *anorak*, *kayak*. French, the mother tongue of around one third of Canadians, has also given words to Canadian English vocabulary, e.g. *cache* (a hiding place).

c *South African English*

English is the lingua franca of South Africa, but it is only one of eleven official languages. It is spoken as a mother tongue by about 10% of the population, and in this form it is the language primarily associated with education and social prestige. The written standard is similar to that of British English. Mother-tongue spoken English is heavily influenced both by Afrikaans (a descendant of the language of the early Dutch settlers) and by the African languages of the region; it also reflects the mixed social and geographical origins of the British settlers. Words derived from Afrikaans include *nogal* (what is more), *sommer* (simply, for no specific reason), *trek*, *padkos* (food for a journey), *dwaal* (a reverie or state of confusion), *braai* (barbecue). Examples of words taken from African languages are *indaba* (discussion, meeting, gathering), *bonsella* (bonus, free gift), *babalaas* (hung over). Some words that have died out in British English have stayed in South Africa: for example *robot* (traffic light), *geyser* (boiler). Grammatical features of informal South African English include some non-standard word order (e.g. *I'll come and see you tomorrow rather*) and the use of *hey* as a question tag (*You know his name, hey?*). Standard pronunciation, originally that of the educated English-speaker, may be changing now that political developments have brought senior black African speakers into positions of influence; at the same time, however, upwardly mobile young black speakers are tending to take the British-flavoured standard pronunciation as a target.
Native speakers of English are massively outnumbered by speakers of the non-native English which is used as a lingua franca across the region. This varies greatly from one social and ethnic group to another, and is very heavily influenced in its grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation by the mother-tongues of its speakers. However, this too may be developing a standard form: there was a strong move a decade or so ago to recognize black South African English as 'the standard'.

d *Caribbean English*

The English of Caribbean countries like Jamaica developed out of pidgin (mixed) languages that grew up during the slave trade. Speakers at one end of the social/educational spectrum are likely to use a British or American standard with a few regional characteristics. At the other extreme, Caribbean dialects ('creoles') are very different indeed from the standard varieties. In Jamaican Creole, for example, the equivalent of *I go* is *mi guo*, *I am going* is *mi de guo*, *I went* is *mi bin guo* and *I was going* is *mi bin de guo*. →

e *Indian English*

English is an associate official language in India, alongside Hindi, the official language. As a lingua franca in a country with over 700 different languages, English has enormous administrative, political and cultural importance and very many speakers. Command of the language ranges from basic to native-speaker-like. Standard British English with an RP accent has traditionally enjoyed high prestige, and is fostered by private English-medium schools. However, very many varieties of English co-exist in India, with differences arising from regional, social, linguistic and other factors. Common features of pronunciation and grammar which are regarded by some educated Indians as mistakes are seen by others as characteristics of an emerging Indian standard. Grammatical differences from British and American English include tense use and the use of progressive forms: *I am here since last week*; *I am seeing her often*; *We have been there five years ago*; *He is doing it yesterday*; *She is having two children.* Questions and negatives may be structured differently: *Who you are wishing to speak to?*; *You not like curry?* Article use varies: articles may be dropped, and *one* is often used rather than *a/an*: *We are needing one new car.* Repetition may be used for emphasis: *I am having small, small problem.* Typical question-tags are *Yes?*, *No?* and *Isn't it?*

The vocabulary of Indian English includes many words taken from modern and classical Indian languages, some of which have made their way into general English outside India, for example *bungalow*, *cheetah*, *yoga*, *nirvana*. Some English words are special to Indian English, for example *headbath* (shampoo), *issueless* (having no children), *prepone* (the opposite of postpone), *teacheress*. Others are current in India although they are no longer used elsewhere, for example *needful*, *thrice* (three times), *miscreant* (criminal).
Indian pronunciation of English is generally syllable-timed rather than stress-timed.

f *Singapore and Malaysian English*

These varieties have a good deal in common, and both are strongly influenced by the regional Chinese, Malay and Indian languages. However, they developed differently after gaining independence from Britain. In a post-colonial reaction, Malaysia initially down-graded the teaching of English, and has only more recently given it renewed importance. Singapore, in contrast, chose early to make English its national language (despite having virtually no native speakers), so as to provide a lingua franca and cultural unifying force for its multilingual population. Education in Singapore is entirely English-medium, and as English comes to be more and more a natural part of Singapore life, it may well become the mother tongue of many citizens. More than a third of Singaporeans now use English at home.

In Singapore and Malaysian English, as in others world-wide, there is considerable variation arising from differences in education and social position. Some members of the urban middle class are virtually bilingual, with a native-speaker-like level of fluency and accuracy, while other English speakers have only a basic command of the language. The context of use also plays a part.

Singapore English, for instance, has a 'high' variety, closer to a British standard, which is used in formal situations; this contrasts with the 'low' informal variety called 'Singlish'. The choice between 'high' and 'low' varieties does not necessarily depend on language proficiency – even accomplished speakers of standard Singapore English use Singlish when they feel that the situation calls for it, as Singlish functions as a marker of Singaporean identity.

Singapore/Malaysian vocabulary includes many local words and expressions, such as *hand phone* (mobile phone) and *void deck* (the ground floor of a block of flats, left vacant to be hired out for communal activities). Many words are imported from the regional languages: for example *makan* (food, eating), *rakyat* (the common people, an ordinary citizen). Typical grammatical differences from standard English, found in many speakers' usage, include many common 'learner-English' features; for instance the complex English modal verb system is often reduced to two elements: *can* and *must*. Spoken discourse particles include the very common *lah*, which perhaps originates from Chinese and is used as a marker of informal intimacy.

We eat here yesterday. *This coffee house very cheap.* *You got car or not?*
Can or not? (= Is this possible?) *She call you, is it?*
Can be that Ahmed calling. (= That will be Ahmed calling.)
Please lah call me soon.

Pronunciation varies considerably, depending on the speaker's mother tongue. At the higher end of the social-educational spectrum, speech is strongly influenced by the British standard, though with a tendency to give syllables equal weight as against British stress-timed rhythm (► 313).

4 English as a lingua franca ('ELF')

A lingua franca is a language used for communication between speakers of different mother tongues. The name 'lingua franca' itself was originally applied to a mixed language used for trade in the Eastern Mediterranean from the 11th to the 19th centuries. Many other languages have served as lingua francas at different times in different parts of the world, for instance Greek, Latin, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, Swahili and Chinese. English is now the world's major lingua franca, and, unlike earlier lingua francas, has no geographical boundaries.

Like other languages which are adopted for international use, lingua franca English varies very widely from one speaker to another, depending on its users' command of the language; it also tends to be heavily influenced in its pronunciation and grammar by the speakers' mother tongues. The variation is of course limited by the need for effective communication, so that speakers will try to accommodate their English to make it more comprehensible to those who need to understand them. And, like most second-language speakers, lingua franca users worldwide tend to make the kind of common simplifications and regularisations illustrated in 320.2 above. So, despite very large individual differences, much lingua franca English has some shared characteristics. Some of these are regional. European kinds of ELF often resemble each other (reflecting mother-tongue similarities in grammar or pronunciation) in ways that distinguish them from, say, typical East Asian, South Asian or African lingua franca types of English. →

Similarities in lingua franca use, and the term 'English as a lingua franca' itself, can lead people to suppose that there is a distinct variety of English, 'ELF', that can be analysed and described in the same way as, say, Australian or Indian English. This is not, however, the case: lingua franca versions of English differ far too much to constitute a consistent variety. The term 'English as a lingua franca' therefore only refers to a process, the use of English for international communication, not to a non-existent form of English that has arisen for this purpose.

Section 29 Vocabulary Areas

INTRODUCTION

This Section contains information about the vocabulary associated with a number of common topics, together with notes on slang, idioms and related matters. For more about vocabulary problems, ► Sections 30–31.

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- ✗ There's an Irish in the house next door. ► 321
- ✗ I have a lot of american friends. ► 321
- ✗ We can say 'one half' as 'nought comma five'. ► 322.1
- ✗ I waited for him for one and a half hour. ► 322.2
- ✗ A third of the students is from abroad. ► 322.3
- ✗ King Henry Eight was born in 1491. ► 322.6
- ✗ I want to live for hundred years. ► 322.10
- ✗ I paid three thousand, a hundred pounds for the car. ► 322.10
- ✗ Sorry, I have no change – only a twenty-pounds note. ► 322.14
- ✗ 'How old are you?' 'I'm thirty years.' ► 323.1
- ✗ When I was at your age I was working in a coal mine. ► 323.2
- ✗ He could already read in the age of three. ► 323.3
- ✗ Wake me at five past seven o'clock. ► 325.1
- ✗ Good morning, Mr Jack Smith. ► 326.2 b
- ✗ The painter Tiziano lived in Venezia. ► 327.1, 327.3
- ✗ There's a spider in the bath. She's enormous! ► 328
- ✗ Congratulation on your exam results. ► 329.4
- ✗ Please lend me a pen. ► 329.17
- ✗ Thank you a lot for offering me that golden chance. But I've changed my thoughts. ► 332.3
- ✗ I am as cross as two sticks because it is raining cats and dogs again. If this goes on I think I will kick the bucket. ► 332.5

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321 nationalities, countries and regions

1 introduction

In order to refer to a nation or region and its affairs it is usually necessary to know four words:

- the name of the country or region
  Denmark *Japan* *France* *Catalonia*
- the adjective
  Danish *Japanese* *French* *Catalan*
- the singular noun used for a person from the country
  a Dane *a Japanese* *a Frenchman/woman* *a Catalan*
- the plural expression *the . . .* used for the population as a whole
  the Danes *the Japanese* *the French* *the Catalans*

Usually the singular noun is the same as the adjective (e.g. *Greek, Mexican*). The plural expression is usually the same as the adjective + *-s* (e.g. *the Greeks, the Mexicans*); words ending in *-ese*, and *Swiss*, remain unchanged for plural meanings (e.g. *the Japanese; the Swiss*). ► 321.2 below for more examples. However, there are a number of exceptions. Some of these are listed in 321.3. All words of this kind (including adjectives) begin with capital letters.

***American** literature* (NOT ~~*american literature*~~)

The name of a national language is often the same as the national adjective.

***Danish** is difficult to pronounce.* *Do you speak **Japanese**?*

2 Examples

Country/region	Adjective	Person	Population
America (the United States)	American	an American	the Americans
Belgium	Belgian	a Belgian	the Belgians
Brazil	Brazilian	a Brazilian	the Brazilians
Europe	European	a European	the Europeans
Italy	Italian	an Italian	the Italians
Kenya	Kenyan	a Kenyan	the Kenyans
Morocco	Moroccan	a Moroccan	the Moroccans
Norway	Norwegian	a Norwegian	the Norwegians
Palestine	Palestinian	a Palestinian	the Palestinians
Russia	Russian	a Russian	the Russians
Greece	Greek	a Greek	the Greeks
Iraq	Iraqi	an Iraqi	the Iraqis
Israel	Israeli	an Israeli	the Israelis
Thailand	Thai	a Thai	the Thais
China	Chinese	a Chinese (person)	the Chinese
Congo	Congolese	a Congolese (person)	the Congolese
Portugal	Portuguese	a Portuguese (person)	the Portuguese
Switzerland	Swiss	a Swiss	the Swiss

3 exceptions

Country/region	Adjective	Person	Population
Britain	British	a British person (ALSO Briton)	the British
England	English	an Englishman/woman	the English
France	French	a Frenchman/woman	the French
Ireland	Irish	an Irishman/woman	the Irish
Spain	Spanish	a Spaniard	the Spanish
the Netherlands / Holland	Dutch	a Dutchman/woman	the Dutch
Wales	Welsh	a Welshman/woman	the Welsh
Denmark	Danish	a Dane	the Danes
Finland	Finnish	a Finn	the Finns
Poland	Polish	a Pole	the Poles
Scotland	Scottish, Scotch	a Scot	the Scots
Sweden	Swedish	a Swede	the Swedes
Turkey	Turkish	a Turk	the Turks

Notes

a *Scottish* is the usual word for the people and culture of Scotland; *Scotch* is used for whisky.

b The word *Briton* is unusual except in newspaper headlines – for example *TWO BRITONS KILLED IN AIR CRASH*. *Brit* is sometimes used informally.

c *English* is not the same as *British*, and is not used for Scottish, Welsh or Irish people (► 411).

d *English* (the name of the language) can be used in the plural to talk about varieties of English, for instance *World Englishes*.

e Although *American* is the normal English word for United States citizens and affairs, people from other parts of the American continent may object to this use, and some people avoid it for this reason.

f *Inuit* is now considered a more respectful term than *Eskimo* for the Arctic races of Northern Canada and elsewhere.

g *Arabic* is used for the language spoken in Arab countries; in other cases, the normal adjective is *Arab*. *Arabian* is used in a few fixed expressions and place names (e.g. *Saudi Arabian*, *the Arabian Sea*).

h Note the pronunciation of words like *Irishman/men*, *Dutchman/men*: the singular is the same as the plural (/ˈaɪrɪʃmən, ˈdʌtʃmən/).

322 numbers

1 fractions and decimals: *two fifths; nought point four*

We say simple fractions like this:

¼	*a/one quarter*	$^{11}/_{16}$	*eleven sixteenths*
⅛	*an/one eighth*	3¾	*three and three quarters*
$^{3}/_{7}$	*three sevenths*	6⅛	*six and one eighth*
$^{2}/_{5}$	*two fifths*		

More complex fractions can be expressed by using the word *over*.

$^{317}/_{509}$ *three hundred and seventeen* ***over*** *five hundred and nine*

We write and say decimals like this:

0.4 *nought/zero* ***point*** *four* (NOT ~~*0,4*~~ OR ~~*nought comma four*~~)
0.375 *nought/zero point* ***three seven five*** (NOT ~~*nought point three hundred and seventy-five*~~)
4.7 *four point seven*

For the difference between *a(n)* and *one* with numbers, ► 322.10 below.

2 before nouns

With fractions below 1, we use *of* before nouns.

three quarters ***of*** *an hour* *seven tenths* ***of*** *a mile* *a third* ***of*** *the students*

Half is not always followed by *of* (► 478).

half *an hour* (AmE also *a half hour*) ***half (of)*** *the students*

Of is also possible with decimals below 1.

nought point six ***of*** *a mile*
0.1625cm: nought point one six two five ***of*** *a centimetre*

However, decimals below *1* are often followed directly by plural nouns.

nought point six ***miles*** (NOT ~~*nought point six mile*~~)
nought point one six two five ***centimetres***

Fractions and decimals over *1* are normally followed by plural nouns.

one and a half ***hours*** (NOT ~~*one and a half hour*~~)
three and three eighths ***miles***
1.3 ***millimetres*** (NOT ~~*1.3 millimetre*~~)

Note also the structure *a . . . and a half.*

I've been waiting for ***an hour and a half.***

3 singular or plural verbs

Singular verbs are normally used after fractions, decimals, and other expressions referring to amounts and measurements (for more details, ► 129).

Three quarters of a ton ***is*** *too much.* (NOT ~~*Three quarters of a ton are*~~ . . .)
3.6 kilometres ***is*** *about 2 miles.*

But plural verbs are used when we are talking about numbers of people or things, even after a singular fraction.

A third of the students ***are*** *from abroad.* (NOT ~~*A third of the students is*~~ . . .)
Half of the glasses ***are*** *broken.*

After expressions like ***one in three, one out of five*** + **plural noun**, both singular and plural verbs are possible.

One in three new cars ***break/breaks*** *down in the first year.*

4 telephone numbers

We say each figure separately, pausing after groups of three or four (not two). 0 is often called *oh* (like the letter *O*).

307 4922 three oh/zero seven, four nine two two

5 Roman numerals

Roman numerals (*I, II, III, IV,* etc) are not common in modern English, but they are still used in a few cases – for example the names of kings and queens, page numbers in the introductions to some books, the numbers of paragraphs in some documents, the numbers of questions in some examinations, the figures on some old clock faces, and occasionally the names of centuries.

It was built in the time of Henry ***V****.*
For details, see Introduction page ***ix****.*
Do question ***(vi)*** *or question* ***(vii)****, but not both.*
a fine ***XVIII*** *Century English walnut chest of drawers*

The Roman numerals normally used are as follows:

1 *I i*	10 *X x*	40 *XL xl*
2 *II ii*	11 *XI xi*	45 *XLV xlv*
3 *III iii*	12 *XII xii*	50 *L l*
4 *IV iv*	13 *XIII xiii*	60 *LX lx*
5 *V v*	14 *XIV xiv*	90 *XC xc*
6 *VI vi*	19 *XIX xix*	100 *C c*
7 *VII vii*	20 *XX xx*	500 *D*
8 *VIII viii*	21 *XXI xxi*	1000 *M*
9 *IX ix*	30 *XXX xxx*	1995 *MCMXCV*

6 cardinal and ordinal numbers: books, chapters, etc; kings and queens

After a noun we usually use a cardinal number (*one, two,* etc) instead of an ordinal number (*first, second,* etc). This structure is common in titles. Compare:

the fourth book – Book ***Four*** *the third act – Act* ***Three***
Mozart's thirty-ninth symphony – Symphony No. ***39****, by Mozart*
the third day of the course – Timetable for Day ***Three***

However, the names of kings and queens are said with ordinal numbers.

Henry VIII: Henry the ***Eighth*** (NOT ~~*Henry Eight*~~)
Louis XIV: Louis the ***Fourteenth*** *Elizabeth II: Elizabeth the* ***Second***

7 centuries

Note how the names of centuries relate to the years in them. The period from 1701–1800 is called the **18**th century (not the 17th); 1801–1900 is the **19**th century, etc. →

8 floors

The *ground floor* of a British house is the *first floor* of an American house; the British *first floor* is the American *second floor*, etc.

9 *and*: punctuation

In British English we always put *and* between *hundred*/*thousand*/*million* and numbers below a hundred. In American English, *and* can be dropped.

310 *three hundred* ***and*** *ten* (AmE also *three hundred ten*)
5,642 *five thousand, six hundred* ***and*** *forty-two*
2,025 *two thousand* ***and*** *twenty-five*

In measurements containing two different units, *and* is possible before the smaller, but is usually left out.

two hours ***(and)*** *ten minutes* *two metres* ***(and)*** *thirty centimetres*

In writing we generally use commas (,) to divide large numbers into groups of three figures, by separating off the thousands and the millions. Full stops (.) are not used in this way.

3,127 (NOT ~~*3.127*~~) *5,466,243*

We do not always use commas in four-figure numbers, and they are not used in dates.

4,126 OR *4126* *the year 1648*

Spaces are also possible.

There are 1 000 millimetres in a metre.

Note the hyphen between the tens and units in *twenty-one*, *twenty-two*, *thirty-six*, *forty-nine*, etc.

10 *a* and *one*

We can say *an eighth* or *one eighth*, *a hundred* or *one hundred*, *a thousand* or *one thousand*, *a million* or *one million*, etc. *One* is more formal.

I want to live for ***a*** *hundred years.* (NOT . . . ~~*for hundred years*~~)
He was fined ***one*** *thousand pounds for dangerous driving.*

A can only be used at the beginning of a number. Compare:

a/one *hundred*
three thousand ***one*** *hundred* (NOT ~~*three thousand a hundred*~~)

A thousand can be used alone, and before *and*, but not usually before a number of hundreds. Compare:

a/one *thousand* ***a/one*** *thousand and forty-nine*
one *thousand, six hundred and two* (More natural than *a thousand, six hundred and two.*)

We can use *a* or *one* with measurement words. The rules are similar.

a/one *kilometre* (BUT ***one*** *kilometre, six hundred metres*)
an/one *hour and seventeen minutes* (BUT ***one*** *hour, seventeen minutes*)
a/one *pound* (BUT ***one*** *pound twenty-five*)

11 numbers with determiners

Numbers can be used after determiners. Before determiners, a structure with *of* is necessary.

You're ***my one*** *hope.*
One of my *friends gave me this.* (NOT ~~*One my friend*~~ . . .)

12 *eleven hundred*, etc

In an informal style we often use *eleven hundred, twelve hundred,* etc instead of *one thousand one hundred,* etc. This is most common with round numbers between 1,100 and 1,900.

*We only got **fifteen hundred** pounds for the car.*

This form is used in historical dates before 2000 (► 324).

*He was born in **thirteen hundred**.*

*It was built in **fifteen (hundred** and) twenty-nine.*

13 *billion*

A *billion* is a thousand million. (But in older British usage a *billion* was a million million.)

14 *five hundred*, etc without *-s*

After a number, the words ***dozen, hundred, thousand, million*** and ***billion*** have no final *-s*, and *of* is not used. This also happens after *several* and *a few*. Compare:

- ***five hundred** pounds*
  ***hundreds of** pounds*
- ***several thousand** times*
  *It cost **thousands**.*
- ***a few million** years*
  ***millions of** years*

Singular forms are used as modifiers before nouns in plural measuring expressions.

*a **five-pound** note* (NOT ~~*a five-pounds note*~~)
*a **three-mile** walk* *a **four-foot** deep hole*
*six **two-hour** lessons* *a **six-foot** tall man*
*a **three-month**-old baby*

In an informal style, we often use *foot* instead of *feet* in other structures, especially when we talk about people's heights.

*My father's just over six **foot** two.*

For the use of *be* in measurements, ► 25.2.
For the use of possessive forms in expressions of time (e.g. *ten minutes' walk*; *four days' journey*), ► 124.5.

15 British money

There are 100 *pence* in a *pound*. Sums of money are named as follows:

1p *one penny* (informal *one p* (/pi:/) OR *a penny*)
5p *five pence* (informal *five p*)
£3.75 *three pounds seventy-five (pence)* OR (more formal) *three pounds and seventy-five pence*

Some people now use the plural *pence* as a singular in informal speech; *pound* is sometimes used informally as a plural.

*That's two pounds and one **pence**, please.*
*It cost me eight **pound** fifty.*

Singular forms are used in expressions like *a five-**pound** note* (see above). However, *pence* is often used instead of *penny* (*a five-**pence** stamp*). →

16 American money

There are 100 *cents* (¢) in a *dollar* ($). One-cent coins are called *pennies*; five-cent coins are *nickels*; ten-cent coins are *dimes*; a twenty-five cent coin is a *quarter*.

17 metric and non-metric measures

Britain uses not-metric measures (*miles*, *yards* and *feet*) for road distances; heights are often given in feet.

*The car park's straight on, about **500 yards** on the right.*
*We are now flying at an altitude of **28,000 feet**.*

Metric measures are now standard for most other purposes, but non-metric measures are also sometimes used. The US generally uses non-metric units.

*It's **30 miles** to the nearest hospital.*
*The lightest road bike ever weighs around **6 pounds**.*

Other English-speaking countries use the metric system. Approximate equivalents are as follows:

1 inch (1in) = 2.5cm
12 inches = 1 foot (30cm)
3 feet (3ft) = 1 yard (90cm)
5,280 feet / 1,760 yards = 1 mile (1.6km)
5 miles = 8km
1 ounce (1oz) = 28gm
16 ounces = 1 pound (455gm)
2.2 pounds (2.2lb) = 1kg
14 pounds (14lb) = 1 stone (6.4kg) (BrE only)
1 British pint = 568ml
1 US pint = 473ml
8 pints (8pt) = 1 gallon
1 British gallon = 4.55 litres
1 US gallon = 3.78 litres
1 acre = 4,840 square yards = 0.4 hectares
1 square mile = 640 acres = 259 hectares

18 area and volume

We say, for example, that a room is *twelve feet **by** fifteen feet*, or that a garden is *thirty metres **by** forty-eight metres*.

A room *twelve feet by twelve feet* can be called ***twelve feet square***; the total area is ***144 square feet***.

A container *2 metres by 2 metres by 3 metres* has a volume of *12 **cubic metres***.

19 *a* and *per*

When we relate two different measures, we usually use *a/an*; *per* is often used in formal writing.

*It costs two pounds **a** week.* (OR . . . *£2 **per** week.*)
*We're doing seventy miles **an** hour.* (OR . . . *70 miles **per** hour / mph.*)

20 numbers not used as complements after *be*

Numbers are used as subjects or objects, but not usually as complements after *be* except in calculations, ► 322.21 below.

I've got three sisters. (NOT ~~*My sisters are three.*~~)

There are twelve of us in my family. (More natural than *We are twelve . . .*)

21 spoken calculations

Common ways of saying calculations in British English are:

2 + 2 = 4	*Two and two is/are four.* (informal) *Two plus two equals/is four.* (formal)
7 − 4 = 3	*Four from seven is/leaves three.* (informal) *Seven take away four is/leaves three.* (informal) *Seven minus four equals/is three.* (formal)
3 × 4 = 12	*Three fours are twelve.* (informal) *Three times four is twelve.* (informal) *Three multiplied by four equals/is twelve.* (formal)
9 ÷ 3 = 3	*Three(s) into nine goes three (times).* (informal, especially BrE) *Nine divided by three equals/is three.* (formal)

22 example of a spoken calculation

Here, for interest, is a multiplication (146×281) together with all its steps, in the words that a British English speaker might have used as he/she was working it out on paper before the days of pocket calculators.

```
  146
× 281
-----
29200
11680
  146
-----
41026
```

A hundred and forty-six times two hundred and eighty-one.

beginning: *Put down two noughts. Two sixes are twelve; put down two and carry one; two fours are eight and one are nine; two ones are two.*

next line: *Put down one nought. Eight sixes are forty-eight; put down eight and carry four; eight fours are thirty-two and four is thirty-six; put down six and carry three; eight ones are eight and three is eleven.*

next line: *One times 146 is 146.*

addition: *Six and nought and nought is six; eight and four and nought is twelve; put down two and carry one; six and two are eight and one is nine and one is ten; put down nought and carry one; nine and one are ten and one is eleven; put down one and carry one; two and one are three and one are four.*

total: *forty-one thousand and twenty-six.*

Note how *is* and *are* can often be used interchangeably.

For ways of saying and writing dates, ► 324. For ways of telling the time, ► 325.

323 talking about age

1 use of *be*

We most often talk about people's ages with ***be*** + **number**

*He **is** thirty.* (NOT ~~*He has thirty.*~~)

OR ***be*** + **number** + ***years old*** (more formal: . . . *of age*).

*He **is thirty years old** / of age.* (NOT . . . ~~*thirty years.*~~)

We ask *How old are you?*, not normally *What is your age?*

2 *be* + . . . *age*

Note the structure ***be*** + . . . ***age*** (without a preposition).

*When I **was your age** I was working.* (NOT ~~*When I was at your age*~~ . . .)

*The two boys **are the same age**.* *She's **the same age** as me.*

3 prepositions

In other structures, *at* is common before *age*.

*He could read **at the age** of three.* (NOT . . . ~~*in the age*~~ . . .)

***At your age** I already had a job.*

324 dates

1 writing

In Britain, the commonest way to write the day's date is as follows. Note that the names of months always begin with capital letters (► 341).

30 March 2004 *27 July 2003*

The last two letters of the number word are sometimes added (e.g. *1st, 2nd, 3rd, 6th*). Some people write a comma before the year, but this is no longer very common in Britain except when the date comes inside a sentence.

30th March(,) 2004

He was born in Hawick on 14 December, 1942.

The date may be written entirely in figures.

30/3/04 *30-3-04* *30.3.04*

In the USA it is common to write the month first and to put a comma before the year.

March 30, 2004

All-figure dates are written differently in Britain and America, since British people put the day first while Americans generally start with the month. So for example, *6.4.02* means '6 April 2002' in Britain, but 'June 4, 2002' in the USA.

The longer names of the months are often abbreviated as follows:

Jan *Feb* *Mar* *Apr* *Aug* *Sept* *Oct* *Nov* *Dec*

The names of decades (e.g. *the nineteen sixties*) can be written like this: *the 1960s* (less commonly *1960's*).

For the position of dates in letters, ► 289. For full stops in abbreviations, ► 336.

2 speaking

30 March 1993 = 'March the thirtieth, nineteen ninety-three' (AmE also *'March thirtieth . . .'*) OR 'the thirtieth of March, nineteen ninety-three'
1200 = *twelve hundred*
1305 = *thirteen hundred and five* OR *thirteen oh*(/əʊ/) *five*
1498 = *fourteen (hundred and) ninety-eight*
1910 = *nineteen (hundred and) ten*
1946 = *nineteen (hundred and) forty-six*
2000 = *two thousand*
2005 = *two thousand and five* OR *twenty oh five*
To announce the date, *It's* is used.
It's April (the) first.
To ask about dates, we can say for instance:
What's the date (today)? *What date is it?*
What date is the meeting? (OR *When is the meeting?*)

3 *BC* and *AD*

To distinguish between dates before and after the birth of Christ, we use the abbreviations *BC* (= Before Christ) and *AD* (= Anno Domini – Latin for 'in the year of the Lord'). *BC* follows the date; *AD* can come before or after it.
*Julius Caesar first came to Britain in **55 BC**.*
*The emperor Trajan was born in **AD 53** / **53 AD**.*
However, instead of *BC* and *AD*, many people now prefer to use *BCE* ('before the Common Era') and *CE* ('Common Era').

325 telling the time

1 saying what time it is

There are two common ways of saying what time it is.

8.05	*eight (oh) five* (OR *five past eight*)
8.10	*eight ten* (OR *ten past eight*)
8.15	*eight fifteen* (OR *a quarter past eight*)
8.25	*eight twenty-five* (OR *twenty-five past eight*)
8.30	*eight thirty* (OR *half past eight*)
8.35	*eight thirty-five* (OR *twenty-five to nine*)
8.45	*eight forty-five* (OR *a quarter to nine*)
8.50	*eight fifty* (OR *ten to nine*)
9.00	*nine o'clock*

Americans prefer to write a colon between the hours and the minutes: *8:50*.
People generally prefer to say *minutes past/to* for times between the five-minute divisions.
*seven **minutes** past eight* (More natural than *seven past eight.*)
*three **minutes** to nine* (More natural than *three to nine.*)
The expression *o'clock* is only used at the hour. Compare:
*Wake me at seven **(o'clock)**.*
Wake me at ten past seven. (NOT . . . ~~*ten past seven o'clock.*~~)
Past is often dropped from *half past* in informal speech.
*OK, see you at **half two**.* (= . . . half past two.)

In American English *after* is often used instead of *past* (e.g. *ten* ***after*** *six*); but Americans do not say *half after*. And in American English *of*, *before* and *till* are possible instead of *to* (e.g. *twenty-five* ***of*** *three*).

2 asking what time it is

Common ways of asking about time are:

What time is it? *Have you got the time?* (informal)
What's the time? *Could you tell me the time?* (more formal)
What time do you make it? (OR *What do you make the time?* BrE, meaning 'What time is it by your watch?')

3 the twenty-four hour clock

The twenty-four hour clock is used mainly in timetables, programmes and official announcements. In ordinary speech, people usually use the twelve-hour clock. Compare:

– *Last check-in time is* ***20.15****.*
I'm seeing Oliver at ***a quarter past eight*** *this evening.*
– *The next train from Platform 5 is the* ***17.30*** *departure for Carlisle.*
*'What time do you stop work?' '****Half past five****.'*
– *The meeting will begin at* ***fourteen hundred****.*
Jack and I are meeting up at ***two o'clock****.*

If necessary, times can be distinguished by using *in the morning/afternoon/evening*. In a more formal style, we can use *am* (= Latin *ante meridiem* – 'before midday') and *pm* (= *post meridiem* – 'after midday').

09.00 = *nine o'clock* ***in the morning*** (OR *nine* ***am***)
21.00 = *nine o'clock* ***in the evening*** (OR *nine* ***pm***)

326 names and titles: *Daniel; Mr Lewis*

Names and titles are used both when talking about people and when talking to them. There are some differences.

1 talking about people

When we talk (or write) about people we can name them in four ways.

a first name (also *Christian name*; AmE also *given name* or *forename*)

We use first names mostly informally, for colleagues, relatives, friends and children.

Where's ***Daniel****? He said he'd be here at three.*
How's ***Mia*** *getting on at school?*

b first name + surname (also *last name* or *family name*)

This is neutral – neither particularly formal nor particularly informal.

Isn't that ***Daniel Connolly*** *the actor?*
We're going to Ireland with ***Emily*** *and* ***Daniel Sinclair****.*

c title (*Mr*, *Mrs*, etc) + surname

This is more formal. We talk like this about people we do not know, or when we want to show respect or be polite.

*Can I speak to **Mr Lewis**, please?*
*We've got a new teacher called **Mrs Campbell**.*
*Ask **Miss Andrews** to come in, please.*
*There's a **Ms Sanders** on the phone.*

Note that it is less usual to talk about people by using *Mr*, *Mrs*, etc + first name + surname (e.g. *Mr John Parker*). *Mr*, *Mrs*, etc are not used before the first name alone (~~*Mr John*~~).

d surname only

We often use just the surname to talk about men and women in public life – politicians, sports personalities, writers and so on.

*Do you think **Roberts** would make a good President?*
*The 5,000 metres was won by **Jones**.* *I never liked **Eliot's** poetry.*
***Thatcher** was the first British woman Prime Minister.*

Surnames alone are sometimes used by members of groups (especially all-male groups like soldiers or team members) when they refer to each other.

*Let's put **Billows** in goal and move **Carter** up.*

2 talking to people

When we talk (or write) to people we generally name them in one of two ways.

a first name

This is informal, used for example to colleagues, relatives, friends and children.

*Hello, **Olivia**. How are you?* *Hi, **Dan**. Did you get my last email?*

However, it is now becoming common for first names to be used by strangers in advertising literature and similar correspondence.

*Dear **Michael**,*
We can offer you 5% interest guaranteed for 3 years . . .

b title + surname

This is more formal or respectful.

*Good morning, **Miss Williamson**.*

Note that we do not usually use both the first name and the surname of a person that we are talking to. It would be unusual to say *'Hello, Peter Matthews'*, for example.

Members of all-male groups sometimes address each other by their surnames alone (e.g. *'Hello, Smith'*), but this is unusual in modern English.

Mr, *Mrs* and *Ms* are not generally used alone.

Excuse me. Can you tell me the time? (NOT ~~*Excuse me, Mr.*~~ OR ~~*Excuse me, Mrs.*~~)

Sir and *madam* are used in Britain mostly by people in service occupations (e.g. shop assistants).

*Can I help you, **madam**?* →

Some schoolchildren call their teachers *sir* or *miss*. In British English, *Dear Sir* and *Dear Madam*, *Dear Sir or Madam* and *Dear Sir/Madam* are common ways of beginning letters to strangers (► 289) – note the capital letters. In other situations *sir* and *madam* are unusual in British English.

Excuse me. Can you tell me the time? (NOT ~~*Excuse me, sir*~~ . . .)

In American English, *sir* and *ma'am* are quite often used (especially in the South and West) when addressing people, both formally and informally.

3 notes on titles

Abbreviated titles like *Mr*, *Mrs* and *Dr* are generally written without full stops in British English, and more often with full stops (*Mr.*, *Mrs.*, *Dr.*) in American English (► 336).

Note the pronunciations of the titles *Mr*, *Mrs* and *Ms* (used before names):

Mr /ˈmɪstə(r)/ *Mrs* /ˈmɪsɪz/ *Ms* /mɪz/ OR /məz/

Mr (= *Mister*) is not normally written in full, and the other two cannot be.

Like *Mr*, *Ms* does not show whether somebody is married or not. It is often used, especially in writing, to talk about or address women when one does not know (or has no reason to say) whether they are married. Many women also choose to use *Ms* before their own names in preference to *Mrs* or *Miss*.

Dr (= *Doctor*) is used as a title for medical and other doctors.

Professor does not simply mean 'teacher'. It is a title reserved for university teachers (especially, in Britain, for more senior university teachers).

Note that we do not normally combine two titles such as *Prof Dr* or *Mrs Dr*.

For ways of addressing people in letters, ► 289. For ways of introducing people, ► 329.1.

327 names: *Florence, Homer,* etc

1 cities

The names of cities are often different in different languages – for example the capital of Denmark, *København*, is called *Kopenhagen* in German, *Copenhague* in French, and *Copenhagen* in Italian and English. Some examples of English names for cities:

Antwerp, Athens, Beirut, Belgrade, Bombay (now usually *Mumbai*), *Brussels, Bucharest, Calcutta* (now usually *Kolkata*), *Cologne, Damascus, Florence, Geneva, Genoa, The Hague, Hanover, Jerusalem, Leghorn* (now more usually *Livorno*), *Lisbon, Lyons* (now more usually *Lyon*), *Marseilles* (now more usually *Marseille*), *Milan, Moscow, Munich, Naples, Oporto, Padua, Peking* (now usually *Beijing*), *Prague, Rome, St Petersburg, Seville, Thessalonica, Turin, Venice, Vienna, Warsaw*

2 classical names

The same is true of many classical Greek and Roman names. Some examples:

Homer, Aeschylus, Livy, Horace, Ovid, Virgil, Aesop, Aristotle, Euclid, Sophocles, Mercury, Jupiter, Helen, Troy, Odysseus

3 artists

The Italian artists Raffaello Sanzio and Tiziano are called *Raphael* and *Titian* in English.

4 countries

The names of countries, of course, also differ from one language to another (for example *Deutschland* is called *Germany* in English; its neighbours call it, for instance, *Allemagne*, *Tyskland* or *Niemcy*). English versions are not listed here, as they are well known and can easily be found in any dictionary if needed.

328 gender (references to males and females)

English does not have many problems of grammatical gender. Usually, people are *he* or *she* and things are *it*. Note the following points.

1 animals, cars, ships and countries

People sometimes call animals *he* or *she*, especially when they are thought of as having personality, intelligence or feelings. This is common with pets and domestic animals like cats, dogs and horses.

*Once upon a time there was a rabbit called Joe. **He** lived . . .*
*Go and find the cat and put **her** out.*

In these cases, *who* is often used instead of *which*.

*She had an old dog **who** always slept in her bed.*

Some people use *she* for cars, motorbikes, etc; sailors often use *she* for boats and ships (but most other people use *it*).

*'How's your new car?' 'Terrific. **She**'s running beautifully.'*
*The ship's struck a rock. **She**'s sinking!*

We can use *she* for countries, but *it* is more common in modern English.

*Norway has decided to increase **its** trade with Romania.*(OR . . . ***her** trade . . .*)

2 *he or she*

Traditionally, English used *he/him/his* when the sex of a person was not known, or in references that could apply to either men or women, especially in a formal style.

*If I ever find the person who did that, I'll kill **him**.*
*If a student is ill, **he** must send **his** medical certificate to the College office.*

This usage is now widely regarded as sexist, and is generally avoided. *He or she, him or her* and *his or her* (also *he/she, him/her, his/her*) are common alternatives, especially in a formal style.

*If a student is ill, **he or she** must send a medical certificate . . .*

3 singular *they*

They is often used to mean 'he or she', especially after indefinite words like *somebody, anybody, nobody, person*. This usage is sometimes considered 'incorrect', but it has been common in educated speech for centuries. For details, ► 175.

*If anybody wants my ticket, **they** can have it.*
*'There's somebody at the door.' 'Tell **them** I'm out.'*
*When a person gets married, **they** have to start thinking about **their** responsibilities.*

→

4 *actor* and *actress*, etc

A few jobs and positions have different words for men and women. Examples:

Man	Woman	Man	Woman
actor	*actress*	*monk*	*nun*
(bride)groom	*bride*	*policeman*	*policewoman*
duke	*duchess*	*prince*	*princess*
hero	*heroine*	*steward*	*stewardess*
host	*hostess*	*waiter*	*waitress*
manager	*manageress*	*widower*	*widow*

A *mayor* can be a man or a woman; in Britain a *mayoress* is the wife of a male mayor.

The use of separate terms for women's roles is often felt to be discriminatory or sexist, and some of the words listed above are going out of use. *Actor, hero* and *manager* are now commonly used for women as well as men. *Police officer* is replacing *policeman/policewoman*, and *flight attendant* is replacing *steward/stewardess*.

5 words ending in *-man*

Some words ending in *-man* do not have a common feminine equivalent (e.g. *chairman, fireman, spokesman*). As many people consider it inappropriate to call a woman, for example, 'chairman' or 'spokesman', these words are now often avoided in references to women or in general references to people of either sex. In many cases, *-person* is now used instead of *-man*.

Alice has just been elected ***chairperson*** (OR ***chair***) *of our committee.*

A ***spokesperson*** *said that the Minister does not intend to resign.*

In some cases, new words ending in *-woman* (e.g. *spokeswoman*) are coming into use. But it is now common practice to choose words, even for men, which are not gender-marked (e.g. *supervisor* instead of *foreman, ambulance staff* instead of *ambulance men, firefighter* instead of *fireman*).

6 *man*

Man and *mankind* have traditionally been used for the human race.

Why does ***man*** *have more diseases than animals?*

That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for ***mankind.*** (Neil Armstrong, on stepping onto the moon)

This is now generally considered sexist, and preferred terms are *people, humanity* or *the human race*. Note also the common use of *synthetic* instead of *man-made*.

For more about discriminatory language, ► 335.1.

329 'social' language

Every language has fixed expressions which are used on particular social occasions – for example when people meet, leave each other, go on a journey, sit down to meals and so on. Here are some of the most important English expressions of this kind.

1 introductions

Common ways of introducing strangers to each other are:

Jack, do you know Ella? Ella, this is my friend Jack.
Sophie, I don't think you've met Laura.
I don't think you two know each other, do you?
Can/May I introduce Ben Willis? (more formal)

When people are introduced, they may say *Pleased/Nice to meet you.* (formal), or *Hello/Hi* (informal). Americans often say *How are you?*
People who are introduced often shake hands.

For the use of first names, surnames and titles, ► 326.

2 greetings

When getting together with people (formal):

(Good) morning/afternoon/evening.

When getting together with people (informal):

Hello. *Hi.* (very informal)

When leaving people:

Goodnight. *Goodbye.*
Bye. (informal) *Bye-bye.* (often used to and by children)
Cheers. (informal – British only) *Take care.* (informal)
See you. (informal) *See you later / tomorrow / next week*, etc (informal)
It was nice to meet / meeting you.

Note that *Good day* is very unusual (except in Australian English in its colloquial form *G'day*), and *Goodnight* is used only when leaving people, not when getting together with them.

3 asking about health, etc

When we meet people we know, we often ask politely about their health or their general situation.

How are you? *How's it going?* (informal)
How are things? / How's things? (informal) *How (are) you doing?*

Formal answers:

Very well, thank you. And you? *Fine, thank you.*

Informal answers:

Fine/Great, thanks. *All right.* *(It) could be worse.*
OK *Not too bad.* *Mustn't grumble.* (BrE)
So-so. (NOT ~~*So and so.*~~) *(I'm) good.* *Can't complain.*

British people do not usually ask *How are you?* when they are introduced to people. And neither British nor American people begin letters to strangers by asking about health (► 289).

4 special greetings

Greetings for special occasions are:

Happy birthday! (OR *Many happy returns!*)
Happy New Year / Easter!
Happy/Merry Christmas! *Happy anniversary!*
Congratulations on your exam results / new job, etc (NOT ~~*Congratulation on . . .*~~)
→

5 small talk

British people often begin polite conversations by talking about the weather.
'Nice day, isn't it?' 'Lovely.'

6 getting people's attention

Excuse me! is commonly used to attract somebody's attention, or to call a waiter in a restaurant. We do not normally say *Excuse me, sir/madam* (► 326.2 b).

7 apologies

British people say *Excuse me* before interrupting or disturbing somebody, and *Sorry* after doing so. Compare:
***Excuse me.** Could I get past? Oh, **sorry**, did I step on your foot?*
***Excuse me**, could you tell me the way to the station?*
Americans also use *Excuse me* to apologise after disturbing somebody.
I beg your pardon is a more formal way of saying 'Sorry'.
***I beg your pardon.** I didn't realise this was your seat.*

8 asking people to repeat

If people do not hear or understand what is said, they may say *Sorry?* (BrE), *What?* (informal, not very polite), *(I beg your) pardon?* or *Pardon me?* (AmE).
*'Mike's on the phone.' '**Sorry?**' 'I said Mike's on the phone.'*
*'See you tomorrow.' '**What?**' 'See you tomorrow.'*
*'You're going deaf.' '**I beg your pardon?**'*

9 journeys, etc

Common ways of wishing people a good journey are:
Have a good/nice trip. *Have a good journey.* (BrE)
Safe journey home. (BrE)
After a journey (for example when we meet people at the airport or station), we may say:
Did you have a good journey/trip/flight?
How was the journey/trip/flight?
If somebody is leaving for an evening out or some kind of pleasant event, people might say *Have a good time!* or *Enjoy yourself!* (especially in American English sometimes just *Enjoy!*). *Good luck!* is used before examinations or other difficult or dangerous events.
When people return home, their friends or family may say *Welcome back/home.*

10 holidays

Before somebody starts a holiday, we may say:
Have a good/nice holiday (AmE *. . . vacation*). OR *Have a good/nice time.*
When the holiday is over, we may say:
Did you have a good/nice holiday/vacation?

11 meals

We do not have fixed expressions for the beginnings and ends of meals. It is common for guests or family members to say something complimentary about the food during the meal (for example *This is very nice*), and after (for example

That was lovely/delicious; thank you very much). Some religious people say 'grace' (a short prayer) before and after meals. Waiters often say *Enjoy your meal* or just *Enjoy* after serving a customer.

For the names of meals, ► 330.

12 drinking

When people begin drinking alcoholic drinks socially, they often raise their glasses and say something. Common expressions are *Cheers!* (BrE) and *Your health!* (AmE also *To your health*). When we drink to celebrate an occasion (such as a birthday, a wedding or a promotion), we often say *Here's to . . .!*

***Here's to** Lily!* ***Here's to** the new job!* ***Here's to** the happy couple!*

13 sending good wishes

Typical expressions are *Give my best wishes/regards/greetings/love to X, Remember me to X, Say hello to X for me.* When the wishes are passed on, common expressions are *X sends his/her best wishes/regards*, etc, *X says hello.*

14 sympathy

Common formulae in letters of sympathy (for example on somebody's death) are *I was very/terribly/extremely sorry to hear about . . .* and *Please accept my deepest sympathy.*

15 invitations and visits

Invitations often begin:

Would you like to . . .?

Possible replies:

Thank you very/so much. That would be very nice/lovely. (formal)
Thanks, that would be great. (informal)
Sorry. I'm afraid I'm not free.

It is normal to thank people for hospitality at the moment of leaving their places.

Thank you very/so much. That was a wonderful evening.

16 offers and replies

Offers often begin *Would you like . . .?* or *Can/May I get/offer you . . .?* (more formal). Offers to do things for people can begin *Would you like me to . . .?, Can/May I . . .?* or *Shall I . . .?* (mainly BrE). Typical replies are *Yes, please; No, thank you; Thanks, I'd love some; I'd love to; That's very nice/kind of you.* Note that *thank you* can be used for accepting as well as refusing.

17 asking for things

We normally ask for things by using *yes/no* questions. (► 310).

***Could you** lend me a pen?* (NOT ~~*Please lend me a pen.*~~)

18 handing over things

We do not have an expression which is automatically used when we hand over things. We sometimes say *Here you are*, especially when we want to attract people's attention to the fact that we are passing something to them.

*'Have you got a map of London?' 'I think so. Yes, **here you are.**' 'Thanks.'*

There you go is also possible in this situation, especially in AmE. →

19 thanks

Common ways of thanking people are:

Thank you.	*Thanks very much / a lot.* (NOT ~~*Thank you a lot.*~~)
Thank you very much.	*Cheers.* (informal BrE)
Thanks. (informal)	*Thank you so much.*

Possible replies to thanks are:

Not at all. (formal)	*You're welcome.*
Don't mention it.	*That's (quite) all right.*
That's OK. (informal)	*No problem.* (informal)

Note that British people do not always reply to thanks, especially thanks for small things.

For more information about thanking and the use of *please*, ► 556.

20 sleep

When somebody goes to bed, people often say *Sleep well.* In the morning, we may ask *Did you sleep well?* or *How did you sleep?*

For expressions used when telephoning, ► 331.

330 meals

There are regional and social differences in the names for meals.

1 British usage

a midday: *dinner* or *lunch*

The midday meal is often called *dinner*, especially if it is the main meal of the day. People who are 'higher' in the social scale usually call it *lunch*. *Lunch* is also the normal term used by most people for a light midday snack or packed meal.

b afternoon: *tea*

(*Afternoon*) *tea* (a light meal of tea with biscuits and cakes, taken at four or five o'clock in the afternoon) is now very unusual, though it is often served in hotels.

c early evening: sometimes *(high) tea* or *supper*

Many people have a cooked meal around five or six o'clock. This is often called *tea* or *high tea*; some people call it *supper*.

d later evening: *supper* or *dinner*

A meal later in the evening is often called *supper* (and some people use the same word for a bedtime snack). Some people use *dinner* for the evening meal if it is the main meal of the day. A more formal evening meal with guests, or in a restaurant, is usually called *dinner*.

2 American usage

Americans generally use *lunch* for the midday meal and *dinner* or *supper* for the evening meal. Celebration meals at Christmas and Thanksgiving are called *Christmas/Thanksgiving dinner*, even if they are eaten at midday.

331 telephoning

1 answering a phone

People answering a private phone either say *Hello* or give their name. People answering a business phone most often give their name.

'Hello.'
'Albert Packard.'

2 asking for a person

Could I speak to Megan Horrabin? (AmE also *Could I speak **with** . . .?*)

3 saying who you are

*Hello, **this is** Corinne.* (NOT USUALLY . . . ~~*I'm Corinne.*~~)
*'Could I speak to Megan Horrabin?' '**Speaking**.'*
OR *'**This is** Megan Horrabin (speaking).'*

4 asking who somebody is

*Who is **that**?* (AmE *Who is **this**?*)
Who am I speaking to?
Who is that speaking?
Who's calling, please?

5 asking for a number

***Can/Could I have** extension two oh four six?*
*What's the **dialling code** / **area code** for Bristol?*
*What's the **country code** for Portugal?*
*How do I get an **outside line**?*

6 if you want the other person to pay for the call

*I'd like to make a **reverse*** (OR ***transferred***) ***charge call** to 0449 437878.*
(AmE *I'd like to make a **collect call** . . .*)

7 if somebody is not there

I'm afraid she's not in at the moment.
Can I take a message?
Can I leave a message?
Please leave your message after the tone.
I'll ring/call again later. (AmE *I'll call . . .*)
Could you ask her to ring/call me back?
Could you ask her to ring/call me at/on 637022?
Could you just tell her Jake called?

8 asking people to wait

Just a moment.
Hold on a moment, please.
Hold the line, please.
May I put you on hold?
I'll just put you on hold.
Hang on. (informal)

→

9 things a switchboard operator may say

One moment, please. *(The number's) ringing for you.*
(I'm) trying to connect you. *(I'm) putting you through now.*
I'm afraid the number/line is engaged (BrE) */ busy* (AmE). *Will you hold?*
I'm afraid there's no reply from this number / from her extension.

10 wrong number

I think you've got the ***wrong number.***
I'm sorry. I've got the ***wrong number.***

11 problems

Could you speak louder? It's a bad line (BrE) */ bad connection.*
You're breaking up. *I'll call again.* *I was/got cut off.*
I rang/called you earlier but I couldn't get through.

332 idioms, collocations and formulaic expressions

1 What are idioms? *break even; a can of worms*

An expression like *turn up* (meaning 'arrive'), *break even* (meaning 'make neither a profit nor a loss') or *a can of worms* (meaning 'a complicated problem') can be difficult to understand, because its meaning is different from the meanings of the separate words in the expression. (If you know *break* and *even*, this does not help you at all to understand *break even*.) Expressions like these are called '**idioms**'. Idioms are usually special to one language and cannot be translated word for word (though related languages may share some idioms).

2 verbs with particles or prepositions: *bring up; look after*

Common short verbs like *bring, come, do, get, give, go, have, keep, make, put,* and *take* are very often used with prepositions or adverb particles (e.g. *on, off, up, away*) to make two-word verbs. These are called 'prepositional verbs' or 'phrasal verbs', and many of them are idiomatic.

Can you ***look after*** *the cats while I'm away?*
She just doesn't know how to ***bring up*** *children.*
I ***gave up*** *chemistry because I didn't like it.*

Many of these two-word verbs are especially common in informal speech and writing. Compare:

- *What time are you planning to* ***turn up?*** (informal)
  Please let us know when you plan to ***arrive.*** (more formal)
- *Just* ***keep on*** *till you* ***get to*** *the crossroads.* (informal)
  Continue as far as *the crossroads.* (formal)

For details of phrasal and prepositional verbs, ► 12–13.

3 collocations: *burning desire; blazing disagreement*

We can say *I fully understand*, but not *I fully like*; *I rather like*, but not *I rather understand*; *I firmly believe*, but not *I firmly think*. Somebody can be a *heavy smoker* or a *devoted friend*, but not *a devoted smoker* or *a heavy friend*. Expressions like these are also idiomatic, in a sense. They are easy to understand, but not so easy for a learner to produce correctly. One can think of many adjectives that might be used with *smoker* to say that somebody smokes a lot – for example *big, strong, hard, fierce, mad, devoted*. It just happens that English speakers have chosen to use *heavy*, and one has to know this in order to express the idea naturally and correctly. These conventional combinations of words are called '**collocations**', and all languages have large numbers of them. Some more examples:

a crashing bore (BUT NOT ~~*a crashing nuisance*~~)
a burning desire (BUT NOT ~~*a blazing desire*~~)
a blazing disagreement (BUT NOT ~~*a burning disagreement*~~)
highly reliable (BUT NOT ~~*highly old*~~)
a golden opportunity (BUT NOT ~~*a golden chance*~~)
change one's mind (BUT NOT ~~*change one's thoughts*~~)
Thanks a lot. (BUT NOT ~~*Thank you a lot.*~~)

4 formulaic expressions: *Sorry I kept you waiting.*

The expressions that are used in typical everyday situations are often idiomatic in the same sense. With the help of a dictionary and a grammar, one could invent various possible ways of expressing a particular common idea, but generally there are only one or two ways that happen to be used by English speakers, and one has to know what they are in order to speak or write naturally. Some examples:

Could you check the oil? (More natural than *Could you inspect the oil?* OR *Could you see how much oil there is in the engine?*)
Is it a direct flight or do I have to change? (More natural than *Does the plane go straight there or do I have to get another one?*)
Sorry I kept you waiting. (More natural than *Sorry I made you wait.*)
Could I reserve a table for three for eight o'clock? (More natural than *Could you keep me a table for three persons for eight o'clock?*)

Other formulaic expressions are used as parts of sentences – useful introductions, conclusions or frames for the things that people want to say.

Let me know when/where/what/how . . .
The best thing would be to . . . (do something) *as a favour*
The point is . . . *. . . is more trouble than it's worth.*
I wouldn't be surprised if . . . *I'll . . . on condition that you . . .*

5 using idioms, collocations and fixed expressions.

Idioms, collocations and formulaic expressions are common in all kinds of English, formal and informal, spoken and written. Informal spoken language is often very idiomatic.

Students should not worry because they do not know all the expressions of this kind that are commonly used by English speakers. There are enormous numbers of them, and they can take years to learn. If students use non-idiomatic ways of →

expressing ideas, they will normally be understood, and English speakers do not expect foreigners to speak perfect natural English. It is therefore not necessary for students to make great efforts to memorise idioms, collocations, etc: they will learn the most common ones naturally along with the rest of their English. In particular, note that books of idioms often contain expressions which are slangy, rare or out of date, and which students should avoid unless they understand exactly how and when the expressions are used. This is especially true of colourful idioms like, for example, *raining cats and dogs, as cross as two sticks* (= angry) or *kick the bucket* (= die). If students try consciously to fill their speech and writing with such expressions the effect will probably be very strange.
It is, however, helpful for learners to have a good up-to-date dictionary of collocations (for example the *Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English*) in order to become aware of the most common word combinations.

For more about formal and informal language, ► 281. For slang, ► 334.

333 formal and informal vocabulary

Some words and expressions are used mainly in formal situations; in neutral or informal situations other words or expressions are used. And some words and expressions are only used in informal situations. Some examples:

- FORMAL: *commence*
  NEUTRAL/INFORMAL: *begin, start*
- FORMAL: *alight* (from a bus or train)
  NEUTRAL/INFORMAL: *get off*
- FORMAL: *I beg your pardon?*
  NEUTRAL/INFORMAL: *Pardon? Sorry?* (AmE *Excuse me? Pardon me?*)
  INFORMAL: *What?*
- FORMAL: *repair*
  NEUTRAL/INFORMAL: *mend* (BrE)
  INFORMAL: *fix*
- FORMAL: *acceptable, satisfactory*
  NEUTRAL/INFORMAL: *all right*
  INFORMAL: *OK*
- FORMAL: *I am (very) grateful to you.*
  NEUTRAL/INFORMAL: *Thank you.*
  INFORMAL: *Thanks.*
- FORMAL: *conceal*
  NEUTRAL/INFORMAL: *hide*
- FORMAL: *construct*
  NEUTRAL/INFORMAL: *build*
- FORMAL: *enquire*
  NEUTRAL/INFORMAL: *ask*
- FORMAL: *purchase*
  NEUTRAL: *buy*
  INFORMAL: *get, pick up*

For more about formal and informal language, ► 281.
For formal and informal ways of using people's names and titles, ► 326.
For the language used in particular social situations, ► 329. For slang, ► 334.

334 slang

1 What is slang?

'Slang' is a very informal kind of vocabulary, used mostly in speech by people who know each other well. Examples (mainly British English):

*Can you lend me some **cash?*** ('money')
*My shoelace has **bust.*** ('broken')
*He's a real **prat.*** ('fool')
*Those boots are real **cool.*** ('fashionable')
*Let's **chill.*** ('relax')
*How are the **kids?*** ('children')

2 strong feelings

Many English slang expressions relate to things that people feel strongly about (e.g. sex, family and emotional relationships, drink, drugs, conflict between social groups, work, physical and mental illness, death).

*I spent the weekend at my **gran's.*** ('grandmother's')
*I've got some sort of **bug.*** ('illness')
*He's **lost it.*** ('gone mad')
*Shut your **trap!*** ('mouth')
*Let's **swap** addresses.* ('exchange')
*Somebody's **pinched/nicked** my scarf.* ('stolen')
*There's **muck** all over the carpet.* ('dirt')
*I'm not going to go on reading this **trash.*** ('rubbish')
*Where's the **loo?*** ('toilet')

Slang can be offensive (accidentally or deliberately) if used in a context where more formal language would be normal. This is particularly the case with 'taboo' language: words for subjects that some people find shocking.

3 group membership; using slang

Many slang expressions (e.g. *cash*, *kids*) are widely used. However, many other slang expressions are only used by members of particular social and professional groups, and nearly all slang is used between people who know each other well or share the same social background. So it is usually a mistake for 'outsiders' (including foreigners) to try deliberately to use slang. This can give the impression that they are claiming membership of a group that they do not belong to. There is also the danger that the slang may be out of date – some kinds of slang go out of fashion quickly, and when it gets into books it may already be dead. It is best for learners to avoid slang unless they are really sure of its use. If they start becoming accepted as part of an English-speaking community, they will learn to use the community's slang naturally and correctly along with the rest of their language.

335 discriminatory and offensive language

The words and expressions described in this entry are generally offensive: their use can upset or insult people. They are included here because they are elements of English, and it is not the job of a usage guide to conceal aspects of the language. However, students should realise that if they use language of this kind, they are liable to offend and upset the people they are talking to. They are also likely to give their listeners or readers the impression that they are insensitive, prejudiced, intolerant, uneducated or worse.

1 false generics

One kind of discriminatory language involves 'false generics' – words that suggest that all people in a certain category, are, for example, exclusively male or female. Talking in general about 'firemen', for instance, implies that all firefighters are men, which is clearly not the case. Some examples:

false generics	**inclusive language**
ambulance men	*ambulance staff, paramedics*
chairman	*chair, chairperson*
cleaning lady	*cleaner*
fireman	*firefighter*
foreman	*supervisor*
mailman (AmE)	*mail carrier* (AmE)
male/female (on a form)	*male / female / prefer not to say*
man-hours	*staff hours*
man-made	*synthetic, manufactured*
man, mankind	*humanity, the human race*
manning	*staffing*
manpower	*human resources, employees*
policeman/men	*police officer(s)*
postman/men (BrE)	*postal worker(s)* (BrE)
steward/stewardess	*flight attendant*
waiters/waitresses	*restaurant staff, servers*

False generics are falling out of use in English, even to speak about individuals – so an individual fireman might well be described in a news report as a 'firefighter'.

A similar way of discriminating is to use a word or expression that is acceptable in one context, but that makes a person or an experience sound less serious or important. For example, a man's calling women he works with 'the girls in the office' is different from calling female children 'girls'. Talking about a 'salesgirl' instead of a *shop assistant* (BrE) or *salesperson* (AmE) is thus discriminatory in two ways at once.

2 offensive language

Other words and expressions are used to discriminate against particular groups – to present them as inferior or undesirable in one way or another. Common targets of discriminatory language are disability status, gender, sexual orientation, nationality and ethnicity. In some cases the offensive use of a term may be accidental – a speaker may not realise, for example, that disabled people prefer not to be called 'handicapped'. (Preferred words and expressions can change over time; to find out what term a group itself prefers, check on the internet.) At the other extreme, words like *dyke* or *nigger* are clearly only normally used to be deliberately offensive. Some examples:

offensive term	**preferred alternative**
cripple, handicapped person	*disabled person, person with a disability*
mental handicap	*mental/learning disability*
retarded, mentally handicapped	*having learning difficulties / a mental/learning disability*
disturbed, mad, crazy, nuts	*having a mental illness / health problem / health condition*
homo, queer	*gay*
dyke, lezzie, lezzo	*lesbian, gay woman*
fag, faggot (AmE)	*gay man*
sex change	*gender reassignment*
transsexual, trannie	*transgender person, trans person*
Chink	*Chinese person*
dago	*Spanish, Italian* OR *Portuguese person*
Frog	*Frenchman/woman*
gyppo, pikey	*Roma, traveller* (OR *Gypsy*)
Jap	*Japanese*
Kraut	*German*
nigger	*black person* (BrE), *African-American* (AmE)
Paki	*Pakistani*
Polack (AmE)	*Pole*
spic (AmE)	*Latin-American*
wog	*Middle-Eastern person*
wop	*Italian*
yid (AmE), *kike* (AmE)	*Jew*

When a neutral term is widely used to discriminate, it may come to be felt as offensive, leading to its rejection. This has happened with *Negro* (replaced by *black* or *African-American*), *Eskimo* (replaced by *Inuit*), *handicapped* (replaced by *disabled*) and *Mongol/Mongoloid/Mongolism* (replaced by *(having) Down's syndrome*). Some Roma people now also regard *Gypsy* as offensive.
Note that it may sometimes be acceptable for members of a group to call one another, for example, 'dyke' or 'nigger'. But of course it is not at all acceptable for people outside the group to use the word.

Section 30 Word Formation and Spelling

INTRODUCTION

abbreviations

Abbreviations – shortened forms of words and expressions – are useful time-savers. They can form an important part of the language of a professional or social group, but may be incomprehensible to outsiders. If an army officer says, for instance, 'RV at 1800, and tell the CSM to get that sitrep to the 2IC now', not all non-military people will understand that the officer wants people to assemble (*RV* = 'rendezvous') at 6 pm, and that the Company Sergeant-Major has to get a situation report to the Second-in-Command of the unit.
Ordinary non-professional language also contains large numbers of abbreviations, some formal (like *e.g.*, meaning 'for example'), and some informal (like *doc* for 'doctor'). It is important for language learners to be familiar with the most common of these.

prefixes and suffixes

It is also useful for learners to be aware of the most common prefixes and suffixes and their meanings, since this can help them to understand unfamiliar words. Knowing that *hydro-* means 'related to water', for instance, makes *hydroelectric* transparent. Many such prefixes and suffixes are derived from classical Greek or Latin, and a number of these are commonly used to form new words (e.g. *technophobe*, somebody who hates or fears technology, perhaps especially computers).

spelling

English spelling is difficult for three main reasons.

1 English has a large number of different sounds: speakers of standard British English distinguish around 21 different vowels and 24 different consonants in pronunciation. But the English alphabet only has 26 letters, with only six vowels, and English does not use written accents, so most spoken vowels have to be represented by combinations of written vowels such as *ea*, *ie*, *ou*.

2 After the Norman invasion in the 11th century, a large number of French words came into English, and these were written according to French spelling conventions rather than those that had been developed for old English. The resulting unsystematic mixture of spelling rules gradually became fixed, and has persisted into modern English.

3 English pronunciation has changed a great deal over the centuries, but spelling has not, in general, been revised accordingly. So spoken vowels are often written in ways that are now misleading (like the vowels in *women*), and many common words contain ghost consonants representing sounds that are no longer there (like the *gh* in *through*, *right*, *sigh* etc).
It is not only foreign learners who find English spelling difficult. Many English-speaking children have a hard time learning to read and write, and some do

not succeed. Indeed, even many highly educated adults have trouble with words like *necessary* or *accommodation*. Literacy would probably be greatly improved by a well-planned spelling reform.

However, English spelling does have some fairly regular patterns, and knowledge of these can help a good deal. The most important ones are explained in this Section.

For some notes on British-American spelling differences, ► 319.3.

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- ✗ I wonder why Daniel ha'snt written to us. ► 337.1
- ✗ 'Are you ready?' 'Yes, I'm.' ► 337.3
- ✗ 'Are you ready?' 'No, I amn't.' ► 337.4 note 2
- ✗ She travelled extensively in north africa. ► 341
- ✗ Professor Hawkins is a specialist in japanese history. ► 341
- ✗ The production was realy original. ► 345
- ✗ Their theory has been definitly disproved. ► 346
- ✗ He completly misunderstood my argument. ► 346
- ✗ The government could easyly be overthrown. ► 348
- ✗ Tragicly, the message never arrived. ► 339.4
- ✗ He should be made to apologise publically. ► 339.4
- ✗ The results caused no surprize. ► 343
- ✗ Too many people are out-of-work. ► 342
- ✗ I am hopping to see you soon. ► 347
- ✗ I will write again latter. ► 347
- ✗ Thank you for offerring to help. ► 347
- ✗ He did wonderful paintings of gallopping horses. ► 347
- ✗ This is the begining of the end. ► 347
- ✗ Please see illustration attatched. ► 349
- ✗ Steack has become extremly expensive. ► 349, 346
- ✗ I am looking forward to recieving your reply. ► 350
- ✗ The claim is hard to beleive. ► 350

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336 abbreviations

1 punctuation

Most abbreviations are generally written without full stops in modern British English. Full stops (AmE *periods*) are normal in American English.

Mr (AmE *Mr.*) = *Mister* (not usually written in full)
kg (AmE *kg.*) = *kilogram* *Ltd* = *Limited* (*company*)

2 initial-letter abbreviations

Some abbreviations are made from the first letters of several words. This often happens with the names of organisations.

the BBC = *the British Broadcasting Corporation*

These abbreviations are most often stressed on the last letter.

the BBC /ðə ˌbiː biː ˈsiː/ *the USA* /ðə ˌjuː es ˈeɪ/

If one of these abbreviations has an article (*a/an* or *the*), the form and pronunciation of the article depend on the pronunciation of the first letter of the abbreviation. Compare:

– ***an*** *EU country*
a *US diplomat* /ə juː . . ./ (NOT ~~*an US*~~ . . .)
– ***a*** *BA degree*
an *MP* /ən em . . ./ (NOT ~~*a MP*~~)
– ***the*** *USA* /ðə juː . . ./ (NOT /~~ðiː juː~~ . . ./)
the *RSPCA* /ðiː ɑːr . . ./ (NOT /~~ðə ɑːr~~ . . ./)

3 acronyms

Some initial-letter abbreviations are pronounced like words. These are often called **'acronyms'**. Articles are usually dropped in acronyms.

UNESCO /juːˈneskəʊ/ (NOT ~~*the UNESCO*~~) = *the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation*

Note that not all initial-letter abbreviations are pronounced as words.

the CIA /ˌsiː aɪ ˈeɪ/ (NOT /ˈ~~sɪə~~/) *the IRA* /ˌaɪ ɑːr ˈeɪ/ (NOT /ˈ~~aɪrə~~/)

4 plurals

An apostrophe (') is sometimes used before the *s* in the plurals of abbreviations.

MP's, CD's BUT more often *MPs, CDs.*

5 some common abbreviations

The following abbreviations are given in their common British form, without full stops. Some of them could also have full stops in British English, and most would have full stops in American English. This is a small selection of the very many abbreviations commonly used in English. For explanations of others, see a good dictionary.

AD (AmE *A.D.*)	after the birth of Christ (from Latin *anno domini*, 'in the year of the Lord', used before years)
Aids OR *AIDS*	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
am	in the morning (from Latin *ante meridiem*, 'before midday')
asap	as soon as possible

ATM	cash machine ('automated teller machine')
Aug	August
Ave	Avenue
b	born (in biographical dates)
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BA	British Airways
BC	before Christ (used before years)
BCE	before the Common Era (alternative to BC, now increasingly preferred)
BSc (BrE)	Bachelor of Science
C	Celsius, centigrade
Capt	Captain
CD	compact disc (e.g. for recorded music)
CE	Common Era (alternative to AD, now increasingly preferred)
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (the United States external security service)
cl	centilitre(s)
cm	centimetre(s)
c/o	care of (in addresses, meaning 'living at X's house')
Co	Company
Col	Colonel
Corp	Corporation
Cpl	Corporal
cu	cubic
CV (BrE)	summary of career (from Latin *curriculum vitae*, equivalent of AmE *résumé*)
d	died (in biographical dates)
Dec	December
dept	department
DIY	do it yourself
DNA	deoxyribonucleic acid
Dr	Doctor
DVD	digital versatile disc, digital videodisc
E	east(ern)
ed	edited (by), editor
e.g.	for example (from Latin *exempli gratia*)
ETA	estimated time of arrival
etc	and so on (from Latin *et cetera*, 'and other things')
EU	European Union
F	Fahrenheit
FAQ	frequently asked questions
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation (the United States national police force)
Feb	February
ft	foot, feet (in measurements)
gal	gallon(s)
GB	Great Britain; gigabyte(s)
Gen	General

GMT	Greenwich Mean Time
GNP	gross national product
govt	government
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
hr	hour(s)
i.e.	in other words (from Latin *id est*, 'that is')
in	inch(es)
Inc	Incorporated
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IT	information technology
Jan	January
Jr	Junior
kg	kilogram(s)
km	kilometre(s)
kph	kilometres per hour
lb	pound(s) in weight (from Latin *libra(e)*)
LCD	liquid crystal display
LED	light-emitting diode
Lt	Lieutenant
Ltd	Limited
m	metre(s)
MA	Master of Arts
MD (BrE)	Managing Director
mg	milligram(s)
MI5	the Security Service (concerned with information from inside Britain)
MI6	the Secret Intelligence Service (concerned with information from outside Britain)
min	minute(s)
ml	millilitre(s)
mm	millimetre(s)
MP	Member of Parliament
mph	miles per hour
Mt	Mount
N	north(ern)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NE	north-east(ern)
NHS	National Health Service
No	number
Nov	November
NW	north-west(ern)
Oct	October
oz	ounce(s)
PA	personal assistant
PC	personal computer; police constable
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PM	Prime Minister
pm	in the afternoon (from Latin *post meridiem*, 'after midday')
Prof	Professor

PS	addition to a written message (from Latin *post scriptum*, 'written afterwards')
pt	pint
Rd	Road
RIP	Rest in Peace (from Latin *requiesca(n)t in pace*, 'May he/she/they rest in peace.')
rpm	revolutions per minute
RSVP	Please reply (on invitations, from French *Répondez s'il vous plaît.*)
S	south(ern)
SE	south-east(ern)
sec	second(s)
Sept	September
Sgt	Sergeant
Sq	Square (in place names)
sq	square (in measurements)
St	Street; Saint
SW	south-west(ern)
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNESCO OR *Unesco*	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
uni	university
Univ	University
US	United States
USA	United States of America
VAT	value added tax
VIP	very important person
vol	volume
v; ALSO (especially AmE) *vs*/*vs.*	against (especially in sporting events, from Latin *versus*)
W	west(ern)
WHO	World Health Organisation
www	world-wide web
yd	yard(s)

For abbreviations used in some electronic messages (e.g. *hope 2 c u* for *hope to see you*), ► 290.

337 contractions: *I'll*, *don't*, etc

1 general rules

Contractions are forms like *I've*, *don't*, in which an auxiliary verb is combined with another word. There are two kinds.

noun/pronoun, etc + (auxiliary) verb

***I'm** tired.* *My **father's** not very well.*
*Do you know when **you'll** arrive?* *Where's the station?*
I've no idea. *There's a problem.* *She'd like to talk to you.*
Somebody's coming. *Here's our bus.*

(auxiliary) verb + *not*

*They **aren't** ready.* *I **haven't** seen him for ages.*
*You **won't** be late, will you?* ***Can't** you swim?*

Contractions are formed with auxiliary verbs, and also with *be* and sometimes *have* when these are not auxiliary verbs.

The short form *'s* (= *is*/*has*) can be written after nouns (including proper names), question words, *here* and *now* as well as pronouns and unstressed *there*.

The short forms *'ll*, *'d* and *'re* are commonly written after pronouns and unstressed *there*, but in other cases we more often write the full forms (especially in British English), even if the words would be contracted in pronunciation.

*'Your **mother will*** (/ˈmʌðərl/) *be surprised', she said.*
*I wondered **what had*** (/ˈwɒtəd/) *happened.*

Contractions are not usually written with double subjects.

***Jack and I have** decided to split up.* (NOT ~~*Jack and I've decided*~~ . . .)

The apostrophe (') goes in the same place as the letters that we leave out: *has not* = ***hasn't*** (NOT ~~*ha'snt*~~). But note that *shan't* (BrE = *shall not*) and *won't* (= 'will not') only have one apostrophe each.

Contractions are common and correct in informal writing: they represent the pronunciation of informal speech. They are not generally used in a formal style.

2 alternative contractions

Some negative expressions can have two possible contractions. For *she had not* we can say *she hadn't* or *she'd not*; for *he will not* we can say *he won't* or *he'll not*. The two negative forms of *be* (e.g. *she isn't* and *she's not*) are both common. With other verbs, forms with *n't* (e.g. *she hadn't*) are more common in most cases in standard southern British English; they are the only forms normally used in American English. (Forms with *not* – e.g. *she'd not* – tend to be more common in northern and Scottish English.)

Double contractions are not normally written: ~~*she'sn't*~~ is impossible.

3 position

Contractions in the first group (**noun** / **pronoun** / **question word** + **auxiliary verb**) do not normally come at the ends of clauses. Compare:

– *I'm late.*
Yes, you are. (NOT ~~*Yes, you're.*~~)
– *I've forgotten.*
Yes, you have. (NOT ~~*Yes, you've.*~~)

Negative contractions can come at the ends of clauses.

*They really **aren't**.* *No, I **haven't**.*

4 list of contractions

Strong and weak forms (► 315) are given where appropriate.

Contraction	Pronunciation	Meaning
I'm	/aɪm/	I am
I've	/aɪv/	I have
I'll	/aɪl/	I will
I'd	/aɪd/	I had/would
you're	/jʊə(r); jɔː(r); jə(r)/	you are
you've	/juːv; jəv/	you have

Contraction	Pronunciation	Meaning
you'll	/juːl; jəl/	you will
you'd	/juːd; jəd/	you had/would
he's	/hiːz; hɪz/	he is/has
he'll	/hiːl; hɪl/	he will
he'd	/hiːd; hɪd/	he had/would
she's	/ʃiːz; ʃɪz/	she is/has
she'll	/ʃiːl; ʃɪl/	she will
she'd	/ʃiːd; ʃɪd/	she had/would
it's	/ɪts/	it is/has
it'd (uncommon)	/ˈɪtəd/	it had/would
we're	/wɪə(r)/	we are
we've	/wiːv; wɪv/	we have
we'll	/wiːl; wɪl/	we will
we'd	/wiːd; wɪd/	we had/would
they're	/ðeə(r); ðe(r)/	they are
they've	/ðeɪv; ðev/	they have
they'll	/ðeɪl; ðel/	they will
they'd	/ðeɪd; ðed/	they had/would
there's	/ðeəz; ðəz/	there is/has
there'll	/ðeəl; ðəl/	there will
there'd	/ðeəd; ðəd/	there had/would
aren't	/ɑːnt/	are not
can't	/kɑːnt/	cannot
couldn't	/ˈkʊdnt/	could not
daren't	/deənt/	dare not
didn't	/ˈdɪdnt/	did not
doesn't	/ˈdʌznt/	does not
don't	/dəʊnt/	do not
hadn't	/ˈhædnt/	had not
hasn't	/ˈhæznt/	has not
haven't	/ˈhævnt/	have not
isn't	/ˈɪznt/	is not
mightn't	/ˈmaɪtnt/	might not
mustn't	/ˈmʌsnt/	must not
needn't	/ˈniːdnt/	need not
oughtn't	/ˈɔːtnt/	ought not
shan't	/ʃɑːnt/	shall not
shouldn't	/ˈʃʊdnt/	should not
usedn't	/ˈjuːsnt/	used not
wasn't	/ˈwɒznt/	was not
weren't	/wɜːnt/	were not
won't	/wəʊnt/	will not
wouldn't	/ˈwʊdnt/	would not

Notes

1 Do not confuse *it's* (= *it is/has*) and *its* (possessive).

2 *Am not* is only normally contracted in questions to *aren't* (/ɑːnt/).
I'm late, aren't I?

3 Note the difference in pronunciation of *can't* in British English (/kɑːnt/) and American English (/kænt/).

4 *Daren't, mightn't, oughtn't, shan't* and *usedn't* are rare, especially in American English; *needn't* is rare in American English.

5 In non-standard English, *ain't* (pronounced /eɪnt/) is used as a contraction of *am not, are not, is not, have not* and *has not.*

I ain't going to tell him. Don't talk to me like that – you ain't my boss.
'It's raining.' 'No it ain't.'
I ain't got no more cigarettes.
James ain't been here for days.

6 For the contraction *let's*, ► 225.

7 *May not* is not normally contracted: *mayn't* is very rare.

338 prefixes and suffixes

The following are some of the most common and useful English prefixes and suffixes.

1 prefixes

prefix	mainly added to	usual meaning	examples
a-	adj.	not, without	*amoral, asexual*
Anglo-	adj.	English	*Anglo-American*
ante-	adj., verbs, nouns	before	*antenatal, antedate, anteroom*
anti-	adj., nouns	against	*antisocial, anti-war*
arch-	nouns	supreme, most	*archbishop, arch-enemy*
auto-	adj., nouns	self	*automatic, autobiography*
bi-	adj., nouns	two	*bilingual, bicycle*
bio-	adj., nouns	life	*biodegradable, biochemist*
cent(i)-	nouns	hundredth	*centimetre, centilitre*
co-	verbs, nouns	together (with)	*co-operate, co-pilot*
counter-	adj., verbs, nouns	against	*counteract, counter-revolution(ary)*
cyber-	nouns	computer, internet	*cybercrime, cyberculture*
de-	verbs verbs	reversing action take away	*defrost, deregulate* *deforest*

prefix	mainly added to	usual meaning	examples
dis-	adj., verbs, nouns	not, opposite	*disloyal, disappear, disorder*
	verbs	reversing action	*disconnect, disinfect*
e-	nouns	electronic, internet	*email, e-commerce, e-book*
eco-	adj., nouns	environment	*eco-friendly, eco-tourism*
en-	nouns	put in	*endanger, encircle*
	adj.	make	*enrich, enable*
Euro-	adj., nouns	European	*Eurocentric, Europop*
ex-	nouns	former	*ex-husband*
extra-	adj.	exceptionally	*extra-special*
	adj.	outside	*extra-terrestrial*
fore-	verbs, nouns	before	*foretell, foreknowledge*
geo-	adj., nouns	earth	*geothermal, geophysics*
hyper-	adj., nouns	extreme(ly)	*hypercritical, hypertension*
ill-	past participles	badly	*ill-advised, ill-expressed*
in-	adj.	not, opposite	*incomplete, insensitive*
(*im-* before *p*)			*impossible*
(*il-* before *l*)			*illegible*
(*ir-* before *r*)			*irregular*
inter-	adj., verbs	between, among	*international, intermarry*
kilo-	nouns	thousand	*kilometre, kilogram*
mal-	adj., verbs, nouns	bad(ly)	*maltreat, malformed, malfunction*
mega-	nouns	million	*megabyte*
	adj. (informal)	extremely	*mega-rich*
micro-	adj., nouns	very small	*microlight (aircraft), micrometer*
mid-	nouns	in the middle of	*mid-December, mid-afternoon*
milli-	nouns	thousandth	*millisecond*
mini-	nouns	little	*minigolf, minicab*

prefix	mainly added to	usual meaning	examples
mis-	verbs, nouns	wrong(ly)	*misunderstand, misconduct*
mono-	adj., nouns	one	*monogamous, monorail*
multi-	adj., nouns	many	*multilingual, multi-purpose*
neo-	adj., nouns	new(ly)	*neo-classical, neo-Nazi*
non-	nouns, adj.	not	*non-smoker, non-returnable*
omni-	adj.	all	*omnipresent*
out-	verbs	do/be more than	*outrun, outnumber*
over-	adj., verbs	too much	*over-confident, overeat*
pan-	adj.	right across	*pan-American*
photo-	adj., nouns	light	*photoelectric, photosynthesis*
poly-	adj., nouns	many	*polyglot, polygon*
post-	adj., nouns	after	*post-modern, postwar*
pre-	adj., nouns	before	*premarital, prewar*
pro-	adj., nouns	for, in favour of	*pro-communist, pro-government* (adj.)
pseudo-	adj.	false	*pseudo-academic*
psycho-	adj., nouns	mind, mental	*psycho-analysis*
re-	verbs, nouns	again, back	*rebuild, reconstruction*
semi-	adj., nouns	half	*semi-conscious, semicircle*
socio-	adj., nouns	society	*socio-economic*
sub-	adj., nouns	below	*substandard, subconscious, subway*
super-	adj. nouns	more than, special	*supernatural, supermarket*
tele-	nouns	distant	*telescope*
thermo-	adj., nouns	heat	*thermo-electric, thermometer*

prefix	mainly added to	usual meaning	examples
trans-	adj., verbs	across	*transatlantic, transplant*
tri-	adj., nouns	three	*tripartite, triangle*
ultra-	adj., nouns	extreme, beyond	*ultra-modern, ultrasound*
un-	adj., participles	not, opposite	*uncertain, unexpected*
	verbs	reverse action	*untie, undress*
under-	verbs, participles	too little	*underestimate, under-developed*
uni-	adj., nouns	one	*unilateral, unicycle*
vice-	nouns	deputy	*vice-chairman*

2 suffixes that form nouns

suffix	mainly added to	usual meaning	examples
-age	verbs	instance of	*breakage, shrinkage*
-al	verbs	instance of	*refusal, dismissal*
-ance, -ancy	adj., verbs	process/state of	*reluctance, performance, expectancy*
-ation	verbs	process/state of	*exploration, starvation*
	verbs	product of	*organisation, foundation*
-ee	verbs	object of verb	*payee, employee*
-ence, -ency	adj., verbs	process/state of	*independence, presidency*
-er	nouns	belonging to	*teenager, Londoner*
-er/or	verbs	person/thing that does	*writer, driver, starter, editor*
-ess	nouns	female	*lioness, waitress*
-ette	nouns	small	*kitchenette*
-ful	nouns	amount held in	*spoonful, cupful*
-hood	nouns	quality, group, time of	*brotherhood, childhood*
-ing	nouns	quantity of material	*carpeting, tubing*
	nouns	activity	*farming, surfing*

→

suffix	mainly added to	usual meaning	examples
-ism	nouns	belief, practice	*communism, impressionism*
-ity	adj.	quality of	*elasticity, falsity*
-ment	verbs	process/result of	*government, arrangement*
-ness	adj.	quality of	*meanness, happiness*
-ocracy	nouns	government by	*democracy*
-ology	nouns	study of	*sociology*
-phile	nouns	lover of	*Anglophile*
-phobe	nouns	hater, fearer of	*Anglophobe*
-phobia	nouns	irrational fear of	*arachnophobia* (fear of spiders)
-ship	nouns	status, state, quality of	*friendship, dictatorship*

3 suffixes that form nouns or adjectives

suffix	mainly added to	usual meaning	examples
-ese	place nouns	inhabitant of, language of	*Chinese, Vietnamese*
-(i)an	nouns	supporter of, related to	*Darwinian, republican*
	nouns	citizen of	*Parisian, Moroccan*
-ist	nouns	practitioner of	*pianist, racist*

4 suffixes that form adjectives

suffix	mainly added to	usual meaning	examples
-able/-ible (▶ 344)	verbs	can be (done)	*washable, drinkable*
-al	nouns	related to	*accidental*
-centric	nouns	centred on	*Eurocentric*
-ed	nouns	having	*wooded, pointed, blue-eyed*
-ful	nouns	full of, providing	*useful, helpful*
-ic(al) (▶ 339)	nouns	related to	*artistic, typical*
-ish	adj., nouns place nouns	rather (like) inhabitant of, language of	*greenish, childish* *Scottish, Turkish*
-ive	verbs	can do, does	*attractive, selective*

suffix	mainly added to	usual meaning	examples
-less	nouns	without	*careless, homeless*
-like	nouns	like	*childlike*
-ly	nouns	with the quality of	*friendly, motherly*
-ous	nouns	having	*virtuous, ambitious*
-proof	nouns	protected/-ing against	*bullet-proof, waterproof*
-ward	adj.	towards	*backward, northward*
-y	nouns	like, characterised by	*creamy, wealthy*

5 suffixes that form adverbs

suffix	mainly added to	usual meaning	examples
-ly	adj.	in an (adjective) way	*calmly, slowly*
-ward(s)	adj.	towards	*backwards, northward(s)*

6 suffixes that form verbs

suffix	mainly added to	usual meaning	examples
-ate	nouns	causative	*orchestrate, chlorinate*
-en	adj.	make, become	*deafen, ripen, harden*
-ify	adj., nouns	causative: make	*simplify, electrify*
-ise/-ize (► 343)	adj., nouns	various	*modernise, symbolise*

7 combining forms

Some prefixes and suffixes combine mainly or often with other prefixes and suffixes. Examples are *phono-* ('sound'), *-logy* ('study of'), *-scope* ('instrument for seeing'), *-metry* ('measurement').

phonology *telescope* *micrometry*

8 negative words with no positive equivalent

Some words with negative prefixes have no positive opposite equivalent: for example, somebody can be *distressed*, but not *tressed*. Other examples: *dishevelled, disappoint, discard, disclose, disconcert, disfigure, dismiss, dispose, incessant, indelible, uncanny, uncouth, ungainly, unkempt, unnerved, unspeakable, unwieldy, unwitting* →

9 productivity

Certain prefixes and suffixes are productive: they are often used to form new words. And some can be added to almost any word of the right grammatical kind.

I'm not ***anti-tourists****; I just don't want them in our town.*

The place has got a real ***1970s-like*** *atmosphere.*

But most are limited to certain words or kinds of word, and cannot be used to invent new vocabulary items.

(NOT ~~*uncredible, subinteresting, considerage*~~ OR ~~*drinkless*~~)

For hyphens after *co-*, *ex-*, etc, ► 342.3.d.

339 *-ic* and *-ical*

Many adjectives end in *-ic* or *-ical*. There is no general rule to tell you which form is correct in a particular case.

1 some adjectives normally ending in *-ic*

academic	*domestic*	*strategic*	*phonetic*
algebraic	*dramatic*	*linguistic*	*public*
arithmetic	*egoistic*	*majestic*	*semantic*
artistic	*emphatic*	*neurotic*	*strategic*
athletic	*energetic*	*pathetic*	*syntactic*
catholic	*fantastic*	*pedagogic*	*systematic*
despotic	*geometric*	*pedantic*	*tragic*

Arithmetical, geometrical and *pedagogical* also occur.

Some of these words ended in *-ical* in older English (e.g. *fantastical, majestical, tragical*).

New adjectives which come into the language generally end in *-ic*, except for those ending in *-logical*.

2 some adjectives ending in *-ical*

biological (and many other adjectives ending in *-logical*)

chemical	*logical*	*musical*	*tactical*
critical	*mathematical*	*physical*	*topical*
cynical	*mechanical*	*radical*	*typical*
fanatical	*medical*	*surgical*	*tyrannical*
grammatical			

3 differences of meaning

Rhythmic and *rhythmical* both exist with no difference of meaning. In a few other cases, both forms exist but with a meaning difference. ► Section 31 for *classic(al), comic(al), economic(al), electric(al), historic(al), magic(al)* and *politic(al)*.

4 adverbs

Note that whether the adjective ends in *-ic* or *-ical*, the adverb ends in *-ically* (pronounced /ɪkli/). The one common exception is *publicly* (NOT ~~*publically*~~).

5 nouns ending in *-ics*

Many nouns ending in *-ics* are singular (e.g. *physics, athletics*). Some can be either singular or plural (e.g. *mathematics, politics*). For details, ► 117.3.

340 apostrophes

We use **apostrophes** (') for three main reasons.

1 missing letters

Apostrophes replace letters in contracted forms (► 337).

can't (= cannot) *I'd* (= I would/had)
it's (= it is/has) *who's* (= who is/has)

2 possessives

We use apostrophes before or after possessive *-s* (► 123).

*the **girl's** father* *Charles's wife* *my **parents'** house*

Possessive determiners and pronouns (e.g. *yours, its*) do not have apostrophes.

*This money is **yours**.* (NOT . . . ~~*your's.*~~)
*The cat had not had **its** food yet.* (NOT . . . ~~*it's food*~~ . . .)
***Whose** house did she stay in?* (NOT ~~*Who's*~~ . . .)

3 special plurals

Words which do not usually have plurals sometimes have an apostrophe when a plural form is written.

*It is a nice idea, but there are a lot of **if's**.*

Apostrophes are generally used in the plurals of letters, and sometimes of numbers and abbreviations.

*He writes **b's** instead of **d's**.*
*It was in the early **1980's**.* (More usually: . . . *1980s.*)
*I know two **MP's** personally.* (More usually: . . . *MPs.*)

It is not correct to put apostrophes in normal plurals.

JEANS – HALF PRICE (NOT ~~*JEAN'S*~~ . . .)

341 capital letters

We use capital (big) letters at the beginning of the following kinds of words:

a the names of days, months and public holidays (but not usually seasons)

Sunday *March* *Easter*
Tuesday *September* *Christmas*
(BUT NORMALLY *summer, autumn*)

b the names of people, institutions and places, including stars and planets

John *Mary* *the Smiths*
the Foreign Office *North Africa* *Canada*
the United States *The Ritz Hotel* *Oxford University*
The Super Cinema *the Far East* (Compare *He teaches at a university.*)
the Pole Star *Mars*
(BUT NORMALLY the earth, the sun, the moon) →

c Words derived from people's names have capitals if they refer to the people.
Shakespearean drama (BUT *to pasteurise*): this refers to a chemical process, not directly to the scientist Pasteur

d people's titles
Mr Smith *Professor Blake* *Dr Jones*
Colonel Webb *the Managing Director*
the Prime Minister is attending the summit (Compare *How is the Swedish prime minister elected?*)

e nouns and adjectives referring to nationalities and regions, languages, ethnic groups and religions
He's Russian. *I speak German.* *Japanese history*
Catalan cooking *She's Jewish.* *He's a Sikh.*

f the names of newspapers and magazines
International Herald Tribune *New Scientist*
The article *the* in such names is usually, but not always, capitalised.
I read it in The/the Guardian.

g the first word (and often other important words) in the titles of books, films and plays
The Spy who Loved Me *Gone with the Wind*
A Midsummer Night's Dream

For the use of capitals with *East*, *North*, etc, ► 442.

342 hyphens

1 What are hyphens?

Hyphens are the short lines (-) that we put between words in expressions like *ticket-office* or *ex-husband*. They are not the same as dashes (–): ► 297.

2 Are hyphens disappearing?

The rules about hyphens are complicated, and usage is not very clear. Perhaps because of this, people seem to be using hyphens less, especially in compound nouns. Many common short compounds are now often written 'solid', with no division between the words (e.g. *weekend*, *wideawake*, *takeover*); other less common or longer compounds are now more likely to be written as completely separate words (e.g. *train driver*, *living room*). The situation at present is rather confused, and it is not unusual to find the same expression spelt in three different ways (e.g. *bookshop*, *book-shop*, *book shop*). If one is not sure whether to use a hyphen between words or not, the best thing is to look in a dictionary, or to write the words separately without a hyphen.

3 When are hyphens used?

Hyphens are still often used in the following cases:

a compound nouns

- compound nouns where the second part ends in *-er*
  bottle-opener
- compound nouns where the first part ends in *-ing*
  writing-paper
- compound nouns made with prepositions and adverb particles
  sister-in-law *make-up* *in-joke*

b compound adjectives

red-hot *nice-looking* *blue-eyed*
grey-green *broken-hearted*

When we use a longer phrase as an adjective before a noun, we often use hyphens. Compare:

– *an* ***out-of-work*** *miner.*
He's ***out of work****.*
– *a* ***shoot-to-kill*** *policy*
They were ordered to ***shoot to kill****.*

c compound verbs beginning with a noun

role-play *house-hunt*

d prefixes

In British English, the prefixes *anti-*, *co-*, *ex-*, *mid-*, *non-*, *pre-*, *post-*, *pro-* and *self-* are often separated from what follows by hyphens. In American English these combinations are generally written as single words (e.g. *antiwar*).

anti-war *mid-term* *pre-meeting*
co-producer *non-involvement* *pro-hunting*
ex-husband *post-publication* *self-study*

In both British and American English, all prefixes may be separated by hyphens in order to avoid unusual or misleading combinations of letters.

un-American *re-examine* *counter-revolution*

e numbers 21–99; fractions

twenty-one *thirty-six* *two-thirds*

4 word division

We also use hyphens to separate the parts of long words at the end of written or printed lines. (To see where to divide words, look in a good dictionary.)

. . . is not completely in accordance with the controversial policy of the present govern-ment, which was . . .

343 *-ise* and *-ize*

Many English verbs and some nouns can be spelt with either *-ise* or *-ize*. In American English, *-ize* is preferred in these cases. Examples:

baptise/*baptize* (BrE)	*baptize* (AmE)
computerise/*computerize* (BrE)	*computerize* (AmE)
mechanise/*mechanize* (BrE)	*mechanize* (AmE)
realise/*realize* (BrE)	*realize* (AmE)

Most words of two syllables, and a few longer words, have *-ise* in both British and American English. Examples:

advertise (NOT ~~*advertize*~~) *devise* *improvise*
advise *disguise* *revise*
comprise *enterprise* *supervise*
compromise *exercise* *surprise*
despise *franchise* *televise* →

Capsize has *-ize* in both British and American English.
Note also *analyse* (AmE usually *analyze*) and *paralyse* (AmE *paralyze*).
If in doubt, remember that in British English *-ise* is almost always acceptable.
Some British usage guides claim that *-ize* is 'preferable' in British English on etymological and phonetic grounds, but this is not correct.
For American English, consult an American dictionary.

344 *-able* and *-ible*

The suffix *-able*, as in *readable*, is far more common than *-ible*, as in *audible*. (Both are pronounced the same: /əbl/). Some common words spelt with *-ible*:

accessible	*eligible*	*intelligible*	*responsible*
audible	*exhaustible*	*invincible*	*reversible*
comprehensible	*fallible*	*legible*	*sensible*
convertible	*feasible*	*negligible*	*suggestible*
credible	*flexible*	*perceptible*	*susceptible*
defensible	*forcible*	*permissible*	*tangible*
digestible	*gullible*	*plausible*	*terrible*
divisible	*horrible*	*possible*	*visible*
edible	*indelible*	*resistible*	

Negatives of these words are naturally also spelt with *-ible*:
e.g. *inaudible, irresponsible.*

345 *-ly*

1 adverb formation

We normally change an adjective into an adverb by adding *-ly*.
late → *lately* *hopeful* → *hopefully* *definite* → *definitely*
right → *rightly* *real* → *really* (NOT ~~*realy*~~) *pale* → *palely*
complete → *completely* (NOT ~~*completly*~~)
Exceptions:
true → *truly* *whole* → *wholly*
due → *duly* *full* → *fully*

2 *-y* and *-i-*

-y usually changes to *-i-* (► 348).
happy → *happily* *dry* → *drily* OR *dryly*
easy → *easily* *gay* → *gaily*
Exceptions:
shy → *shyly* *sly* → *slyly* *coy* → *coyly*

3 adjectives ending in consonant + *le*

-le changes to *-ly* after a consonant.
idle → *idly* *noble* → *nobly* *able* → *ably*

4 adjectives ending in *-ic*

If an adjective ends in *-ic*, the adverb ends in *-ically* (pronounced /ɪkli/).
tragic → *tragically* *phonetic* → *phonetically*
Exception:
public → *publicly*

346 final *e*

1 final *-e* dropped before vowels

When an ending that begins with a vowel (e.g. *-ing, -able, -ous*) is added to a word that ends in *-e*, we usually drop the *-e*.

hope → hoping *note → notable* *shade → shady*
make → making *fame → famous*

An exception in British English is *ageing* (more common than *aging*).

Some words that end in *-e* have two possible forms before *-able* and *-age*. The form without *-e* is more common in most cases. Note:

likeable (usually with *e*)
mov(e)able (both forms common)
mileage (only with *e*)

Final *-e* is not dropped from words ending in *-ee, -oe* or *-ye*.

see → seeing *canoe → canoeist*
agree → agreeable *dye → dyeing*

2 final *-e* not dropped before consonants

Before endings that begin with a consonant, final *-e* is not normally dropped.

excite → excitement *complete → completeness*
definite → definitely

Exceptions: words ending in *-ue*

due → duly *true → truly* *argue → argument*

In words that end with *-ce* or *-ge*, we do not drop *-e* before *a* or *o*.

replace → replaceable *courage → courageous*
(BUT *charge → charging, face → facing*)

Judg(e)ment and *acknowledg(e)ment* can be spelt with or without the *-e* after *g*.

For words ending in *-ie*, ► 348.5. For adverbs ending in *-ly*, ► 345.

347 doubling final consonants

1 doubling before vowels

We sometimes double the final consonant of a word before adding *-ed, -er, -est, -ing, -able, -y* (or any other ending that begins with a vowel).

stop → stopped *sit → sitting* *big → bigger*

2 Which consonants are doubled?

We double the following letters:

b: *rub → rubbing*
d: *sad → sadder*
g: *big → bigger*
l: *travel → travelling*
m: *slim → slimming*
n: *win → winnable*
p: *stop → stopped*
r: *prefer → preferred*
t: *sit → sitting*

We double final *-s* in *gassing, gassed* (but not usually in other words), final *-z* in *quizzes, fezzes*, and final *-f* in *iffy* (a colloquial word for 'questionable', 'uncertain').
Final *w* (in words like *show, flow*) is part of a vowel sound, and is not doubled.
show → showing *flow → flowed* (NOT ~~*showwing, flowwed*~~)

3 only at the end of a word

We only double consonants that come at the end of a word. Compare:
hop → hopping BUT *hope → hoping*
fat → fatter BUT *late → later*
plan → planned BUT *phone → phoned*

4 one consonant after one vowel letter

We only double when the word ends in one consonant after one vowel letter. Compare:
fat → fatter BUT *fast → faster* (NOT ~~*fastter*~~)
bet → betting BUT *beat → beating* (NOT ~~*beatting*~~)

5 only stressed syllables

We only double consonants in stressed syllables. We do not double in longer words that end in unstressed syllables. Compare:
up'set → up'setting BUT *'visit → 'visiting*
be'gin → be'ginning BUT *'open → 'opening*
re'fer → re'ferring BUT *'offer → 'offering*
Note the spelling of these words:
'gallop → 'galloping → 'galloped (NOT ~~*gallopping, gallopped*~~)
de'velop → de'veloping → de'veloped (NOT ~~*developping, developped*~~)

6 exception: final *l* in unstressed syllables

In British English, we double *-l* at the end of a word after one vowel letter in most cases, even in unstressed syllables.
'travel → 'travelling *'equal → 'equalled*
In American English, words like this are most often spelt with one *l*: *traveling*.

7 other exceptions

Consonants are sometimes doubled at the end of final syllables that are pronounced with full vowels (e.g. /æ/), even when these do not carry the main stress.
'kidnap → 'kidnapped *'handicap → 'handicapped*
'worship → 'worshippers (AmE also *'worshipers*)
'combat → 'combating OR *combatting*
Final *-s* is sometimes doubled in *'focus(s)ing* and *'focus(s)ed*.

8 final *c*

Final *-c* changes to *ck* before *-ed, -er, -ing*, etc.
picnic → picnickers *panic → panicking* *mimic → mimicked*

9 Why double?

The reason for doubling is to show that a vowel is still pronounced short. This is because, in the middle of a word, a stressed vowel letter before one consonant is usually pronounced as a long vowel or as a diphthong (double vowel). Compare:

hoping /'həʊpɪŋ/	*later* /'leɪtə(r)/	*diner* /'daɪnə(r)/
hopping /'hɒpɪŋ/	*latter* /'lætə(r)/	*dinner* /'dɪnə(r)/

348 *y* and *i*

1 changing *y* to *i*

When we add an ending to a word that ends in *-y*, we usually change *-y* to *-i-*.

hurry → hurried *fury → furious* *merry → merriment*
marry → marriage *easy → easier* *busy → business*
happy → happily

Generally, nouns and verbs that end in *-y* have plural or third person singular forms in *-ies*.

story → stories *spy → spies* *hurry → hurries*

2 exceptions

Two spellings are possible for the nouns *flyer/flier*.
A machine that dries things is a *dryer*.
Words formed from the adjective *dry*: normally *drier, driest, dryly/drily, dryness*.
Words formed from the adjective *sly*: *slyer, slyest, slyly, slyness*.

3 no change before *i*

We do not change *-y* to *-i-* before *i* (for example when we add *-ing, -ism, -ish*).

try → trying *Tory → Toryism* *baby → babyish*

4 no change after a vowel

We do not change *-y* to *-i-* after a vowel letter.

buy → buying *play → played*
enjoy → enjoyment *grey → greyish*

Exceptions:

say → said *pay → paid* *lay → laid*

5 changing *ie* to *y*

We change *-ie* to *-y-* before *-ing*.

die → dying *lie → lying* (BUT *dye → dyeing*)

349 *ch* and *tch*, *k* and *ck*

After one vowel, at the end of a word, we usually write *-ck* and *-tch* for the sounds /k/ and /tʃ/.

back	*neck*	*sick*	*lock*	*stuck*
catch	*fetch*	*stitch*	*botch*	*hutch*

→

Exceptions:
yak *tic* *public* (and many other words ending in *-ic*)
rich *which* *such* *much* *attach* *detach*
After a consonant or two vowels, we write *-k* and *-ch*.
bank *work* *talk* *march* *bench*
break *book* *week* *peach* *coach*

350 *ie* and *ei*

The sound /iː/ (as in *believe*) is often written *ie*, but not usually *ei*. However, we write *ei* after *c* for this sound. English-speaking children learn a rhyme: 'i before e, except after c'.
believe *chief* *field* *grief* *piece* *shield*
ceiling *deceive* *receive* *receipt*
Exceptions: *seize, Neil, Keith, either, neither*

For other pronunciations of *either* and *neither*, ▸ 156–157.

351 spelling and pronunciation

In many English words, the spelling is different from the pronunciation. This is mainly because our pronunciation has changed a good deal over the last few hundred years, while our spelling system has stayed more or less the same. Here is a list of some difficult common words with their pronunciations.

1 usually two syllables, not three

The letters in brackets are usually not pronounced.

asp(i)rin	*ev(e)ry*	*om(e)lette*
bus(i)ness	*ev(e)ning*	*rest(au)rant*
choc(o)late	*marri(a)ge*	*sev(e)ral*
diff(e)rent	*med(i)cine* (AmE three syllables)	

2 usually three syllables, not four

The letters in brackets are usually not pronounced.

comf(or)table	*temp(e)rature*
int(e)resting	*us(u)ally*
secret(a)ry (AmE four syllables)	*veg(e)table*

3 silent letters

The letters in brackets are not pronounced.

- *clim(b)* *com(b)* *de(b)t* *dou(b)t* *dum(b)*
- *mus(c)le*
- *han(d)kerchief* *san(d)wich* *We(d)nesday*
- *champa(g)ne* *forei(g)n* *si(g)n*
- *borou(gh)* *bou(gh)t* *cau(gh)t* *dau(gh)ter* *hei(gh)t* *hi(gh)* *li(gh)t* *mi(gh)t* *nei(gh)bour* *ni(gh)t* *ou(gh)t* *ri(gh)t* *strai(gh)t* *thou(gh)t* *throu(gh)* *ti(gh)t* *wei(gh)*

- *w(h)at w(h)en w(h)ere w(h)ether w(h)ich w(h)ip w(h)y*
  and similarly in other words beginning *wha, whe* or *whi*. (Some speakers use an unvoiced /w/ in these words.)
- *(h)onest (h)onour (h)our*
- *(k)nee (k)nife (k)nob (k)nock (k)now*
  and similarly in other words beginning *kn*.
- *ca(l)m cou(l)d ha(l)f sa(l)mon shou(l)d ta(l)k wa(l)k wou(l)d autum(n) hym(n)*
- *(p)neumatic (p)sychiatrist (p)sychology (p)sychotherapy (p)terodactyl*
  and similarly in other words beginning *pn, ps* or *pt*.
- *cu(p)board* /ˈkʌbəd/
- *i(s)land i(s)le*
- *cas(t)le Chris(t)mas fas(t)en lis(t)en of(t)en whis(t)le*
  (*Often* can also be pronounced /ˈɒftən/.)
- *g(u)arantee g(u)ard g(u)errilla g(u)ess g(u)est g(u)ide g(u)ilt g(u)itar g(u)y*
- *(w)rap (w)rite (w)rong*
- *(w)ho (w)hom (w)hore (w)hose (w)hole*

4 **a** = /e/

***a**ny **m**any Thames* /temz/

5 **ch** = /k/

ach**e **arch**aeology **arch**itect **ch**aos **ch**aracter **ch**emist **Ch**ristmas **mech**anical **Mich**ael **stomach

6 **ea** = /e/

already bread breakfast dead death dreadful dreamt head health heavy instead lead** (the metal) **leant leather meant measure pleasant pleasure read** (past) **ready steady sweater threat tread weather

7 **ea** = /eɪ/

break great steak

8 **gh** = /f/

cough /kɒf/ ***draught*** /drɑːft/ ***enough*** /ɪˈnʌf/ ***laugh*** /lɑːf/
rough /rʌf/ ***tough*** /tʌf/

9 **o** = /ʌ/

above brother colour come comfortable company cover done front glove government honey London love lovely Monday money month mother none nothing one onion other oven some son stomach ton(ne) tongue once won wonder worry

10 **o** = /uː/

lose prove to →

11 *ou* = /ʌ/

country *couple* *cousin* *double* *enough* *rough* *tough* *trouble* *young*

12 *u* or *ou* = /ʊ/

bull *bullet* *bush* *butcher* *could* *cushion* *full* *pull* *push* *put* *should* *would*

13 words pronounced with /aɪ/

biology *buy* *dial* *height* *idea* *iron* *microphone* *science* *society* *either* (some British speakers) *neither* (some British speakers)

14 other strange spellings

area /'eəriə/
Australia /ɒs'treɪliə/
bicycle /'baɪsɪkl/
biscuit /'bɪskɪt/
blood /blʌd/
brooch /brəʊtʃ/
business /'bɪzmɪs/
busy /'bɪzi/
clothes /kləʊðz/
does /dʌz/
doesn't /'dʌz(ə)nt/
Edinburgh /'edɪnbrə/
Europe /'jʊərəp/
foreign /'fɒrən/
friend /frend/
fruit /fruːt/
heard /hɜːd/
heart /hɑːt/
juice /dʒuːs/
Leicester /'lestə/
minute /'mɪnɪt/
moustache /mə'stɑːʃ/ (AmE *mustache* /'mʌstæʃ, mə'stæʃ/)
once /wʌns/
one /wʌn/
queue /kjuː/
two /tuː/
woman /'wʊmən/
women /'wɪmɪn/
Worcester /'wʊstə/

15 silent *r*

In standard southern British English, *r* is not normally pronounced before a consonant or at the end of a word.

hard /hɑːd/ *first* /fɜːst/ *order* /'ɔːdə/
car /kɑː/ *four* /fɔː/ *more* /mɔː/

But *r* is pronounced at the end of a word if a vowel follows immediately.

four islands /'fɔːr 'aɪləndz/
more eggs /'mɔːr 'egz/

Note the pronunciation of *iron*, and of words ending in *-re* and *-ered*.

iron /aɪən/ (AmE /'aɪərn/)
centre /'sentə(r)/
theatre /'θɪətə(r)/ (AmE /'θiːətər/)
wondered /'wʌndəd/
bothered /'bɒðəd/

We often add /r/ after words ending in the sound /ə/ even when this is not written with *r*, if another vowel follows immediately.

India and Africa /'ɪndɪər ənd 'æfrɪkə/

In most varieties of American English, and in many regional British accents, *r* is pronounced whenever it is written.

Section 31 Word Problems from A to Z

INTRODUCTION

This Section deals with a number of words which often cause problems to do with meaning and grammar. Some other words are more conveniently explained in the grammatical Sections: see the Index for references.
Note that a general usage guide like this only has room to cover a limited selection of word problems. For a wider and more detailed treatment, a separate reference book is needed.

Do you know what's wrong with these, and why?

- ✗ According to me, he's an idiot. ► 356
- ✗ In 1840, the population of Ireland was higher than it is actually. ► 358
- ✗ 'I'm tired.' 'I also.' ► 369.3
- ✗ My sister looks just as me. ► 515
- ✗ The train's late, as usually. ► 381
- ✗ We arrived to the airport in the middle of the night. ► 384.5
- ✗ When we were at first married we lived with my parents. ► 388
- ✗ My girlfriend won me at poker. ► 392
- ✗ You can't park before the station. ► 397
- ✗ My aunt has a little house besides the river. ► 400
- ✗ Can I lend your bike? ► 408
- ✗ Thanks for taking me here. It's lovely. ► 409
- ✗ Edinburgh is one of the most beautiful cities in England. ► 411
- ✗ Can you clean this suit until Friday? ► 613.6
- ✗ I asked the garage to control the brakes and steering. ► 429
- ✗ The Prince always looks so handsome in an evening dress. ► 437.1
- ✗ We have a spare room for eventual visitors. ► 453
- ✗ I'm afraid that colour doesn't fit me. ► 467
- ✗ Chess is a very slow play. ► 555
- ✗ I have big respect for our MP. ► 404.3
- ✗ He was driving fast indeed when he crashed. ► 499.1
- ✗ He's quite anti-social, but instead he's very generous. ► 500.3
- ✗ No doubt the world is getting warmer. ► 534
- ✗ I don't like nowadays fashion. ► 539
- ✗ There's a supermarket right in front of my house. ► 549.1
- ✗ It's good if a child can have an own room. ► 552.1
- ✗ From my point of view, war is always wrong. ► 557
- ✗ What's your principle reason for wanting to work here? ► 563
- ✗ Remember me to call Andy. ► 568.1
- ✗ Supper tonight is rests from lunch. ► 569
- ✗ If you shout at her she'll cry. She's terribly sensible. ► 577
- ✗ I'm hot. Let's find some shadow to sit in. ► 578
- ✗ When he laughs so, I want to scream. ► 582.2

352 *about* and *on*

Compare:
- *a book for children* ***about*** *Africa and its peoples*
  a textbook ***on*** *African history*
- *a conversation* ***about*** *money*
  a lecture ***on*** *economics*

We use *about* to talk about ordinary, more general kinds of communication. *On* suggests that a book, talk, etc is more serious, suitable for specialists.

353 *about to*

About + **infinitive** (with *to*) means 'going to very soon'; 'just going to'.
Don't go out now – we're ***about to*** *have lunch.*
I was ***about to*** *go to bed when the telephone rang.*

Not about to can mean 'unwilling to'.
I'm ***not about to*** *pay 100 dollars for that dress.*

about and *around* ▸ 376

354 *above* and *over*

1 'higher than': *above* or *over*

Above and *over* can both mean 'higher than'. *Above* is more common with this meaning.
The water came up ***above/over*** *our knees.*
Can you see the helicopter ***above/over*** *the palace?*

2 'not directly over': *above*

We use *above* when one thing is not directly over another.
We've got a little house ***above*** *the lake.* (NOT . . . ~~*over the lake.*~~)

3 'covering': *over*

We prefer *over* when one thing covers and/or touches another.
There is cloud ***over*** *the South of England.*
He put on a coat ***over*** *his pyjamas.*

We use *over* or *across* (▸ 357) when one thing crosses another.
The plane was flying ***over/across*** *Denmark.*
Electricity cables stretch ***over/across*** *the fields.*

4 measurements: *above*

Above is used in measurements of temperature and height, and in other cases where we think of a vertical scale.

*The temperature is three degrees **above** zero.*
*The summit of Everest is about 8000 metres **above** sea level.*
*She's well **above** average in intelligence.*

5 ages, speeds, 'more than': *over*

We usually use *over*, not *above*, to talk about ages and speeds, and to mean 'more than'.

*You have to be **over** 18 to see this film.*
*The police said she was driving at **over** 110mph.*
*There were **over** 100,000 people at the festival.*

6 books and papers

In a book or paper, *above* means 'earlier on the page' or 'on an earlier page'.

*The **above** rules and regulations apply to all students.*
*For prices and delivery charges, see **above**.*
*Our village is just **above** Cardiff on the map.*

See over means 'look on the next page'.

*There are cheap flights at weekends: see **over**.*

The difference between *below* and *under* is similar. ► 399
For other meanings of these words, see a good dictionary.

355 *accept* and *agree*

Before an infinitive, we usually use *agree*, not *accept*.

*I **agreed to meet** them here.* (More normal than *I accepted to meet . . .*)

356 *according to*

According to X means 'in X's opinion', 'if what X says is true'.

***According to Harry**, it's a good film.*
*The train gets in at 8.27, **according to the timetable**.*

We do not usually give our own opinions with *according to*. Compare:

***According to Anna**, her boyfriend is brilliant.* (= If what Anna says is true, . . .)
***In my opinion**, Anna's boyfriend is an idiot.* (NOT ~~*According to me,*~~ . . .)

357 *across, over* and *through*

1 on/to the other side of (a line): *across* and *over*

Across and *over* can both be used to mean 'on or to the other side of a line, river, road, bridge, etc'.

*His village is just **across/over** the border.*
*See if you can jump **across/over** the stream.* →

2 high things: *over* preferred

We prefer *over* to say 'on/to the other side of something high'.

Why are you climbing ***over*** *the wall?* (NOT . . . ~~*across the wall?*~~)

3 flat areas: *across* preferred

We usually prefer *across* to say 'on/to the other side of a flat area or surface'.

He walked right ***across*** *the desert.*

It took them six hours to row ***across*** *the lake.*

4 the adverb *over (to)*

Note that the adverb *over* has a wider meaning than the preposition *over*. We often use *over (to)* for short journeys.

I'm going ***over to*** *Jack's.* *Shall we drive* ***over*** *and see your mother?*

5 *across* and *through*

The difference between *across* and *through* is like the difference between *on* and *in*. *Through*, unlike *across*, is used for a movement in a three-dimensional space, with things on all sides. Compare:

– *We walked* ***across*** *the ice.* (We were **on** the ice.)
I walked ***through*** *the wood.* (I was **in** the wood.)

– *We drove* ***across*** *the desert.*
We drove ***through*** *several towns.*

For *over* and *above*, ► 354. For *across from* (AmE), ► 549.1.
For other uses of these words, see a good dictionary.

358 *actual(ly)*

1 meaning and use

Actual means 'real'; *actually* means 'really' or 'in fact'.

They are used to make things clearer, more precise or more definite.

It's over 100 kilos. Let me look. Yes, the ***actual*** *weight is 108 kilos.*

I've got a new job. ***Actually****, they've made me sales manager.*

'Did you enjoy your trip?' 'Very much, ***actually****.'*

Actual and *actually* often introduce surprising or unexpected information.

It takes me an hour to drive to work, although the ***actual*** *distance is only 20 miles.*

She was so angry that she ***actually*** *tore up the letter.*

'How did you get on with my car?' 'Well, ***actually****, I'm terribly sorry, I'm afraid I had a crash.'*

He's twelve, but he ***actually*** *still believes in Father Christmas.*

They can be used to correct mistakes or misunderstandings.

The book says she died aged 47, but her ***actual*** *age was 43.*

*'Hello, Jack. Nice to see you.' '****Actually****, my name's Andy.'*

Actually is more common in British than American English.

2 'false friends'

Actual and *actually* are 'false friends' for people who speak some languages. They do not mean the same as, for example, *actuel(lement), aktuell,* or *attual(ment)e.* We express these ideas with *present, current, up to date; at this moment, now, at present.*

What's our ***current*** *financial position?* (NOT . . . ~~*our actual financial position?*~~)
In 1840 the population of Ireland was higher than it is ***now.***
(NOT . . . ~~*than it is actually.*~~)

For more about *actually* and similar discourse markers, ► 284.3, 301.3.

359 *afraid*

1 *afraid* and *fear*

In an informal style, *be afraid* is more common than *fear.*

Don't ***be afraid.*** (NOT ~~*Don't fear*~~) *She's* ***afraid*** *that I might find out.*
Are *you* ***afraid*** *of the dark?* *I'm not* ***afraid*** *to say what I think.*

2 *I'm afraid* = 'I'm sorry'

I'm afraid (that) often means I'm sorry to tell you (that). It is used to introduce apologetic refusals and bad news.

I'm afraid (that) *I can't help you.*
I'm afraid (that) *there's been an accident.*

I'm afraid so/not are used as short answers.

*'Can you lend me a pound?' '****I'm afraid not.****'*
'It's going to rain.' 'Yes, ***I'm afraid so.****'*

3 not used before a noun

Afraid is one of the adjectives that are not usually used before a noun in 'attributive position' (► 183). Compare:

Jack's ***afraid.*** *Jack's a* ***frightened*** *man.* (NOT . . . ~~*an afraid man.*~~)

For information about *-ing* forms and infinitives after *afraid,* ► 105.13.

360 *after*: adverb

1 *shortly after*, etc

After can be used in adverb phrases like *shortly after, long after, a few days after,* etc.

We had oysters for supper. ***Shortly after,*** *I began to feel ill.*

In more exact expressions of time, *later* is more common.

They started the job on the 16th and finished ***three weeks later.***

2 *after* not used alone

After is not normally used alone as an adverb. Instead, we use other expressions like *afterwards* (AmE also *afterward*), *then* or *after that.*

I'm going to do my exams, and ***afterwards*** *I'm going to study medicine.*
(NOT . . . ~~*and after, I'm going*~~ . . .)

361 *after all*

1 two meanings

After all can mean 'in spite of what was said before' or 'contrary to what was expected'. Position: usually at the end of a clause.

I'm sorry. I know I said I would help you, but I can't ***after all.***

I expected to fail the exam, but I passed ***after all.***

Another meaning is 'we mustn't forget that . . .', introducing an argument or reason which may have been forgotten. Position: at the beginning or end of a clause.

Of course you're tired. ***After all,*** *you were up all night.*

Let's finish the cake. Somebody's got to eat it, ***after all.***

2 not used for 'finally'

After all does not mean 'finally', 'at last', 'in the end'.

After the theatre we had supper and went to a nightclub; then we ***finally*** *went home.* (NOT . . . ~~*after all we went home.*~~)

again and *back* ► 390

362 *ago*

1 word order: *six weeks ago*

Ago follows an expression of time.

I met her ***six weeks ago.*** (NOT . . . ~~*ago six weeks.*~~) *a long* ***time ago***

2 tenses

An expression with *ago* refers to a finished time, and is normally used with a past tense, not a present perfect (► 47.4).

She ~~***phoned***~~ *a few minutes ago.* (NOT ~~*She has phoned*~~ . . .)

'Where's Mike?' 'He ***was working*** *outside ten minutes ago.'*

3 the difference between *ago* and *for*

Ago says how long before the present something happened; *for* (with a past tense) says how long it lasted. Compare:

He died ***three years ago.*** (= three years before now)

(NOT ~~*He died for three years.*~~ OR . . . ~~*for three years ago.*~~)

He was ill ***for three years*** *before he died.* (= His illness lasted three years.)

4 *ago* and *before* with time expressions: counting back

We use *ago* with a past tense and a time expression to 'count back' from the present; to say how long before now something happened.

We can use *before* in the same way (with a past perfect tense) to count back from a past moment. Compare:

I met that woman in Scotland ***three years ago.*** (NOT . . . ~~*three years before / before three years.*~~)

When we got talking, I found out that I had been at school with her husband ***ten years before.*** (NOT . . . ~~*ten years ago.*~~)

ago and ***before***

I met her three years ago. I had been at school with her husband ten years before.



For other uses of *before*, ► 250, 397.

agree and *accept* ► 355

363 *alike*

The adjective *alike* means 'like each other'. Compare:

The two boys are ***alike*** *in looks, but not in personality.*

He's ***like*** *his brother.* (NOT ~~*He's alike his brother.*~~)

Alike is not often used before a noun (► 183). Compare:

His two daughters are very much ***alike.***

He's got two very ***similar-looking*** *daughters.* (NOT . . . ~~*alike daughters.*~~)

364 *all right* and *alright*

The standard spelling is *all right*. *Alright* is common in informal usage, but some people consider it incorrect.

365 *allow, permit* and *let*

1 *allow* and *permit*

These words have similar meanings and uses. *Permit* is more formal. Both words can be followed by **object + infinitive**.

We do not ***allow/permit people to smoke*** *in the kitchen.*

When there is no personal object, an *-ing* form is used.

We do not ***allow/permit smoking*** *in the kitchen.*

Passive structures are common; personal subjects and gerund (*-ing* form) subjects are both possible.

People are not allowed/permitted *to smoke in the kitchen.*

Smoking is not allowed/permitted *in the kitchen.* →

The passive structure with *it* is only possible with *permit*.

***It is not permitted** to smoke in the kitchen.*

(BUT NOT ~~*It is not allowed to smoke*~~ . . .)

Allow, but not *permit*, can be used with adverb particles.

*She wouldn't **allow** me **in**.* *Emily isn't **allowed out** at night.*

2 *let*

Let is the least formal of these three words, and is followed by **object + infinitive** without *to*. Compare:

*Please **allow me to buy** you a drink.* (polite and formal)

***Let me buy** you a drink.* (friendly and informal)

Let is not usually used in the passive.

*I **wasn't allowed** to pay for the drinks.* (NOT ~~*I wasn't let*~~ . . .)

Let can be used with adverb particles; passives are possible in this case.

*She wouldn't **let** me **in**.* *I've been **let down**.*

For more about *let*, ► 225, 512.

366 *almost* and *nearly*; *practically*

1 progress, measurement and counting

Almost and *nearly* can both express ideas connected with progress, measurement or counting. *Nearly* is less common in American English.

*I've **almost**/**nearly** finished.*

*There were **almost**/**nearly** a thousand people there.*

Sometimes *almost* is a little 'nearer' than *nearly*. Compare:

*It's **nearly** ten o'clock.* (= perhaps 9.45)

*It's **almost** ten o'clock.* (= perhaps 9.57)

Very and *pretty* can be used with *nearly* but not *almost*.

*I've **very**/**pretty nearly** finished.* (NOT . . . ~~*very almost*~~ . . .)

2 other meanings

We can use *almost* to mean 'similar to, but not exactly the same', and to make statements less definite. *Nearly* is not used like this.

*Our cat understands everything – he's **almost** human.*

(NOT . . . ~~*he's nearly human.*~~)

*My aunt's got a strange accent. She **almost** sounds foreign.*

(NOT . . . ~~*She nearly sounds foreign.*~~)

*I **almost** wish I'd stayed at home.* (NOT ~~*I nearly wish*~~ . . .)

*Jake is **almost** like a father to me.*

3 *never*, *nobody*, *nothing*, etc

We do not usually use *nearly* before negative pronouns or adverbs like *never*, *nobody*, *nothing*. Instead, we use *almost*, or we use *hardly* with *ever*, *anybody*, *anything*, etc.

*She's **almost never** / **hardly ever** at home.* (NOT . . . ~~*nearly never*~~ . . .)

***Almost nobody** / **hardly anybody** was there.*

4 *everybody, everything, anybody, anything,* etc

We also prefer *almost* before *everybody/-one/-thing/-where*, and *almost* is much more common than *nearly* before *anybody/-one/-thing/-where*.

*She likes **almost everybody**.* *__Almost anybody__ can do this job.*
*He's been **almost everywhere**.* *He eats **almost anything**.*

5 *practically*

Practically can be used in the same way as *almost*.

*I've **practically** finished.* *Jake is **practically** like a father to me.*
*She's **practically** never at home.*

367 *alone, lonely, lonesome* and *lone*

Alone means 'without others around'. *Lonely* (and informal AmE *lonesome*) means 'alone and unhappy because of it'. Compare:

*I like to be **alone** for short periods.*
*But after a few days I start getting **lonely/lonesome**.*

Alone can be emphasised by *all*.

*After her husband died, she was **all alone**.*

Alone is not used before a noun (► 183.3). *Lone* and *solitary* can be used instead; *lone* is rather literary.

*The only green thing was a **lone/solitary pine tree**.*

368 *along*

The preposition *along* is used before nouns like *road, river, corridor, line*: words that refer to things with a long thin shape.

*I saw her running **along the road**.*
*His office is **along the corridor**.*

To talk about periods or activities, we prefer *through*.

through the centuries (NOT ~~*along the centuries*~~)
*all **through the journey*** (NOT ~~*all along the journey*~~)
*right **through the meal***

Note the special use of *along* as an adverb particle in expressions like *Come along* (= Come with me) or *walking along* (= walking on one's way).

aloud and *loudly* ► 520

already, still and *let* ► 595

369 *also, as well* and *too*

1 position

Also, as well and *too* have similar meanings, but they do not go in the same position in clauses. *Also* usually goes with the verb, in mid-position (► 200); *as well* and *too* usually go at the end of a clause. *As well* is less common in American English.

*She not only sings; she **also** plays the piano.*
*She not only sings; she plays the piano **as well**.*
*She doesn't just sing, she plays the piano **too**.*

As well and *too* do not go at the beginning of a clause. *Also* can go at the beginning of a clause to give more importance to a new piece of information.

*It's a nice house, but it's very small. **Also**, it needs a lot of repairs.*

2 reference

These words can refer to different parts of a clause, depending on the meaning. Consider the sentence *We work on Saturdays as well.* This can mean three different things:

a (Other people work on Saturdays, and) we work on Saturdays as well.

b (We do other things on Saturdays, and) we work on Saturdays as well.

c (We work on other days, and) we work on Saturdays as well.

When we speak, we show the exact meaning by stressing the word or expression that *also* / *as well* / *too* refers to.

3 imperatives and short answers

As well and *too* are used in imperatives and short answers, but not usually *also*.

*Give me some bread **as well**, please.* (More natural than *Also give me . . .*)
*'She's nice.' 'Her sister is **as well**.'* (More natural than *Her sister is also.*)
*'I've got a headache.' 'I have **too**.'* (More natural than *I also have.*)

In very informal speech, we often use *Me too* as a short answer.

*'I'm going home.' '**Me too**.'*

More formal equivalents are *So am I* (► 309) or *I am too* (BUT NOT ~~*I also*~~).

4 *too* in a formal style

In a formal or literary style, *too* can be placed directly after the subject.

*I, **too**, have experienced despair.*

For *also, as well, too* and *either* in negative clauses, ► 227.
For *also* and *even*, ► 452.3.
For *as well as*, ► 382.

370 *alternate(ly)* and *alternative(ly)*

Alternate(ly) means 'first one and then the other', 'in turns'.

*We spend **alternate** weekends at our country cottage.*
*I'm **alternately** happy and depressed.*

Alternative(ly) is similar to 'different', 'instead', 'on the other hand'.
Jessica's not free on the 27th. We'll have to find an ***alternative*** *date.*
You could go by air, or ***alternatively*** *you could drive there.*
In American English, *alternate(ly)* can be used with the same meaning as *alternative(ly)*.

371 *although, though, but* and *however*: contrast

1 *although* and *though*: conjunctions

Both these words can be used as conjunctions, with the same meaning. *Though* is less formal than *although*, and is more common in speech than writing. They introduce an idea ('A') with which the main clause ('B') is in contrast. When we say '(Al)though A, B', there is something unexpected or surprising about 'B'.

(Al)though *(A) I don't like him, (B) I agree that he's a good manager.*
(B) I'd quite like to go out, ***(al)though*** *(A) it is a bit late.*

2 *but* and *however*

We can give the same meaning by putting *but* or *however* with the contrasting, 'unexpected' clause ('B').

(A) I don't like him, ***but*** *(B) I agree that he's a good manager.*
(A) I don't like him. ***However,*** *(B) I agree that he's a good manager.*
(A) It is a bit late, ***but*** *(B) I'd quite like to go out.*
(A) It is a bit late; ***however,*** *(B) I'd quite like to go out.*

3 *but* and *however*: the difference

But is a conjunction: it joins two clauses, and comes at the beginning of the second. *However* is an adverb: it does not connect its sentence grammatically to the one before. This is why it comes after a full stop or a semi-colon in the above examples.

However can go in various positions. It is normally separated from its sentence by one or two commas, depending on its position.

However, *the police did not believe him.*
The police, ***however,*** *did not believe him.*
The police did not believe him, ***however.***

4 *though* used as an adverb

We can use *though* as an adverb (often at the end of a sentence), to mean 'however'.

'Nice day.' 'Yes. Bit cold, ***though.'***
The strongest argument, ***though,*** *is economic and not political.*

For *as though*, ▶ 378. For *even though* (NOT ~~*even although*~~), ▶ 452.4.
For sentences like *Cold though it was, I went out*, ▶ 255.
For *however* in sentences like *However much he eats, he never gets fat*, ▶ 252.

372 *altogether* and *all together*

Altogether means 'completely' or 'considering everything'.
*My new house isn't **altogether** finished.*
***Altogether**, she decided, marriage was a bit of a mistake.*
Altogether can also be used to give totals.
*That's £4.38 **altogether**.*
All together usually means 'everybody/everything together'.
*Come on, everybody sing. **All together** now . . .*
*They **all** went to the cinema **together**.*

among and *between* ► 403

another and *other(s)* ► 550

373 *any* and *no*: adverbs

1 *any* and *no* with comparatives

Any can modify comparatives. This happens mostly in questions and negative sentences, and after *if* (also ► 222).
*Can you go **any faster**?*
*You don't look **any older** than your daughter.* (= You don't look at all older . . .)
***If** I were **any younger**, I'd fall in love with you.*
No can also be used in this way (but not *some*).
*I'm afraid the weather's **no better** than yesterday.*

2 *any/no different*

We can also use *any* and *no* with *different*.
*This school isn't **any different** from the last one.*
*'Is Jack any better?' '**No different**. Still very ill.'*

3 *any/no good; any/no use*

Note the expressions *any good/use* and *no good/use*.
*Was the film **any good**?* *This watch is **no use**. It keeps stopping.*

374 *appear*

1 linking verb: 'seem'

Appear can be a linking verb (► 11), used to say how things look or seem. It is used in similar ways to *seem* (► 576 for details), but is less frequent, especially in an informal style.
With this meaning, *appear* is followed by adjectives, not adverbs. We can use *appear* or *appear to be*.
*He **appears (to be)** very **angry** today.* (NOT ~~*He appears very angrily today.*~~)

Before nouns we generally use *appear to be.*

*It **appears to be** some kind of bomb.*

*The boys on the bus **appeared to be** students.*

Structures with preparatory *there* (► 20) or *it* (► 268) are possible.

***There** appears to be a problem with the oil pressure.*

***It** appears that we may be mistaken.*

2 *appear* and *seem*: differences

Seem can be used to talk both about objective facts and about subjective impressions and feelings (► 576 for examples). *Appear* is mostly used to talk about objective facts. Compare:

*The baby **seems/appears** (to be) hungry.*

*She doesn't want to go on studying. It **seems** a pity.* (NOT ~~*It appears a pity.*~~)

Seem is often used with *like*. This is not normal with *appear*.

*It **seemed like** a good idea.* (More natural than *It appeared like a good idea.*)

Seem can be used in a special structure with *can't* (► 576.4). This is not possible with *appear*.

*I **can't seem** to make him understand.* (BUT NOT ~~*I can't appear to make him understand.*~~)

3 'come into sight'

Appear can also mean 'come into sight' or 'arrive'. In this case it can be modified by an adverbial.

*She **suddenly appeared** in the doorway.*

For structures with *look*, ► 518.

375 *arise* and *rise*

Arise means 'begin', 'appear', 'occur', 'come to one's notice'. It is used mostly with abstract nouns as subjects.

*A discussion **arose** about the best way to pay.*

*I'm afraid a difficulty has **arisen**.*

Rise usually means 'get higher', 'come/go up'.

*Prices keep **rising**.* *What time does the sun **rise**?*

*My hopes are **rising**.*

Note that we usually say that people *get up* in the morning. *Rise* is only used with this meaning in a very formal style.

Arise and *rise* are irregular verbs.

(a)rise – (a)rose – (a)risen

For the difference between *rise* and *raise*, ► 1.2.

376 *(a)round* and *about*

1 circular movement, etc: *(a)round*

We use both *round* and *around* (AmE usually *around*) for movement or position in a circle or a curve.

*She walked **(a)round** the car and looked at the wheels.*
*I'd like to travel **(a)round** the world.*
*'Where do you live?' 'Just **(a)round** the corner.'*

2 touring, distribution: *round*

We also use *round* or *around* (AmE usually *around*) to talk about going to all (or most) parts of a place, or giving things to everybody in a group.

*We walked **(a)round** the old part of the town.*
*Can I look **(a)round?** Could you pass the cups **(a)round**, please?*

3 indefinite movement and position

We use *around* or *about* (AmE usually *around*) to refer to movements or positions that are not very clear or definite: 'here and there', 'in lots of places', 'in different parts of', 'somewhere in' and similar ideas.

*The children were running **around/about** everywhere.*
*Stop standing **around/about** and do some work.*
*'Where's Jack?' 'Somewhere **around/about**.'*
*I like doing odd jobs **around/about** the house.*

We also use these words in some common expressions to talk about time-wasting or silly activity.

*Stop **fooling around/about**. We're late.*

4 approximately

About and *around* can both mean 'approximately', 'not exactly'. *About* is more common than *around* in British English.

*There were **about/around** fifty people there.*
*'What time shall I come?' '**About/Around** eight.'*

For other uses of these words, see a good dictionary.

as and *like* ► 515

377 *as, because, since* and *for*

All four of these words can be used to refer to the reason for something. (For *as, since* and *for* referring to time, ► 251, 469, 579.) There are some differences.

1 *as* and *since*

As and *since* are used when the reason is already known to the listener/reader, or when it is not the most important part of the sentence. *As-* and *since*-clauses often come at the beginning of sentences.

***As it's raining again**, we'll have to stay at home.*
***Since he had not paid his bill**, his electricity was cut off.*

As- and *since*-clauses are relatively formal; in an informal style, the same ideas are often expressed with *so*.

*It's raining again, **so** we'll have to stay at home.*

2 *because*

Because puts more emphasis on the reason, and most often introduces new information which is not known to the listener/reader.

***Because** I was ill for six months, I lost my job.*

When the reason is the most important part of the sentence, the *because*-clause usually comes at the end. It can also stand alone. *Since* and *as* cannot be used like this.

*Why am I leaving? I'm leaving **because** I'm fed up!* (NOT . . . ~~*I'm leaving as/since I'm fed up!*~~)

*'Why are you laughing?' '**Because** you look so funny.'*

A *because*-clause can be used to say how one knows something.

*You didn't tell me the truth, **because** I found the money in your room.*
(= . . . I know because I found . . .)

For more information about *because*, ► 393.

3 *for*

For introduces new information, but suggests that the reason is given as an afterthought. A *for*-clause could almost be in brackets. *For*-clauses never come at the beginning of sentences, and cannot stand alone. *For*, used in this sense, is most common in a formal written style, and is becoming rare.

*I decided to stop and have lunch – **for** I was feeling hungry.*

For ***for*** **+ object + infinitive clause** (e.g. *What I want is **for everyone to have lunch***), ► 113.

378 *as if* and *as though; like*

1 meaning

As if and *as though* are both used to say what a situation seems like. They can refer to something that we think may be true.

*It looks **as if/though** it's going to rain.*

*It sounds **as if/though** Jack's going to change his job.*

They can also be used to talk about things which we know are not true.

*I feel **as if/though** I'm dying.*

*She was acting **as if/though** she was in charge.*

2 tenses

When we talk about things which we know are not true, we can use a past tense with a present meaning after *as if/though*. This emphasises the meaning of unreality. Compare:

– *She looks **as if** she **is** rich.* (Perhaps she is.)
*He talks **as if** he **was** rich.* (But he is definitely not.)

– *You look **as though** you **know** each other.*
*Why is he looking at me **as though** he **knew** me? I've never seen him before.*

In a formal style, *were* can be used instead of *was* in an 'unreal' comparison. This is common in American English.

*He talks **as if** he **were** rich.* →

3 *like* meaning 'as if/though'

Like is often used in the same way as *as if/though*, especially in an informal style. This used to be typically American English, but it is now common in British English.

*It seems **like** it's going to rain.*
*He sat there smiling **like** it was his birthday.*

For the difference between *like* and *as*, ► 515.

379 *as long as*

1 tenses

After *as long as*, we use a present tense to express a future idea.

*I'll remember that day **as long as I live**.* (NOT . . . ~~*as long as I will live.*~~)

For other conjunctions which are used in this way, ► 231.

2 conditions

As/so long as is often used to state conditions.

*You can take my car **as/so long as you drive carefully**.* (= . . . on condition that you drive carefully.)

3 emphatic use

Before a number, *as long as* can be used to suggest great length.

*These meetings can last **as long as** four hours.*

For a similar use of *as much/many as*, ► 203.6.

380 *as such*

Not . . . as such is used to say that something is not exactly what a word or expression suggests.

*'So you went on a tour to Japan?' 'Well, **not** a tour **as such** – I went on business. But I managed quite a lot of sightseeing.'*
*I'm **not** a teacher **as such**, but I've taught English to some of my friends.*

381 *as usual*

Note that in this expression we use the adjective *usual*, not the adverb *usually*.

*The train's late, **as usual**.* (NOT . . . ~~*as usually.*~~)

as well, also and *too* ► 369

382 *as well as*

1 meaning

As well as has a similar meaning to 'not only . . . but also'.

*She's got a goat, **as well as** five cats and three dogs.*
*He's clever **as well as** nice.* (= He's not only nice, but also clever.)
*She works in television **as well as** writing children's books.*

When some information is already known to the listener/reader, we put this with *as well as*.

***As well as birds**, some mammals can fly.* (NOT ~~*Birds can fly, as well as some mammals.*~~)
*They speak Italian in parts of Switzerland **as well as Italy**.* (NOT ~~*They speak Italian in Italy as well as parts of Switzerland.*~~)

2 verbs after *as well as*

When we put a verb after *as well as*, we most often use the *-ing* form.

*Smoking is dangerous, **as well as making** you smell bad.* (NOT . . . ~~*as well as it makes you smell bad.*~~)
***As well as breaking** his leg, he hurt his arm.* (NOT . . . ~~*as well as he broke his leg*~~ . . .)

After an infinitive in the main clause, an infinitive without *to* is possible.

*I have to feed the animals **as well as look** after the children.*

Note the difference between:

*She sings **as well as playing** the piano.* (= She not only plays, but also sings.)
*She sings **as well as she plays** the piano.* (= Her singing is as good as her playing.)

For *as well, also* and *too*, ▸ 369.

383 *ask*

1 *ask* and *ask for*

ask for: ask somebody to give something
ask without *for*: ask somebody to tell something

Compare:

– *Don't **ask** me **for** money.* (NOT ~~*Don't ask me money.*~~)
*Don't **ask** me my name.* (More common than *Don't ask me for my name.*)
– ***Ask for** the menu.*
***Ask** the price.*

Ask is sometimes used without *for* when talking about asking for sums of money, especially in connection with buying, selling and renting.

*They're **asking £500** a month including tax.*
*'How much is the car?' '**I'm asking fifteen hundred**.'*

Note also the expressions *ask a lot of somebody, ask too much of somebody, ask a favour of somebody* and *ask (for) permission.* →

2 infinitive structures

We can use infinitive structures after *ask* (► 97–98).

ask + infinitive

*I **asked to go** home.* (= I asked permission to go home.)

ask + object + infinitive

*I **asked Jack to go** home.* (= I told Jack I would like him to go home.)

ask + *for* + object + infinitive

*I **asked for the children to have** extra milk.*
*I **asked for the package to be sent** to my home address.*

Note the difference between these two sentences:
*I **asked Jack to go** home.* (I wanted Jack to go home.)
*I **asked Jack if I could go** home.* (I wanted to go home myself.)

384 *at, on* and *in*: place

1 *at*

At is used to talk about position at a point.
*It's very hot **at** the centre of the earth.*
*Turn right **at** the next corner.*

Sometimes we use *at* with a larger place, if we just think of this as a point: a stage on a journey or a meeting place, for example. Compare:
– *The plane stops for an hour **at/in Frankfurt**.* (a point on a journey)
*She lives **in Frankfurt**.* (somebody's home) (NOT ~~*She lives at Frankfurt.*~~)
– *Let's meet **at the club**.* (a meeting point)
*It was warm and comfortable **in the club**.* (a place to spend time)

We very often use *at* before the name of a building, when we are thinking not of the building itself but of the activity that happens there.
*I first heard her sing **at the Usher Hall** in Edinburgh.*
*Eat **at the Steak House** – best food in town.*
*Sorry I didn't phone last night – I was **at the theatre**.*

At is particularly common with proper names used for buildings or organisations. Compare:
– *I first met your father **at/in Harrods**.*
*I first met your father **in a shop**.*
– *She works **at Legal and General Insurance**.*
*She works **in a big insurance company**.*

At is used to say where people study.
*He's **at the London School of Economics**.*

We use *at* with the name of a city to talk about the city's university. Compare:
*He's a student **at Oxford**.* *He lives **in Cambridge**.*

At is also used before the names of group activities.
***at** a party* ***at** a meeting* ***at** a concert*
***at** a lecture* ***at** the match*

2 *on*

On is used to talk about position on a line (for example a road or a river).

*His house is **on the way** from Aberdeen to Dundee.*
*Stratford is **on the river Avon**.*

But *in* is used for the position of things which form part of the line.

*There's a misprint **in line 6** on page 22.*
*Who's the good-looking boy **in the sixth row**?*

On is used for position on a surface.

*Hurry up – supper's **on the table**!*
*That picture would look better **on the other wall**.*
*There's a big spider **on the ceiling**.*

On can mean 'attached to'.

*Why do you wear that ring **on** your first finger?*
*There aren't many apples **on** the tree this year.*

On is also used for position by a lake or sea.

*Bowness is **on Lake Windermere**.* *Southend-**on**-Sea*

3 *in*

In is used for position inside large areas, and in three-dimensional space (when something is surrounded on all sides).

*I don't think he's **in his office**.* *Let's go for a walk **in the woods**.*
*She grew up **in Swaziland**.* *I last saw her **in Times Square**.*
*He lived **in the desert** for three years.*

4 public transport

We use *on* (and *off*) to talk about travel using public transport (buses, trains, planes and boats), as well as (motor)cycles and horses.

*There's no room **on the bus**; let's get **off** again.*
*He's arriving **on the 3.15 train**.* (NOT . . . ~~*in/with the 3.15 train.*~~)
*We're travelling **on flight 604**.*
*It took five days to cross the Atlantic **on the Queen Elizabeth**.*
*I'll go down to the shop **on my bike**.*

But we use *in* and *out (of)* to talk about cars and small private planes and boats.

*She came **in a taxi**.*
*He fell into the river when he was getting **out of his canoe**.*

5 *arrive*

We generally use *at* (not *to*) after *arrive*; *in* is used before very large places.

*He **arrives at** the airport at 15.30.* (NOT ~~*He arrives to the airport*~~ . . .)
*What time do we **arrive in** New York?*

6 addresses

We generally use *at* to talk about addresses.

*Are you still **at the same address**?* *She lives **at 73 Albert Street**.*

We use *in* (AmE *on*) if we just give the name of the street.

*She lives **in Albert Street**.*

We use *on* for the number of the floor.

*She lives in a room **on the third floor**.* →

At can be used with a possessive (especially in British English) to mean 'at somebody's house or shop'.

'Where's Megan?' 'She's ***at Naomi's****.'*

I used to get my bread ***at a small baker's*** *in the next street.*

7 special expressions

Note these expressions:

in/at *church*	***at*** *home/work*	***in/at*** *school/college*
in *a picture*	***in*** *the sky*	***in*** *the rain*
in *a tent*	***in*** *a hat*	

The map is ***on page 32****.* (BUT *I stopped reading* ***at page 32****.*)

in *bed / (the) hospital / prison*

on *a farm* *working* ***on*** *the railway*

Note that *at* is usually pronounced /ət/, not /æt/ (► 315).
For the difference between *at/in* and *to*, ► 385. For *smile at, shoot at,* etc, ► 385.3.

385 *at/in* and *to*

1 the difference

At and *in* are generally used for position (for the difference, ► 384); *to* is used for movement or direction. Compare:

– *He works* ***at*** *the market.*
He gets ***to*** *the market by bike.*
– *My father lives* ***in*** *Canada.*
I go ***to*** *Canada to see him whenever I can.*

2 expressions of purpose

If we mention the purpose of a movement before we mention the destination, we usually use *at/in* before the place. Compare:

– *Let's go* ***to*** *Marcel's for coffee.*
Let's go and have coffee ***at*** *Marcel's.* (NOT ~~*Let's go and have coffee to Marcel's.*~~)
– *I went* ***to*** *Canada to see my father.*
I went to see my father ***in*** *Canada.* (NOT ~~*I went to see my father to Canada.*~~)

3 targets

After some verbs, *at* is used with the 'target' of a perception or non-verbal communication. Common examples are *look, smile, wave, frown.*

Why are you ***looking at*** *her like that?* *Because she* ***smiled at*** *me.*

At is also used after some verbs referring to attacks or aggressive behaviour. Common examples are *shoot, laugh, throw, shout* and *point.*

It's a strange feeling to have somebody ***shoot at*** *you.*
If you can't ***laugh at*** *yourself, who can you* ***laugh at****?*
Stop ***throwing*** *stones* ***at*** *the cat, darling.*
You don't need to ***shout at*** *me.*
In my dream, everybody was ***pointing at*** *me and laughing.*

Throw to, shout to and *point to* are used when there is no idea of attack.

Please do not ***throw*** *food* ***to*** *the animals.*
Could you ***shout to*** *Jake and tell him it's breakfast time?*

'The train's late again,' she said, ***pointing to*** *the timetable.*

Arrive is generally followed by *at* or *in*; never by *to*.

We should ***arrive at*** *Pat's in time for lunch.* (NOT . . . ~~*arrive to Pat's*~~ . . .)

When did you ***arrive in*** *New Zealand?* (NOT . . . ~~*to New Zealand?*~~)

For *in* and *into*, ▸ 496.

386 *at, on* and *in*: time

at + clock time
at + weekend, public holiday
in + part of day
in + longer period
on + particular day

1 clock times: *at*

I usually get up ***at six o'clock.*** *I'll meet you* ***at 4.15.***

Phone me ***at lunch time.***

At is usually left out before *what time* in an informal style (▸ 386.7).

What time *does your train leave?*

2 parts of the day: *in*

I work best ***in the morning.*** *three o'clock* ***in the afternoon***

We usually go out ***in the evening.***

Note the difference between *in the night* (mostly used to mean 'during one particular night') and *at night* (= during any night). Compare:

I had to get up ***in the night.*** *I often work* ***at night.***

In an informal style, we sometimes use plurals (*days*, etc) with no preposition.

Would you rather work ***days*** *or* ***nights?***

We use *on* if we say which morning/afternoon, etc we are talking about, or if we describe the morning/afternoon, etc.

See you ***on Monday morning.***

We met ***on a cold afternoon*** *in early spring.*

3 days: *on*

I'll ring you ***on Tuesday.*** *My birthday's* ***on March 21st.***

They're having a party ***on Christmas Day.***

In an informal style we sometimes leave out *on*.

I'm seeing her ***Sunday morning.***

We use plurals (*Sundays, Mondays*, etc) to talk about repeated actions.

We usually go and see Granny ***on Sundays.***

4 public holidays and weekends: *at*

We use *at* to talk about the whole of the holidays at Christmas, New Year, Easter and Thanksgiving (AmE).

We're having the roof repaired ***at Easter.***

→

But we use *on* to talk about one day of the holiday.

Come and see us ***on Christmas Day.***

What are you doing ***on Easter Monday?***

British people say *at the weekend*; Americans use *on*.

What did you do ***at the weekend?***

5 longer periods: *in*

It happened ***in the week*** *after Christmas.*

I was born ***in March.*** *Kent is beautiful* ***in spring.***

Our house was built ***in the 15th century.*** *He died* ***in 1616.***

6 other uses of *in*

In can also be used to say how soon something will happen, and to say how long something takes to happen.

Ask me again ***in three or four days.***

I can run 200 metres ***in about 30 seconds.***

The expression *in . . .'s time* is used to say how soon something will happen, not how long something takes. Compare:

I'll see you again ***in a month's time.***

It'll be ready ***in three weeks' time.***

He wrote the book ***in a month.*** (NOT . . . ~~*in a month's time.*~~)

In American English, *in* can be used in negative sentences, like *for*, to talk about periods up to the present.

I haven't seen her ***in years.***

7 expressions with no preposition

At/*on*/*in* are not normally used in expressions of time before *next*, *last*, *this*, *that* (sometimes), *one*, *any* (in an informal style), *each*, *every*, *some*, *all*.

See you ***next week.*** *Come* ***any time.***

Are you free ***this morning?*** *I didn't feel very well* ***that week.***

I'm at home ***every evening.*** *We met* ***one day*** *in late August.*

We stayed ***all day.***

These prepositions are not normally used, either, before *yesterday*, *the day before yesterday*, *tomorrow* or *the day after tomorrow*.

What are you doing ***the day after tomorrow?***

And prepositions are usually dropped in questions beginning ***What*/*Which*** **+ expression of time**, and in answers which only contain an expression of time.

What day *is the meeting?*

Which week *did you say you're away?*

'***What time*** *are you leaving?*' '***Eight o'clock.***'

Note that *at* is usually pronounced /ət/, not /æt/ (► 315).
For the difference between *in* and *during*, ► 441.

387 *at all*

1 *at all* with a negative

We often use *at all* to emphasise a negative idea.

I didn't understand anything ***at all.*** (= I didn't understand even a little.)

She was hardly frightened ***at all.***

2 questions, etc

At all can also be used in questions, and with 'non-affirmative' words like *if, ever* and *any*.

*Do you play poker **at all?*** (= . . . even a little?)
*He'll come before supper if he comes **at all**.*
*You can come whenever you like – any time **at all**.*

3 *Not at all.*

The expression *Not at all* is used (especially in British English) as a rather formal answer to *Thank you* (► 329.19) and to *Do you mind if . . .?* (► 528).

388 *at first* and *first*

We use *at first* to talk about the beginning of a situation, to make a contrast with something different that happens/happened later. *At first . . .* is often followed by *but*.

***At first** they were very happy, **but** then things started going wrong.*
*The work was hard **at first, but** I got used to it.*

In other cases, we usually prefer *first*.

*That's mine – I saw it **first!*** (NOT . . . ~~*I saw it at first.*~~)
*We lived there when we were **first** married.* (= . . . in the early days of our marriage.) (NOT . . . ~~*when we were at first married.*~~)
***First**, I want to talk about the history of the problem; then I'll outline the situation today; and then we'll discuss possible solutions.* (NOT ~~*At first, I want to talk . . .*~~)

Note that *at last* is not the opposite of *at first*, ► 465.
For *first(ly)* as a discourse marker, ► 301.1.

at last, finally, in the end and *at the end* ► 465

389 *(a)wake* and *(a)waken*

1 use

Wake is the most common of these four verbs. It can mean 'stop sleeping' or 'make (somebody else) stop sleeping'. It is often followed by *up*, especially when it means 'stop sleeping'.

*I **woke up** three times in the night.*
***Wake up!** It's time to go to work.* (NOT ~~*Wake!*~~ . . .)
*Could you **wake** me **(up)** at half past six?*

Waken is a more literary alternative to *wake (up)*.

*The princess **did** not **waken** for a hundred years.*
*Then the prince **wakened** her with a kiss.*

Awake and *awaken* are also rather literary words. They are most often used to talk about the waking of emotions, understanding, etc.

*I slowly **awoke** to the danger that threatened me.* →

At first I paid little attention, but slowly my interest ***awoke****.*
The sound of the church clock ***awakened*** *a half-buried memory.*

2 *awake* and *asleep* (adjectives)

In informal British English the adjectives *awake* and *asleep* are more common in predicative position (after *be*) than the verb forms *waking* and *sleeping*.

Is the baby ***awake*** *yet?*
Everyone was ***asleep*** *when I got home.*

390 *back* (adverb) and *again*

Back and *again* can be used with similar meanings, but there are some differences.

1 *back* with a verb

With a verb, we use *back* to suggest a return to an earlier situation, a movement in the opposite direction to an earlier movement, and similar ideas. *Again* is not normally used in this way with a verb.

Give me my watch ***back****.* (NOT ~~*Give me my watch again.*~~)
I'm taking this meat ***back*** *to the shop.* (NOT ~~*I'm taking this meat to the shop again.*~~)

2 *again* with a verb

With a verb, *again* usually suggests repetition. Compare:

– *That was lovely. Can you play it* ***again****?*
When I've recorded your voice I'll play it ***back****.*
– *Sam was really bad-mannered. I'm never going to invite him* ***again****.*
She comes to our parties but she never invites us ***back****.*
– *I don't think he got your email. You'd better write* ***again****.*
If I write to you, will you write ***back****?*

Note the difference between *sell back* (to the same person) and *sell again*.

The bike you sold me is too small. Can I ***sell*** *it* ***back*** *to you?*
If we buy this house and then have to move somewhere else, how easy will it be to ***sell*** *it* ***again****?*

3 cases when *back* is not used

When the verb itself already expresses the idea of 'return to an earlier situation' or 'movement in the opposite direction', *back* is not generally used.

Stefan can never ***return*** *to his country.* (More natural than *Stefan can never return back . . .*)
Who opened the window? Could you ***close*** *it, please?* (NOT . . . ~~*close it back*~~ . . .)

However, *again* can be used to emphasise the idea of 'return to an earlier situation'.

Stefan can never ***return*** *to his country* ***again****.*
Who opened the window? Could you ***close*** *it* ***again****, please?*

4 adverb particles, etc

With adverb particles and prepositional phrases, we can use both *back* and *again* to suggest 'return to an earlier situation', etc.

I stood up, and then I sat ***(back) down (again)****.*
He tasted the apple and spat it ***(back) out (again)****.*
Go ***(back) to sleep (again)****.*
I'll be ***(back) in the office (again)*** *on Monday.*

5 *ring/call back*

Note that *ring back* (British English only) and *call back* can be used to mean both 'return a phone call' and 'repeat a phone call'.

'She's not here just now.' 'Ask her to ***ring/call*** *me* ***back****.'* (= return my call)
'I haven't got time to talk now.' 'OK, I'll ***ring/call back*** *later.'* (= ring again)

6 word order

Back is an adverb particle (► 195), and can usually go between a verb and its object, unless this is a pronoun (► 12.4). *Again* cannot.

Take ***back your money*** *– I don't want it.* (OR *Take* ***your money back*** *. . .*)
Count ***the money again****, please.* (NOT ~~*Count again the money*~~ *. . .*)

For other uses of *back* and *again*, see a good dictionary.

391 *bath* and *bathe*

1 *bath*

Pronunciation: *bath* /bɑːθ/ *bathing* /ˈbɑːθɪŋ/ *bathed* /bɑːθt/

This verb is not used in American English.
It can have an object.

It's your turn to ***bath*** *the baby.*

And it can be used to mean 'bath oneself'.

I don't think he ***baths*** *very often.*

This use is rather formal; people more often say *have/take a bath* (and this is also common in American English).

I'm feeling hot and sticky; I think I'll ***have a bath****.*

2 *bathe*

Pronunciation: *bathe* /beɪð/ *bathing* /ˈbeɪðɪŋ/ *bathed* /beɪðd/

Bathe is the American equivalent of the British verb *bath.*

It's your turn to ***bathe*** *the baby.* (AmE)
I always ***bathe*** *before I go to bed.* (AmE) (OR *. . . take a bath*)

Bathe can also be used (in both British and American English) to talk about putting water on a part of the body that hurts (for instance sore eyes).

Your eyes are very red – you ought to ***bathe*** *them.*

And ***bathe*** can be used to mean 'swim for pleasure' in British English.

NO BATHING FROM THIS BEACH

This use is rather formal; people more often say *have a swim, go for a swim, go swimming* or just *swim.*

Let's ***go for a swim*** *in the river.*

b changes for the worse

Go (not usually *get*) is used before adjectives in some expressions that refer to changes for the worse. People ***go mad*** (BrE), ***crazy***, ***deaf***, ***blind***, ***grey*** or ***bald***; horses ***go lame***; machines ***go wrong***; meat, fish or vegetables ***go bad***; milk ***goes sour***; bread ***goes stale***; beer, lemonade, musical instruments and car tyres ***go flat***.

*He **went bald** in his twenties.* *The car keeps **going wrong**.*

Note that we use *get*, not *go*, with *old*, *tired* and *ill*.

5 *come true*, etc

Come is used in a few fixed expressions to talk about things finishing up all right. The most common are *come right* (BrE) and *come true*.

*I'll make all your dreams **come true**.*

*Trust me – it will all **come right** in the end.*

***Come* + infinitive** can be used to talk about changes in mental state or attitude.

*I slowly **came to realise** that she knew what she was doing.*

*You will **come to regret** your decision.*

6 *grow old*, etc

Grow is used before adjectives especially to talk about slow and gradual changes. It is more formal than *get* or *go*, and a little old-fashioned or literary.

*Without noticing it he **grew old**.*

*When they **grew rich** they began to drop their old friends.*

*As the weather **grows colder**, I think of moving to a warmer country.*

***Grow* + infinitive** can be used (like ***come* + infinitive**) to talk about changes in attitude, especially if these are gradual.

*He **grew to accept** his stepmother, but he never **grew to love** her.*

7 *turn red*, etc

Turn is used mostly for visible or striking changes of state. It is common before colour words (and is not so informal as *go*).

*She **turned bright red** and ran out of the room.*

*He **turns violent** after he's had a couple of drinks.*

We can use *turn* before numbers to talk about important changes of age.

*I **turned fifty** last week. It's all downhill from now on.*

Turn into is used before nouns.

*He's a lovely man, but when he gets jealous he **turns into a monster**.*

*A girl has to kiss a lot of frogs before one of them **turns into a prince**.*

Turn to and *turn into* can both be used before the names of materials.

*Everything that King Midas touched **turned (in)to gold**.*

*They stood there as if they had been **turned (in)to stone**.*

To talk about a change of occupation, religion, politics, etc, we sometimes use *turn* with a noun (with no preposition or article) or an adjective.

*He worked in a bank for thirty years before **turning painter**.*

*Towards the end of the war he **turned traitor**.*

*At the end of her life she **turned Catholic**.*

Turn (in)to can also be used to talk about changing one thing into another.

*In the Greek legend, Circe **turned men into pigs**.*

8 *fall ill*, etc

Fall is used to mean 'become' in *fall ill, fall asleep* and *fall in love.*

9 verbs related to adjectives: *thicken, brighten*, etc

A number of verbs which are related to adjectives have meanings like 'get more . . .' or 'make more . . .'. Many of them end in *-en*. Examples:

*The fog **thickened**.* *They're **widening** the road here.*
*The weather's beginning to **brighten** up.* *His eyes **narrowed**.*
*Could you **shorten** the sleeves on this jacket?*

10 no change: *stay, keep, remain*

To talk about things not changing, we can use *stay, keep* or *remain* before adjectives. *Remain* is more formal.

*How do you manage to **stay young** and fit?* ***Keep calm**.*
*I hope you will always **remain so charming**.*

Stay and *remain* are also sometimes used before noun phrases.

*Promise me you will always **stay/remain my little boy**.*

Keep can be used before *-ing* forms.

***Keep smiling** whatever happens.*

For other uses of the words discussed in this section, see a good dictionary.

395 *been* meaning 'come' or 'gone'

Been is often used as a past participle of *come* and *go*.

*Granny has **been** to see us twice since Christmas.*
*I haven't **been** to the theatre for ages.*
*Have you ever **been** to Northern Ireland?*

Note that *been* is only used for completed visits. Compare:

– *The electrician's already **been**.* (He has come and gone away again.)
*Megan's **come**, so we can start work.* (She has come and is still here.)
– *I've **been** to London three times this week.*
*'Where's Lucy?' 'She's **gone** to London.'*

For *be gone*, ▸ 477.

396 *before*: adverb

1 'at any time before now/then'

We can use *before* to mean 'at any time before now'. In British English, a present perfect tense is normally used.

*I think **I've seen** this film **before**.* ***Have** you ever **been** here **before**?*

Before can also mean 'at any time before then – before the past moment that we are talking about'. In this case a past perfect tense is used.

*She realised that she **had seen** him **before**.* →

2 counting back from a past time: *eight years before*

We also use *before* after a time expression to 'count back' from a past moment – to say how much earlier something else had happened. A past perfect tense is normally used.

When I went back to the town that I ***had left eight years before****, everything was different.* (NOT . . . ~~*that I had left before eight years*~~ . . .)

To count back from the present, we use *ago*, not *before* (► 362).

I left school ***four years ago****.* (NOT . . . ~~*four years before / before four years*~~)

3 *before, before that* and *first*

Before is not generally used alone to mean 'first' or 'before that happens'. Instead we use *first* or *before that.*

I want to get married one day. But ***before that / first****, I want to travel.* (NOT . . . ~~*But before, I want to travel.*~~)

For the difference between *before* and *ever*, ► 454.4. For *before* as a conjunction, ► 250.

397 *before* (preposition) and *in front of*

before: time
in front of: place

Compare:

I must move my car ***before nine o'clock****.*
It's parked ***in front of the station****.* (NOT . . . ~~*before the station.*~~)

Before is normally used to refer to time. However, it can refer to place:

a to talk about order in queues, lists, documents, etc

Do you mind? I was ***before / in front of you****!*
Her name comes ***before mine*** *in the alphabet.*
We use 'a' ***before a consonant*** *and 'an'* ***before a vowel****.*

b to mean 'in the presence of (somebody important)'

I came up ***before the magistrates*** *for dangerous driving last week.*

c in the expressions *right before one's eyes, before one's very eyes.*

For the difference between *in front of* and *facing/opposite*, ► 549. For *before* as a conjunction, ► 250. For *before* as an adverb, ► 396. For *by* meaning 'at/on or before', ► 414.

398 *begin* and *start*

1 meaning; formality

Begin and *start* can both be used with the same meaning.

I ***began/started*** *teaching when I was 24.*
If Hannah doesn't come soon, let's ***begin/start*** *without her.*

We generally prefer *begin* when we are using a more formal style. Compare:

We will ***begin*** *the meeting with a message from the President.*
Damn! It's ***starting*** *to rain.*

2 cases where *begin* is not possible

Start (but not *begin*) is used to mean:

a 'start a journey'
*I think we ought to **start** at six, while the roads are empty.*

b 'start working' (for machines)
*The car won't **start**.*

c 'make something start'
*How do you **start** the washing machine?*
*The President's wife fired the gun to **start** the race.*

For infinitives and *-ing* forms after *begin* and *start*, ► 105.10.

399 *below, under, underneath* and *beneath*

1 'lower than': *below* or *under*

The prepositions *below* and *under* can both mean 'lower than'.
*Look in the cupboard **below**/**under** the sink.*

2 not directly under: *below*

We prefer *below* when one thing is not directly under another.
*The climbers stopped 300m **below** the top of the mountain.*
*A moment later the sun had disappeared **below** the horizon.*

3 covered: *under*

We prefer *under* when something is covered or hidden by what is over it, and when things are touching.
*I think the cat's **under** the bed.*
*What are you wearing **under** your sweater?*
*The whole village is **under** water.* (NOT . . . ~~*below water.*~~)

4 measurements: *below*

Below is used in measurements of temperature and height, and in other cases where we think of a vertical scale.
*The temperature is three degrees **below** zero.*
*Parts of Holland are **below** sea level.*
*The plane came down **below** the clouds.*
*She's well **below** average in intelligence.*

5 'less than': *under*

We usually use *under*, not *below*, to mean 'less/fewer than' or 'younger than'.
*There were **under** twenty people at the lecture.*
*You can't see this film if you're **under** 18.*

6 *underneath*

Underneath is sometimes used as a preposition instead of *under*, but only for physical position. Compare:
*There's a mouse **under(neath)** the piano.*
*He's still **under** 18.* (NOT . . . ~~*underneath 18.*~~)

7 *beneath*

Beneath is used mostly in a rather literary style.

The ship sank slowly ***beneath*** *the waves.*

It is common before abstract nouns in some fixed expressions.

He acts as if I was ***beneath his notice.*** (= not worth considering)

Her behaviour is ***beneath contempt.*** (= really disgraceful)

8 adverbs

Below can be used as an adverb.

We looked over the cliff at the waves crashing on the rocks ***below.***

Under can be used as an adverb particle (► 195) with some verbs.

A lot of businesses are ***going under*** *because of the economic crisis.*

In other cases we prefer *underneath* for adverbial use.

I can't take my sweater off – I haven't got anything on ***underneath.***

(NOT . . . ~~*anything on under.*~~)

In a book or a paper, *see below* means 'look at something written later in the text'.

The difference between *above* and *over* is similar to the difference between *below* and *under.* ► 354 for details.

400 *beside* and *besides*

Beside is a preposition meaning 'at the side of', 'by', 'next to'.

They lived in a little house ***beside*** *the river.*

Besides can be used like *as well as* (► 382), when we add new information to what is already known.

Besides *literature, we have to study history and philosophy.*

Who was at the party ***besides*** *Jack and the Bensons?*

Besides can also be used informally as a discourse marker (► 301.2) meaning 'also', 'as well', 'in any case'. It is often used in speech to add a stronger, more conclusive argument to what has gone before. In this case, *besides* usually goes at the beginning of a clause.

I don't like those shoes; ***besides****, they're too expensive.*

It's too late to go out now. ***Besides****, it's starting to rain.*

401 *bet*

1 use

I bet (you) can be used in an informal style to mean 'I think it's probable that'. *That* is usually dropped.

I bet (you) *she's not at home.*

(More natural than *I bet (you) that she's not at home.*)

I'll bet . . . is also possible.

I'll bet *you she's not at home.*

2 tenses

After *I bet (you)*, we often use a present tense to refer to the future.
*I bet (you) they **don't come** this evening.* (OR *I bet (you) they won't come . . .*)
*I bet (you) the Conservatives **(will) lose**.*

3 two objects

When *bet* is used to talk about real bets, it can be followed by two objects: the person with whom the bet is made, and the money or thing that is bet.
*I bet **you £5** it doesn't rain this week.*
*My father bet **my mother dinner** at the Ritz that she would marry him.*
He won, but she never bought him the dinner.
Bet is irregular (*bet – bet – bet*).

402 *better*

1 'recovered'

When *better* means 'recovered from an illness', it can be used with *completely* or *quite* (unlike other comparative adjectives).
*Don't start work again until you're **completely better**.*

2 correcting mistakes

We do not normally use *better* to correct mistakes.
*She's gone to Hungary – or **rather**, Poland.* (NOT . . . ~~*or better, Poland.*~~)

For the structure *had better*, ► 77.

403 *between* and *among*

1 *between* two

We say that something is *between* two people, things, or groups of things.
*She was standing **between** Alice and Emily.*
*a long valley **between** high mountains*
Between is often used to talk about distances or intervals.
*We need **two metres between** the windows.*
*I'll be at the office **between nine and eleven**.*
Between is common before *each*.
*There seems to be less and less time **between each** birthday.*

2 *between* or *among* more than two

We usually say that somebody or something is *between* several clearly separate people or things. We prefer *among* when somebody or something is in a group, a crowd or a mass of people or things which we do not see separately. Compare:
– *Our house is **between the woods, the river and the village**.*
*His house is hidden **among the trees**.*
– *I saw something **between the wheels** of the car.*
*Your passport is somewhere **among all these papers**.*

Among is normal before a singular (uncountable) noun.

They found an envelope full of money ***among all the rubbish.***

3 dividing and sharing; *difference*

We can talk about *dividing* or *sharing* things *between* or *among* more than two people or groups.

He ***divided*** *all his money* ***between/among*** *his children and grandchildren.*

We ***shared*** *the work* ***between/among*** *the five of us.*

We normally use *between* after *difference.*

There are enormous ***differences between*** *languages.*

What's the ***difference between*** *'between' and 'among'?*

4 'one of', etc

Among can mean 'one of', 'some of' or 'included in'.

Among *the first to arrive was the ambassador.*

He has a number of criminals ***among*** *his friends.*

404 *big, large* and *great*

1 concrete nouns: usually *big* or *large*

With concrete nouns – the names of things you can see, touch, etc – we mostly use *big* and *large. Big* is most common in an informal style.

Get your ***big*** *feet off my flowers.*

She is a small woman, but she has very ***large*** *hands.*

It was a ***large*** *house, situated near the river.*

2 *great* with concrete nouns

Great is not normally used simply to talk about physical size. In an informal style, it is often used with concrete nouns to mean 'wonderful'.

I've just got a ***great*** *new bike.*

And it can also be used with meanings like 'large and impressive'.

Great *clouds of smoke rose above the burning cathedral.*

Another meaning is 'famous' or 'important'.

Do you think Napoleon was really a ***great*** *man?*

3 abstract nouns: usually *great*

Great is common with abstract nouns – the names of things you cannot see, touch, etc.

I have ***great respect*** *for her ideas.* (NOT ~~*big/large respect*~~)

His behaviour caused ***great annoyance.*** (NOT ~~*big/large annoyance*~~)

You are making a ***great mistake.***

Her work showed a ***great improvement*** *last year.*

Big can be used with countable abstract nouns in an informal style.

You're making ***a big mistake.*** ***Big bargains*** *for weekend shoppers!*

Large is used with countable abstract nouns referring to quantities, amounts and proportions.

We're thinking of giving your company a very ***large order.***

There was a ***large error*** *in the accounts.*

She spent ***large sums*** *on entertaining.*
He wrote a ***large part*** *of the book while he was in prison.*

Big and *large* are not generally used with uncountable nouns – but note the fixed expressions *big business, big trouble.*

4 *large* and *wide*

Large is a 'false friend' for speakers of some languages. It does not mean 'wide'.
The river is 100 metres ***wide.*** (NOT . . . ~~*100 metres large.*~~)

For *wide* and *broad*, ► 412.

405 *birthday* and *date of birth*

Somebody's *date of birth* is the date (day, month and year) when they were born. A *birthday* is the anniversary (day and month) of that date.
Write your name, address and ***date of birth*** *in Section 1 of the form.*
It's my ***birthday*** *on Tuesday. Come and help me celebrate.*

406 *(a) bit*

1 use

A bit is often used as an adverb with the same meaning as *a little* (► 168).
She's ***a bit*** *old to play with dolls, isn't she?*
Can you drive ***a bit*** *slower?* *Wait* ***a bit.***

Note that when *a bit* and *a little* are used with non-comparative adjectives, the meaning is usually negative or critical.
a bit ***tired*** *a bit* ***expensive*** *a little (too)* ***old***
(BUT NOT ~~*a bit kind, a little interesting*~~)

2 *a bit of a*

A bit of a can be used before some nouns in an informal style. The meaning is similar to *rather a* (► 565).
He's ***a bit of a*** *fool, if you ask me.* *I've got* ***a bit of a*** *problem.*

3 *not a bit*

The informal expression *not a bit* means 'not at all'.
I'm ***not a bit*** *tired.* *'Do you mind if I put some music on?' '****Not a bit.****'*

For *a bit* with comparative adjectives and adverbs, ► 207.

407 *born* and *borne*

1 *be born*

To talk about coming into the world at birth, we use the passive expression *to be born.*
Hundreds of children ***are born*** *deaf every year.* →

To give a place or date of birth, we use the simple past: *was/were born*.
*I **was born** in 1936.* (NOT ~~*I am born in 1936.*~~)
*My parents **were born** in Scotland.*

2 the verb *bear*

The verb *bear* (*bore, borne*) is used to talk about accepting or tolerating difficult experiences. It is most common in the expression *can't bear* (= hate, can't stand).
*I **can't bear** her voice.*
In a very formal style, *bear* can be used with other meanings, including 'give birth to' and 'carry'.
*She **bore** six children in seven years.* (More normal: *She had six children . . .*)
*The king's body was **borne** away to the cathedral.*

408 *borrow* and *lend*

Borrowing is **taking** (for a time).
*Can I **borrow** your bicycle?* (NOT ~~*Can I lend your bicycle?*~~)
You borrow something **from** somebody.
*I **borrowed** a pound **from** my brother.* (NOT ~~*I borrowed my brother a pound.*~~)
Lending (AmE also *loaning*) is **giving** (for a time). You lend something **to somebody**, or **lend somebody** something.
*I **lent** my coat **to** Josh, and I never saw it again.*
***Lend me** your comb for a minute, will you?* (NOT ~~*Borrow me your*~~ . . .)

For *lend* in passive structures, ► 61.

409 *bring* and *take*

1 speaker's/hearer's position

We mostly use *bring* for movements to the place where the speaker or hearer is, and *take* for movements to other places. Compare:
– *This is a nice restaurant. Thanks for **bringing** me here.*
(NOT . . . ~~*thanks for taking me here.*~~)
*Let's have another drink, and then I'll **take** you home.*
(NOT . . . ~~*and then I'll bring you home.*~~)
– (on the phone) *Can we come over on Sunday? We'll **bring** a picnic.*
*Let's go and see Aunt May on Sunday. We can **take** a picnic.*

2 speaker's/hearer's past or future position

We can also use *bring* for a movement to a place where the speaker or hearer already was or will be. Compare:
– *'Where's that report?' 'I **brought** it to you when you were in Mr Allen's office. Don't you remember?'*
*I **took** the papers to Jack's office.*
– *I'll arrive at the hotel at six o'clock. Can you **bring** the car at six-thirty?*
*Can you **take** the car to the garage tomorrow? I won't have time.*
(NOT ~~*Can you bring the car to the garage tomorrow?*~~ . . .)

3 joining a movement

Bring (with) can be used to talk about joining a movement of the speaker's/hearer's, even if *take* is used for the movement itself.

*I'm **taking** the kids to the circus tonight. Would you like to come with us and **bring** Susie?*

4 somebody else's position

Sometimes when we are talking about somebody else (not the speaker or hearer), that person can become the centre of our attention. In that case, we use *bring* for movements to the place where he/she is (or was or will be). This often happens in stories.

*He heard nothing for months. Then one day his brother **brought** him a letter.*

5 American English

Americans often use *bring* where British English has *take*.

*Let's go and see Aunt May on Sunday. We can **bring** a picnic.*

The difference between *come* and *go* is similar. ► 424
For other uses of *take*, ► 602.

410 *bring up* and *educate*

Bring up and the noun *upbringing* are mostly used for the moral and social training that children receive at home. *Educate* and *education* are used for the intellectual and other training that people get at school and university.

*Lucy was **brought up** by her aunt and **educated** at the local school.*

*Their kids are very badly **brought up** – always screaming and fighting.*

(NOT ~~*Their kids are very badly educated*~~ . . .)

*Which is better: a good **upbringing** and a bad **education**, or the opposite?*

411 *Britain, the United Kingdom, the British Isles* and *England*

(Great) Britain is normally used to mean the island which includes England, Scotland and Wales; *British* is used for the people of these three countries. Great Britain and Northern Ireland together are called *the United Kingdom*; some people also use *Britain* in this wider sense.

The British Isles is a geographical, not a political, term. It is the name for England, Scotland, Wales, the whole of Ireland (which includes both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, also called 'Eire'), and the smaller islands round about.

Note that *England* is only one part of Britain. Scotland and Wales are not in England, and Scottish and Welsh people do not like to be called 'English'.

An informal word for a British person is *Brit*. *Briton* is used mainly in news reports and newspaper headlines (e.g. *THREE BRITONS DIE IN AIR CRASH*), and to refer to the ancient inhabitants of Britain.

412 *broad* and *wide*

1 physical distance

To talk about the physical distance from one side of something to the other, we more often use *wide*.

*The old city has very **wide** streets.* *The car's too **wide** for the garage.*

Broad can also be used in this physical sense, especially in more formal descriptions.

*Across the **broad** valley, the mountains rose blue and mysterious.*
*She wore a simple green dress with a **broad** black belt.*

Note also: ***broad** shoulders; a **broad** back; **wide** eyes; a **wide** mouth.*

Wide is used in expressions of measurement; note the word order.

*The river is about **half a mile wide**.* (NOT . . . ~~*wide half a mile.*~~)

2 abstract meanings

Both words can express more abstract meanings. Common expressions:

***broad** agreement* (= agreement on most important points)
***broad**-minded* (= tolerant) ***broad** daylight* (= full, bright daylight)
***a wide** variety/range* (of opinions, etc)

For other common expressions with *broad* and *wide*, see a good dictionary.

but, although, though* and *however ► 371

413 *but* meaning 'except'

1 use

We use *but* to mean 'except' after *all, none, every, any, no* (and *everything, everybody, nothing, nobody, anywhere*, etc).

*He eats **nothing but** hamburgers.* ***Everybody's** here **but** George.*
*I've finished **all** the jobs **but** one.*

Note the expressions *next but one, last but two*, etc (mainly BrE).

*Jackie lives **next door but one**.* (= two houses from me)
*I was **last but two** in the race yesterday.*

But for expresses the idea 'if something had not existed/happened'.

*I would have been in real trouble **but for** your help.*
***But for** the storm, I would have been home before eight.*

Note also the structure *who/what should . . . but* (used to talk about surprising appearances, meetings, etc).

*I walked out of the station, and **who should** I see **but** old Holly?*
*I looked under the bed, and **what should** I find **but** the keys I lost last week?*

2 pronouns after *but*

After *but*, we usually use object pronouns (*me, him*, etc). Subject pronouns (*I, he*, etc) are possible in a more formal style before a verb.

*Nobody **but her** would do a thing like that.* (More formal: *Nobody but she . . .*)

3 verbs after *but*

The verb form after *but* usually depends on what came before. Infinitives are normally without *to*.

She's not interested in anything ***but skiing.*** (*interested in . . . skiing*)
That child does nothing ***but watch*** *TV.* (*does . . . watch*)

Can't (help) but + **infinitive without *to*** is sometimes used with the meaning of 'can't help . . .ing' (► 418). *Cannot but . . .* is very formal; *can't help but . . .* is especially common in American English.

One ***cannot (help) but admire*** *his courage.* (= One has to admire . . .)
I ***can't help but wonder*** *what's going to happen to us all.*

Infinitives with *to* are used after *no alternative/choice/option but . . .*

The train was cancelled, so I had ***no alternative but to take*** *a taxi.*

4 *but* meaning 'only'

In older English, *but* was used to mean 'only', but this is now very unusual.

She is ***but*** *a child.*

Note: *but* is usually pronounced /bət/, not /bʌt/ (► 315).
For *except*, ► 456. For *but* as a conjunction and ellipsis after *but*, ► 276.

414 *by*: time

1 not later than

By can mean 'not later than'.

I'll be home ***by*** *five o'clock.* (= at or before five)
'*Can I borrow your car?*' '*Yes, but I must have it back* ***by*** *tonight.*' (= tonight or before)

By can also suggest the idea of 'progress up to a particular time'.

By *the end of the meal, everybody was drunk.*

Before a verb, we use *by the time (that).*

I'll be in bed ***by the time*** *you get home.*
By the time that *the guards realised what was happening, the gang were already inside the bank.*

For the difference between *by* and *until*, ► 613.6.

2 other meanings

By can also be used to talk about time in the rather literary expressions *by day* and *by night* (= during the day/night).

He worked ***by night*** *and slept* ***by day.***

Note also *day by day, hour by hour* etc.

The situation is getting more serious ***day by day.*** (= . . . each day.)

And one can pay *by the hour, by the day* etc.

In this job we're paid ***by the hour.***
You can rent a bicycle ***by the day*** *or* ***by the week.***

415 *by* and *near*

By means 'just at the side of'; something that is *by* you may be closer than something that is *near* you. Compare:

*We live **near the sea**.* (perhaps five kilometres away)
*We live **by the sea**.* (We can see it.)

416 *by* (method, agent) and *with* (tools, etc)

1 the difference

By and *with* can both be used to say how somebody does something, but there is an important difference.

We use *by* to talk about an action – what we **do** to get a result. We use *with* to talk about a tool or other object – what we **use** to get a result. Compare:

– *I killed the spider **by hitting it**.* (Note the *-ing* form after *by*.)
*I killed the spider **with a shoe**.* (NOT . . . ~~*by a shoe*~~.)
– *'I got where I am **by hard work**.'*
*'No you didn't. You got there **with your wife's money**.'*

Without is the opposite of both *by* and *with* in these cases. Compare:

– *I got her to listen **by** shouting.*
*It's difficult to get her to listen **without** shouting.*
– *We'll have to get it out **with** a screwdriver.*
*We can't get it out **without** a screwdriver.*

By is also used to refer to means of transport (*by bus, by train*, etc), ► 142.1.

2 passive clauses

In passive clauses, *by* introduces the agent – the person or thing that is responsible for the action (► 58).

*I was interviewed **by three directors**.*
*My car was damaged **by a falling branch**.*

We generally prefer *with* to refer to a tool or instrument used by somebody. Compare:

*He was killed **by a heavy stone**.* (This could mean 'A stone fell and killed him'.)
*He was killed **with a heavy stone**.* (This means 'Somebody used a stone to kill him'.)

417 *call*

Call (with no object) can mean both 'telephone' and 'visit'. This sometimes causes confusion.

*'Alice **called** this morning.' 'You mean she came here or she phoned?'*

418 *can't help*

If you say that you *cannot/can't help* doing something (especially in British English), you mean that you can't stop yourself, even if you don't want to do it.

She's a selfish woman, but somehow you ***can't help*** *liking her.*
Excuse me – I ***couldn't help*** *overhearing what you said.*
Sorry I broke the cup – I ***couldn't help*** *it.*

Can't help can be followed by ***but*** + **infinitive without *to*** (► 413.3), with the same meaning as *can't help . . .ing*. This is common in American English.

I ***can't help but wonder*** *what I should do next.*

419 *care*: *take care (of), care (about)* and *care for*

1 *take care of*

Take care of normally means 'look after' or 'take responsibility for'.

Nurses ***take care of*** *sick people.*
It's no good giving Daniel a rabbit: he's too young to ***take care of*** *it.*
Ms Savage ***takes care of*** *marketing, and I'm responsible for production.*

Take care (without a preposition) means 'be careful'. Some people use it as a formula when saying goodbye.

Take care *when you're crossing the road, children.*
'Bye, Ruth.' 'Bye, Mike. ***Take care.***'

2 *care (about)*

Care (about) is used to say whether you feel something is important to you. This is very common in negative sentences. *About* is used before an object, but is usually left out before a conjunction.

Most people ***care about*** *other people's opinions.*
(NOT . . . ~~*take care of / care for other people's opinions*~~)
I don't ***care whether*** *it rains – I'm happy.*
'I'll never speak to you again.' 'I ***don't care.***'
'Your mother's upset with you.' 'I ***couldn't care less.***' (= I don't care at all.)

3 *care for*

Care for can be used to mean 'look after'.

He spent years ***caring for*** *his sick mother.*

Another meaning is 'like' or 'be fond of', but this is not very common in modern English.

I don't much ***care for*** *strawberries.*

420 *city* and *town*

Most people simply use *city* to talk about large and important towns – examples in the UK are Belfast, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Manchester, Liverpool and London.

City can be used in a more exact way to talk about a town that has been given a special status by the king or queen (in Britain) or by the state (in some other English-speaking countries).

The City is also a name for London's financial centre.

I'm not sure what his job is: something in ***The City****.*

The two words can be used more or less interchangeably in American English, with *city* often preferred in more prestigious contexts. Compare:

The ***City*** *of Pasadena is governed by a Mayor and a* ***City*** *Council.*

(NOT ~~*The town of Pasadena is governed*~~ . . .)

Pasadena is a small ***town*** *on the outskirts of Houston.*

(NOT . . . ~~*a small city*~~ . . .)

421 *classic* and *classical*

Classic usually refers to a famous traditional style.

He's a ***classic*** *1960s hippy who has never changed.*

She buys ***classic*** *cars and restores them.*

Classical refers to the culture of ancient Greece and Rome, or to European works of art of the so-called 'classical' period in the 18th century.

She's studying ***classical*** *languages and literature at Cambridge.*

Classical music is used to refer to the work of composers like Bach, Mozart or Szymanowski, in contrast to popular music or jazz.

It's hard to learn ***classical*** *guitar.*

422 *close* and *shut*

1 use

Close /kləʊz/ and *shut* can often be used with the same meaning.

Open your mouth and ***close/shut*** *your eyes.*

I can't ***close/shut*** *the window. Can you help me?*

The shop ***closes/shuts*** *at five o'clock.*

You can *shut*, but not *close*, somebody/something in or out of a place.

I ***shut*** *the papers in my desk drawer and locked it.* (NOT ~~*I closed the papers*~~ . . .)

She ***shut*** *him out of the house.*

2 past participles

The past participles *closed* and *shut* can be used as adjectives.

The office is ***closed/shut*** *on Saturday afternoon.*

Shut is not usually used before a noun.

a closed door (NOT ~~*a shut door*~~) ***closed eyes*** (NOT ~~*shut eyes*~~)

3 cases where *close* is preferred

We prefer *close* for slow movements (like flowers closing at night), and *close* is more common in a formal style.

*As we watched, he **closed** his eyes for the last time.*

Compare:

***Close** your mouth, please.* (dentist to patient)

***Shut** your mouth!* (a rude way of saying 'Be quiet!')

We *close* roads, railways, etc (channels of communication). And we *close* (= end) letters, bank accounts, meetings, etc.

423 *cloth* and *clothes*

Cloth (pronounced /klɒθ/) is material made from wool, cotton, etc, used for making clothes, curtains, soft furnishings and so on. (In informal English, it is more common to say *material* or *fabric*.)

*His suits were made of the most expensive **cloth**.*

A cloth is a piece of material used for cleaning, covering things, etc.

*Could you pass me **a cloth**? I've spilt some milk on the floor.*

Clothes (pronounced /kləʊðz/) are things you wear: skirt, trousers, etc.

Clothes has no singular; instead of ~~*a clothe*~~, we say *something to wear* or *an article / a piece of clothing*.

*I must buy some new **clothes**; I haven't got anything to wear.*

424 *come* and *go*

1 speaker's/hearer's position

We use *come* for movements to the place where the speaker or hearer is.

*'Maria, would you **come** here, please?' 'I'm **coming**.'* (NOT . . . ~~*I'm going*~~.)

*When did you **come** to live here?*

(on the phone): *Can I **come** and see you?*

We use *go* for movements to other places.

*I want to **go** and live in Greece.* *Let's **go** and see Daniel and Chloe.*

*In 1577, he **went** to study in Rome.*

2 speaker's/hearer's past or future position

We can use *come* for a movement to a place where the speaker or hearer already was or will be at the time of the movement. Compare:

- *What time did I **come** to see you in the office yesterday?*
  *I **went** to Jack's office yesterday, but he wasn't in.*
- *Will you **come** and visit me in hospital when I have my operation?*
  *He's **going** into hospital next week.*
- *Sarah can't **come** to your birthday party.*
  *She's **going** to see her mother.* →

3 joining a movement

Come (with) can be used to talk about joining a movement of the speaker's/hearer's, even if *go* is used for the movement itself.

*We're **going** to a concert tonight. Would you like to **come** with us?*

4 somebody else's position

Sometimes when we are talking about somebody else (not the speaker or hearer), that person can become the centre of our attention. In that case, we use *come* for movements to the place where he/she is (or was or will be). This often happens in stories.

*He waited till four o'clock, but she didn't **come**.*

5 *come to; come from*

Come to can mean *arrive at.*

*Go straight on till you **come to** a crossroads.*

Come from is used (in the present) to say where people's homes are or were.

*She **comes from** Scotland, but her mother's Welsh.*

*Originally I **come from** Hungary, but I've lived here for twenty years.*

(NOT ~~*Originally I came from Hungary*~~ . . .)

The difference between *bring* and *take* is similar. ► 409 For *come/go and . . .*, ► 99.
For *come/go . . .ing*, ► 476. For *been = come/gone*, ► 395.

425 *comic* and *comical*

Comic is the normal adjective for artistic comedy.

***comic** verse* ***comic** opera* *Shakespeare's **comic** technique*

Comical is a rather old-fashioned word meaning 'funny'.

*a **comical** expression*

426 *complement* and *compliment* (noun and verb)

A *complement* adds to the quality of something, or goes well with it.

The verb *complement* has a similar meaning.

*Dinner at Antonio's – the perfect **complement** to your evening at the opera.*

*They have very different personalities, but they **complement** each other.*

A *compliment* is an expression of praise or admiration. The verb *compliment* has a similar meaning.

*My new hairstyle is getting a lot of **compliments**.*

*I must **compliment** you on your exam results.*

Both nouns are pronounced /ˈkɔmplɪmənt/. Both verbs are pronounced /ˈkɔmplɪment/.

For the grammatical meaning of *complement*, see **Language Terminology**.

427 *continual(ly)* and *continuous(ly)*

Continual(ly) and *continuous(ly)* are both commonly used for uninterrupted actions, processes, etc.

*There has been **continual/continuous** fighting on the border for the last 48 hours.*

*I've been working almost **continually/continuously** since yesterday evening.*

Continual(ly) is preferred for things that happen repeatedly, often annoyingly.

*I can't work with these **continual** interruptions.*

*She's **continually** taking days off.*

428 *contrary*

1 *on the contrary* and *on the other hand*

On the contrary is used to contra~~dict what has been said or suggested~~ has been said or suggested is not true. If we want to give the other side of a question, we use *on the other hand*, not *on the contrary*. Compare:

– *'I suppose the job was boring?' '**On the contrary**, it was really exciting.'*
*The job was boring, but **on the other hand** it was well paid.*
(NOT . . . ~~*on the contrary, it was well paid.*~~)

– *He did not make things easy for his parents. **On the contrary**, he did everything he could to annoy and worry them.*
*He di~~d not make things easy for his parents.~~ **On the other hand**, he could often be wonderfully sweet and loving.*

We can emphasise a contrast with *in contrast*.

*Daytime temperatures in the desert are very high. **In contrast**, the nights can be bitterly cold.* (NOT ~~*On the contrary, the night*~~ . . .)

2 *contrary* and *opposite*

We use *opposite* (▸ 548), not *contrary*, to talk about contrasting words.

*'Short' is the **opposite** of 'tall', and also of 'long'.* (NOT . . . ~~*the contrary of 'tall'*~~ . . .)

429 *control*

Control is a 'false friend' for people who speak some languages. It generally means *manage, direct*, not *check* or *inspect*. Compare:

– *The crowd was too big for the police to **control**.* (= . . . to keep in order.)
*The police were **checking** everybody's papers.* (NOT . . . ~~*controlling everybody's papers.*~~)

– *I found the car difficult to **control** at high speeds.*
*I took the car to the garage and asked them to **have a look at** the steering.*
(NOT . . . ~~*to control the steering.*~~)

However, the noun *control* is used with the meaning of 'inspection point' in expressions like *passport/customs control*.

430 *country*

1 countable use

Country (countable) = 'nation', 'land'.

Scotland is a cold ***country.*** *Mexico is the* ***country*** *I know best.*
How many ***countries*** *are there in Europe?*

2 uncountable use

Country (uncountable) = 'open land without many buildings'.

I like wild ***country*** *best.* (NOT ~~*I like a wild country best.*~~)

The expression *the country* (the opposite of *the town*) is very common.

We live in ***the country*** *just outside Manchester.*
Would you rather live in the town or ***the country?***

For information about countable and uncountable nouns, ▸ 119–120.

date of birth and *birthday* ▸ 405

431 *dare*

1 uncommon

In modern English, *dare* is not a very common verb. In an informal style, people generally use other expressions.

He's not afraid to say what he thinks. (More natural than *He dares to say what he thinks.*)

2 negative use; *daren't*

Dare is, however, quite often used in negative sentences. It can be followed by an infinitive with or without *to*.

She ***doesn't dare (to) go*** *out at night.*
The old lady ***didn't dare (to) open*** *the door.*

A special negative form *daren't* (+ infinitive without *to*) exists in British English.

I ***daren't look.***

The third person singular is also *daren't*, without *-s*.

She ***daren't*** *tell him what she thinks.*

3 special expressions

Don't you dare! is sometimes used to discourage people from doing unwanted things.

*'Mummy, can I draw a picture on the wall?' '****Don't you dare!****'*

How dare you? is sometimes used as an indignant exclamation.

How dare you? *Take your hands off me at once!*

And *I dare say* (sometimes written *I daresay*) is a rather old-fashioned expression meaning 'I think probably', 'I suppose'.

I dare say it'll rain soon. *I daresay you're ready for a drink.*

Children use the expression ***I dare you*** + **infinitive** to challenge each other to do frightening things.

I dare you to run across the road with your eyes shut.

432 *dead, died* and *death*

Dead is an adjective.

a dead man *Mrs McGinty is **dead**.*

*That idea has been **dead** for years.*

Died is the past tense and past participle of the verb *die*.

*Shakespeare **died** in 1616.* (NOT ~~*Shakespeare dead*~~ . . .)

*She **died** in a car crash.* (NOT ~~*She is dead in*~~ . . .)

*So far 50 people have **died** in the fighting.*

Note the spelling of the present participle *dying* (► 348).

Death is a noun meaning 'the end of life'.

*After his **death** his wife went to live in Canada.*

For expressions like *the dead* (= dead people), ► 188.

433 *different*

1 modifiers: *any different*, etc

Different is a little like a comparative: unlike most adjectives, it can be modified by *any* and *no*, *(a) little* and *not much*.

*I hadn't seen her for years, but she wasn't **any** different.*

'How's the patient, doctor?' 'No different.'

*His ideas are **little** different from those of his friends.*

*The new school isn't **much** different from the old one.*

Quite different means 'completely different' (► 564.3).

*I thought you'd be like your sister, but you're **quite different**.*

Unlike comparatives, *different* can also be modified by *very*.

*She's **very** different from her sister.*

2 prepositions: *different from/to*

From is generally used after *different*; many British people also use *to*.

In American English, *than* is common.

*American football is very different **from/to** soccer.* (AmE . . . *different **from/than** soccer.*)

Before a clause, *different than* is also possible in British English.

*The job's different **than I expected**.* (OR . . . *different **from/to what** I expected.*)

For the difference between *different* and *other*, ► 550.2.

434 *disinterested*

A *disinterested* person has no reason to support one side or another in a disagreement or competition.

*The referee was not exactly **disinterested**: his brother-in-law was playing for one of the teams.*

Disinterested is also often used to mean 'uninterested'.

divorce ► 523

435 *do*: general-purpose verb; *do* and *make*

The general-purpose verb *do* has several uses, and can sometimes be confused with *make*.

*Learn more about what we **do** and what we **make** at megamega.com.* (advertisement)

1 *do* for indefinite activities

We use *do* when we do not say exactly what activity we are talking about – for example with words like *thing, something, nothing, anything, what.*

*Then he **did** a very strange **thing**.* (NOT ~~*Then he made a very strange thing.*~~)
Do something! *I like **doing nothing**.* (NOT ~~*Then he made a very strange thing.*~~)
***What** shall we **do**?*

2 *do* for work

We use *do* when we talk about work and jobs.

*I'm not going to **do** any work today.* *Could you **do** the shopping for me?*
*It's time to **do** the accounts.* *I wouldn't like to **do** your job.*
*I **did*** (= studied) *French and German at school.*
*Has Ben **done** his homework?*
*Could you **do** the ironing first, and then **do** the windows if you've got time?*

3 *do . . .ing*

We use *do* in the informal structure *do . . .ing* to talk about activities that take a certain time, or are repeated (for example jobs and hobbies). There is usually a determiner (e.g. *the, my, some, much*) before the *-ing* form.

*During the summer I'm going to **do some walking** and **a lot of reading**.*
*I hate **doing the ironing**.*

Note that the *-ing* form in this structure is noun-like, and cannot have an object. (NOT ~~*I'm going to do some watching TV.*~~)

But *do* can be used with a compound noun that includes **verb** + **object**.

*I want to **do some bird-watching** this weekend.*
*It's time I **did some letter-writing**.*

4 *make* for constructing, creating, etc

We often use *make* to talk about constructing, building, creating, etc.

*I've just **made** a cake.* *Let's **make** a plan.*
*My father and I once **made** a boat.*

5 *do* instead of *make*

We sometimes use *do* in place of *make*, to sound casual about a creative activity – as if we are not claiming to produce any very special results.

*'What are we going to eat?' 'Well, I could **do** an omelette.'*

6 common fixed expressions

***do** good, harm, business, one's best, somebody a favour, sport, some exercise, one's hair, one's teeth, one's duty, 50mph*
***make** a journey, an offer, arrangements, a suggestion, a decision, an attempt, an effort, an excuse, an exception, a mistake, a noise, a phone call, money, a profit, a fortune, love, peace, war, a bed, progress*

Note that we say ***make** a bed*, but we often talk about ***doing** the bed(s)* as part of the housework. Compare:

*He's old enough to **make his own bed** now.*
*I'll start on the vegetables as soon as I've **done the beds**.*

We use *take*, not *make*, in *take a photo*, and *have*, not *make*, in *have an (interesting) experience*.

For information about causative structures with *make*, ▸ 107.

436 *doubt*

Clauses after the verb *doubt* can be introduced by *whether*, *if* or *that*.

*Economists **doubt whether** interest rates will fall in the near future.*
*I **doubt if** she'll come this evening.*
*The directors **doubt that** new machinery is really necessary.*

In an informal style, people sometimes use no conjunction.

*I **doubt we'll** have enough money for a new car.*

After negative forms of *doubt*, we normally use *that* or no conjunction.

*I **don't doubt (that)** there will be more problems.*

For *no doubt* meaning 'probably', ▸ 534.

down ▸ 614

437 *dress*

1 noun

The countable noun *dress* means an article of women's clothing (it goes from the shoulders to below the hips).

*This is the first time I've seen you wearing **a dress**.*

There is also an uncountable noun *dress* (not used with the article *a/an*). It means 'clothing', 'clothes'. It is not very common in modern English, and is used mostly to talk about special kinds of clothing (for example *national dress, evening dress, battledress*).

He looks good in evening ***dress.*** (NOT . . . ~~*in an evening dress.*~~)

2 verb: putting clothes on

The verb *dress* can be used to talk about putting clothes on oneself or somebody else. *Undress* is used for taking clothes off.

It only takes me five minutes to ***dress*** *in the morning.*
Could you ***dress*** *the children for me?*
I'm going to ***undress*** *in front of the fire.*

In informal English, we use *get dressed/undressed* to talk about dressing or undressing oneself.

Get ***dressed*** *and come downstairs at once!*

Put on and *take off* are generally used when clothes are mentioned.

I ***put on*** *a sweater, but it was so warm that I had to* ***take it off*** *again.*
Can you ***take*** *Jack's boots* ***off*** *for him?*

3 verb: wearing clothes

To say what somebody is/was wearing on a particular occasion, we can use the form *be dressed in* (note the preposition).

I didn't recognise him because he ***was dressed in*** *a dark suit.*
(NOT . . . ~~*dressed with*~~ . . . OR . . . ~~*dressing in*~~ . . .)
She ***was dressed in*** *orange pyjamas.*

Be wearing and *have on* (especially AmE) are also very common.

She ***was wearing*** *orange pyjamas.*
She ***had on*** *orange pajamas.* (AmE)

The active form *dress (in)* can be used to give the idea of repetition or habit.

She always ***dresses in*** *green.* *He* ***dresses*** *well.*

Note also the expression *well dressed.*

438 *drown*

Both active and passive forms of *drown* are common when we talk about accidental drowning.

He ***(was) drowned*** *while trying to swim across a river.*

439 *due to* and *owing to*

Due to and *owing to* are similar to 'because of'. *Due to* is more common than *owing to.*

Phrases beginning *due/owing to* are often separated from the rest of their sentence by a comma.

Due/Owing to *the bad weather*(,) *the match was cancelled.*
We have had to postpone the meeting(,) ***due/owing to*** *the strike.*

Some people believe it is incorrect to use *due to* at the beginning of a clause in this way, but the structure is common in educated usage.
Due to can also follow the verb *be*. *Owing to* is not usually used like this.
His success was ***due to*** *his mother.* (NOT . . . ~~*was owing to his mother.*~~)

440 *during* and *for*

During is used to say **when** something happens; *for* is used to say **how long** it lasts. Compare:
- *My father was in Germany* ***during the summer.***
  My father was in Germany ***for six weeks.*** (NOT . . . ~~*during six weeks.*~~)
- *It rained* ***during the night for two or three hours.***
  I'll come and see you ***for a few minutes during the afternoon.***

For *for, since, in* and *from*, ► 469.

441 *during* and *in*

We use both *during* and *in* to say that something happens inside a particular period of time.
We'll be away ***during/in*** *August.* *I woke up* ***during/in*** *the night.*
We use *during* to stress that we are talking about the whole of the period.
The shop's closed ***during all*** *of August.* (NOT . . . ~~*in all of August.*~~)
And we use *during* when we are talking about an event, activity or experience (not simply a period of time).
He had some strange experiences ***during his military service.***
(NOT . . . ~~*in his military service.*~~)
I'll try to phone you ***during the meeting.*** (NOT . . . ~~*in the meeting.*~~)
I met them ***during my stay in China.***

early, soon and *quickly* ► 591

442 *east* and *eastern, north* and *northern*, etc

1 adjectives: the difference

We often prefer *eastern, northern*, etc when we are talking about vague, indefinite or larger areas, and *east, north*, etc for more clearly defined places (e.g. the names of countries or states). Compare:
- *the* ***northern*** *part of the country*
  the ***north*** *side of the house*
- *the* ***southern*** *counties of Britain*
  the ***south*** *coast*
- ***southern*** *Africa* (an area)
  South *Africa* (a country)
- *the* ***northern*** *United States*
  North *Carolina*

However, place names do not always follow this rule. Note the following:
Northern Ireland *North/East/West Africa* *North/South America*
East/South, etc *Asia* BUT *Western/Eastern*, etc *Europe*
South Australia BUT *Western Australia; the Northern Territory*
the North/South Atlantic/Pacific *the Northern/Southern hemisphere*

2 'belonging to'

We use *eastern, northern*, etc to mean 'belonging to' or 'typical of'.
a southern accent *a group of northern poets*

3 capital letters

Capital letters are used at the beginning of *East, Eastern, North, Northern*, etc when these come in official or well-established place names.
North Carolina *Western Australia*
And capitals are used in *the West, the North*, etc when these are names of well-defined regions.
Unemployment is high in the North. *My sister lives in the South-west.*
In other cases, adjectives, nouns and adverbs generally begin with small letters.
We spent the winter in southern California.
I live in north London. *There's a strong north wind.*
The sun rises in the east. *By sunrise we were driving south.*

4 prepositions

Note the difference between *in the east*, etc *of . . .* and *to the east*, etc *of . . .*
I live in the east of Scotland.
Denmark is about 500km to the east of Scotland.

443 *economic* and *economical*

Economic refers to the science of economics, or to the economy of a country.
economic theory *economic problems*
Economical means 'not wasting money, time or effort'.
an economical little car *an economical housekeeper*
'I was not lying,' said the Minister. 'I was just being economical with the truth.'

educate and *bring up* ► 410

444 *efficient* and *effective*

If somebody/something is *efficient*, he/she/it works in a well-organised way without wasting time or energy.
He's not very efficient: he works very slowly, and he keeps forgetting things.
Our bus service is even less efficient than our train service.
If something is *effective*, it has the right effect: it solves a problem or gets a result.
My headache's much better. Those tablets really are effective.
I think a wide black belt would look very effective with that dress.

445 *elder* and *eldest*

Elder and *eldest* can be used instead of *older* and *oldest* to talk about the order of birth of the members of a family. They are only used attributively (before nouns). Compare:

– *My **elder**/older brother has just got married.*
*He's three years **older** than me.* (NOT . . . ~~*elder than me.*~~)
– *His **eldest**/oldest daughter is a medical student.*
*She's the **oldest** student in her year.*

Elder brother/sister are used when a person has only one brother/sister who is older; *eldest* is used when there are more. An *elder son/daughter* is the older of two; an *eldest son/daughter* is the oldest of two or more.

446 *electric* and *electrical*

Electric is used with the names of particular machines that work by electricity.
*an **electric** motor* *__electric__ blankets*
Note also: *an **electric** shock*; *an **electric** atmosphere* (full of excitement).
Electrical is used before more general words.
__electrical__ appliances *__electrical__ equipment*
__electrical__ component *__electrical__ engineering*

447 *else*

1 use

We use *else* to mean 'other' after:
somebody, someone, something, somewhere; anybody, everybody, nobody, etc; question words; *whatever, whenever,* etc; *little, much.*

*Would you like **anything else**?*
*I'm sorry. I mistook you for **somebody else**.*
***Where else** did you go besides Madrid?*
***Whatever else** he may be, he's not a mathematician.*
*We know when Shakespeare was born and when he died, but we don't know **much else** about his life.*

In a formal style, *else* is sometimes used after *all*.
*When **all else** fails, read the instructions.*

2 word order

Note that *else* comes immediately after the word it modifies.
***What else** would you like?* (NOT ~~*What would you like else?*~~)

3 *else's*

Else has a possessive *else's*.
*You're wearing somebody **else's** coat.*

→

4 singular only

There is no plural structure with *else*.

I didn't see ***any other*** *people.* (NOT . . . ~~*any else people.*~~)

5 *or else*

Or else means 'otherwise', 'if not'.

Let's go, ***or else*** *we'll miss the train.*

Or else is sometimes used with no continuation, as a threat.

You'd better stop hitting my little brother, ***or else!***

6 *elsewhere*

This is a formal word for *somewhere else*.

If you are not satisfied with my hospitality, go ***elsewhere.***

448 *end* and *finish*: verbs

1 both used

These verbs have similar meanings, and are often both possible.

What time does the concert ***end/finish?***

Term ***ends/finishes*** *on June 23.*

2 completing an activity

When we talk about completing something that we are doing, we usually prefer *finish*.

She's always starting something new, but she never ***finishes*** *anything.*

You'll never ***finish*** *that hamburger – it's too big for you.*

'Are you still reading the paper?' 'No, I've ***finished.***'

3 changes

End is more common when there is an important change.

I decided it was time to ***end*** *our affair.*

It's time to ***end*** *the uncertainty – the Prime Minister must speak out.*

The Second World War ***ended*** *in 1945.*

We also prefer *end* to talk about a special way of bringing something to a close or 'shaping' the end of something.

How do you ***end*** *a letter to somebody you don't know?*

The ceremony ***ended*** *with a speech from the President.*

End is often used to talk about physical shapes.

The road ***ended*** *in a building site.* (NOT ~~*The road finished*~~ . . .)

Nouns that ***end*** *in -s have plurals in -es.*

4 *-ing* forms

Finish, but not *end*, can be followed by an *-ing* form (► 100).

I ***finished teaching*** *at 3.00.* (NOT ~~*I ended teaching*~~ . . .)

England, Britain, the United Kingdom and *the British Isles* ► 411

449 *enjoy*

Enjoy normally has an object.

*'Did you **enjoy the party**?' 'Yes, I **enjoyed it** very much.'*

(NOT ~~*I enjoyed very much.*~~)

To talk about having a good time, we can use *enjoy myself/yourself*, etc.

*I really **enjoyed myself** when I went to Rome.*

*'We're going to Paris for the weekend.' '**Enjoy yourselves!**'*

'Enjoy!' with no object is possible in informal English. It is often used by waiters in restaurants.

*One chicken curry and one fillet of sole. **Enjoy!***

Enjoy can be followed by *-ing*.

*I don't **enjoy looking** after small children.* (NOT . . . ~~*enjoy to look*~~ . . .)

450 *enough*

1 adjective/adverb + *enough*

Enough usually follows adjectives and adverbs.

*Is it **warm enough** for you?* (NOT . . . ~~*enough warm*~~ . . .)

*You're not driving **fast enough**.*

2 *enough* + noun

Enough can be used before a noun as a determiner (▸ 171).

*Have you got **enough milk**?* *There aren't **enough glasses**.*

Enough is occasionally used after a noun, but this is rare in modern English except in a few expressions.

*If only we had **time enough** . . .* *I was **fool enough** to believe him.*

Before another determiner (article, possessive, etc) or a pronoun, we use *enough of*. Compare:

*I don't know **enough** Spanish to read this.* (NOT . . . ~~*enough of Spanish*~~ . . .)

*I don't understand **enough of the** words in the notice.*

3 position with adjective + noun

When *enough* modifies an adjective and noun together, it comes before the adjective. Compare:

*We haven't got **enough big** nails.*

(= We need more big nails – *enough* modifies *big nails*.)

*We haven't got **big enough** nails.*

(= We need bigger nails – *enough* modifies *big*.)

4 *enough* + infinitive; structure with *for*

We can use an infinitive structure after *enough*.

*She's old enough **to do** what she wants.*

*I haven't got enough money **to buy** a car.*

Infinitives can be introduced by ***for*** + **noun/pronoun**.

*It's late enough **for the staff to stop** work.*

*There was just enough light **for us to see** what we were doing.* →

5 *It's small enough to put in your pocket*, etc

The subject of the sentence can be the object of the following infinitive. (For more about this structure, ► 101.4.) Object pronouns are not normally used after the infinitive in this case.

***The radio**'s small enough **to put** in your pocket.*
(NOT . . . ~~*to put it in your pocket.*~~)

***Those tomatoes** aren't ripe enough **to eat**.* (NOT . . . ~~*to eat them.*~~)

However, object pronouns are possible in structures with *for*.

*The radio was small enough **for** me to put **(it)** in my pocket.*
*Those tomatoes aren't ripe enough **for** the children to eat **(them)**.*

For other examples of *for* + **object + infinitive**, ► 113.
For similar structures with *too* and *too much/many*, ► 610–611.

6 *the* = *enough*; leaving out *enough*

The article *the* can be used to mean 'enough'.

*I hardly had **the** strength to take my clothes off.*
*I didn't quite have **the** money to pay for a meal.*

Time and *room* are often used to mean 'enough time' and 'enough room'.

*Do you have **time** to look at this draft?*
*There isn't **room** for everybody to sit down.*

451 *especial(ly)* and *special(ly)*

1 *especially* and *specially*

Especially and *specially* can often both be used with the same meaning.

*It was not (e)**specially** cold.*

2 *especially* meaning 'above all'

Especially is often used to mean 'above all'.

*We play a lot of tennis, **especially** on Sundays.*
*The children are very noisy, **especially** when we have visitors.*
*I like all kinds of fruit, **especially** apples.*

Especially follows a subject.

*All my family like music. **My father, especially**, goes to as many concerts as he can.* (NOT . . . ~~*Especially my father goes*~~ . . .)

3 *especially* before prepositions and conjunctions

We prefer *especially* before prepositions and conjunctions.

*We go skiing quite a lot, **especially** in February.*
*I drink a lot of coffee, **especially** when I'm working.*

4 *specially* with past participles

Specially is used with a past participle to mean 'for a particular purpose'.

*These shoes were **specially made** for me.*
*The song was **specially written** for his birthday.*

5 *especial* and *special*

The adjective *especial* is rare. We normally use *special*.

*He took **special** trouble over his work.*

452 *even*

1 meaning

Even suggests the idea of a surprising extreme: 'more than we expect'; *not even* suggests 'less than we expect'.

*She's rude to everybody. She's **even** rude to the police.*

*He **can't even** write his own name.*

2 position

Even most often goes with the verb, in mid-position (► 200).

*She has broken all her toys. She **has even broken** her bike.*
(NOT ~~*Even she has broken*~~ . . .)

*He speaks lots of languages. He **even speaks** Esperanto.*

*They're open every day. They're **even** open on Christmas Day.*

Even goes at the beginning of a clause when it refers just to the subject; and it can go just before other words and expressions that we want to emphasise.

*Anybody can do this. **Even a child** can do it.*

*I work every day, **even on Sundays**.*

*I haven't seen my family for months – **not even my parents**.*

3 *even* and *also*

Also (► 369) is not used to talk about surprising extremes.

*Everybody helped with the packing – **even** the dog.* (NOT . . . ~~*also the dog.*~~)

4 *even if* and *even though*

Even is not used alone as a conjunction, but we can use *even* before *if* and *though*.

***Even if** I become a millionaire, I will always be a socialist.*
(NOT . . . ~~*Even I become*~~ . . .)

***Even though** I didn't know anybody at the party, I had a nice time.*
(NOT ~~*Even although*~~ . . .)

*I wouldn't marry you **even if** you were the last man in the world.*

We sometimes use *if* to mean *even if*.

*I'll do it **if** it kills me.* (= . . . even if it kills me.)

5 *even so; even now*

Even so means 'however', 'in spite of that'.

*He seems nice. **Even so**, I don't really trust him.* (NOT . . . ~~*Even though, I don't really trust him.*~~)

Even now can mean 'in spite of everything that has happened'.

*He left her ten years ago, but **even now** she still loves him.*

453 *eventual(ly)*

Eventual and *eventually* mean 'final(ly)', 'in the end', 'after all that'. We use them to say that something happens after a long time or a lot of effort.

The chess game lasted for three days. Androv was the ***eventual*** *winner.*
The car didn't want to start, but ***eventually*** *I got it going.*

Eventual and *eventually* are 'false friends' for people who speak some languages. They do not mean the same as, for instance, French *éventuel/éventuellement*, Dutch *eventueel* or Polish *ewentualny/ewentualnie*, and are not used to express the idea of possibility. For this meaning we use *possible, perhaps, if, may, might*, etc.

In our new house I'd like to have a spare bedroom for ***possible*** *visitors.* (NOT . . . ~~*eventual visitors.*~~)
I'm not sure what I'll do next year. I could look for a job here, or I ***might*** *go to America.* (NOT ~~*Eventually I'll go to America*~~ . . .)

454 ever

1 *ever* meaning 'at any time'

Ever is a 'non-affirmative word' (► 222). It is used especially in questions to mean 'at any time'. Compare:

Do you ***ever*** *go to London by train?* (= at any time)
I ***always*** *go to London by train.* (= every time)
I ***sometimes*** *go to Birmingham by train.*
I ***never*** *go to Cambridge by train.* (= at no time)

Ever is possible in negative clauses, but *never* is more usual than *not ever.*

I ***don't ever*** *want to see you again.* (OR *I* ***never*** *want . . .*)

We also use *ever* after *if*, and with words that express a negative idea (like *nobody, hardly* or *stop*).

Come and see us ***if*** *you are* ***ever*** *in Manchester.*
Nobody ever *visits them.* *I* ***hardly ever*** *see my sister.*
I'm going to ***stop*** *her* ***ever*** *doing that again.*

2 with comparatives, superlatives, *as* and *only*

Ever is used in affirmative clauses in comparisons and with *only.*

You're looking ***lovelier than*** *ever.*
What is the ***best*** *book you've* ***ever*** *read?*
It's the ***largest*** *picture* ***ever*** *painted.* *He's as charming* ***as ever.***
She's the ***only*** *woman* ***ever*** *to have climbed this mountain in winter.*

3 *ever* + perfect

Ever is often used with perfect tenses (► 47, 53) to mean 'at any time up to now/then'.

Have *you* ***ever been*** *to Greece?*
Had *you* ***ever thought*** *of getting married before you met Georgia?*

4 *ever* and *before*; *ever before*

Ever and *before* can both be used to mean 'at any time in the past', but there is a difference. *Before* (or *ever before*) refers to a present event, and asks whether it has happened at another time.

Have you (ever) been to Scotland ***before?*** (The hearer is probably in Scotland.)

Ever (without *before*) does not refer to a present event.

Have you ***ever*** *been to Africa?* (The hearer is not in Africa.)

5 *ever* meaning 'always'

Ever is not normally used to mean 'always'.

I shall ***always*** *remember you.* (NOT ~~*I shall ever remember you.*~~)

But *ever* is sometimes used to mean 'always' in compound expressions with adjectives and participles.

his ***ever-open*** *mouth* *an* ***ever-increasing*** *debt*
evergreen *trees* *his* ***ever-loving*** *wife*

Ever also means 'always' in *forever* (or *for ever*) and *ever since*, and in a few other expressions like *ever after* and *Yours ever* (used at the end of letters).

I shall love you ***forever.*** *I've admired him* ***ever since*** *I met him.*

For *who ever, what ever*, etc, ► 627. For *whoever, whatever*, etc, ► 252.
For *forever* with progressive forms, ► 5.

455 *ever so, ever such*

These expressions are often used in informal British English to mean 'very'.

She's ***ever so*** *nice.* *It's* ***ever such*** *a good film.*

For the difference between *so* and *such*, ► 597.

456 *except* and *except for*

1 *except for* before nouns

We generally use *except for* before noun phrases.

I've cleaned the house ***except for*** *the bathroom.*
The garden was empty ***except for*** *one small bird.*

2 *except (for)* after *all, any,* etc

After generalising words like *all, any, every, no, everything, anybody, nowhere, nobody, whole,* we often leave out *for.*

I've cleaned ***all*** *the rooms* ***except (for)*** *the bathroom.*
He ate ***everything*** *on his plate* ***except (for)*** *the beans.*
Nobody *came* ***except (for)*** *Jack and Emily.*

But this does not happen **before** *all, any, nobody,* etc.

Except for *the bathroom,* ***all*** *the rooms are clean.* (NOT ~~*Except the bathroom, all the rooms are clean.*~~)

3 *except* before prepositions and conjunctions

We use *except*, not *except for*, before prepositions and conjunctions.

It's the same everywhere ***except in*** *Scotland.* (NOT . . . ~~*except for in Scotland.*~~)
He's good-looking ***except when*** *he smiles.*
This room is no use ***except as*** *a storeroom.*
The trip was nice ***except that*** *there wasn't enough snow.*

4 *except (for)* + pronoun

After *except (for)* we use object pronouns, not subject pronouns.

Everybody understood ***except (for) me.*** (NOT . . . ~~*except I.*~~)
We're all ready ***except (for) her.***

5 *except* + verb: *He does nothing except eat.*

A common structure is ***do . . . except*** + **infinitive without *to***.

He ***does*** *nothing* ***except eat*** *all day.*
I'll ***do*** *everything for you* ***except cook.***

In other cases an *-ing* form is usually necessary.

She's not interested in anything ***except skiing.***
You needn't worry about anything ***except having*** *a great time.*

6 *except* and *without*

Except (for) is only used to talk about exceptions to generalisations. In other cases, *without* or *but for* may be better. Compare:

Nobody helped me ***except*** *you.*
Without / But for *your help, I would have failed.* (NOT ~~*Except for your help, I would have failed.*~~)

For the use of *but* to mean 'except', ► 413.

457 *expect, hope, wait* and *look forward*

1 *expect* and *hope*: difference of meaning

Expecting is a matter of thinking rather than feeling. If I *expect* something to happen, I have a good reason to think it will in fact happen. *Hoping* is more emotional. If I *hope* for something to happen, I would like it to happen, but I do not know whether it will. Compare:

– *I'* ***m expecting*** *Jack to phone at three o'clock.*
I ***hope*** *he's got some good news.*
– *Lucy's* ***expecting*** *a baby.* (= She's pregnant.)
She's ***hoping*** *it will be a girl.*

One can *expect* good or bad things, but one only *hopes* for things that one wants.

I ***expect*** *it will rain at the weekend. But I* ***hope*** *it won't.*

2 *expect* and *wait*: difference of meaning

One *waits* when somebody or something is late, when one is early for something, or when one wants time to pass so that something will happen. *Waiting* is often physical – the word suggests, for example, standing or sitting somewhere until something happens.

Compare:

– *I'm **expecting** a phone call from Jack at three o'clock. I hope he calls on time.*
*I hate **waiting** for people to phone.* (NOT ~~*I hate expecting people to phone.*~~)
– *He **expects** to get a bike for his birthday.* (= He thinks he'll get one.)
*It's hard to **wait** for things when you're five years old.*
– *I **expected** her at ten, but she didn't turn up.*
*I **waited** for her till eleven, and then went home.*

Can't wait often expresses impatience.

*I **can't wait** for the weekend!*

When we say that we *expect* a person, this usually means that he/she is coming to our home, office, etc. Compare:

*Come and see me this afternoon. I'll **expect** you at 4.00.*
Let's meet at the theatre. I'll be there at 6.00. (NOT ~~*I'll expect you at 6.00.*~~)

3 *look forward*: meaning

Look forward means 'think about (something in the future) with pleasure'. One *looks forward* to something that seems certain to happen, and that one is glad about.

*He's **looking forward** to his birthday.*
*'See you on Sunday.' 'I **look forward** to it.'*

4 all four expressions compared

Compare:

*I **expect** to hear from her.* (= I'm pretty sure I'll get an email from her.)
*I **hope** to hear from her.* (= I'm not sure whether she'll write, but I would like her to.)
*I'm **waiting** to hear from her.* (= I need her email to come; perhaps it's late.)
*I **look forward** to hearing from her.* (= I feel pleasure at the thought that I will hear from her.)

5 prepositions

Before an object, we use *expect* (with no preposition), *hope for*, *wait for*, and *look forward to*.

We're expecting rain soon.
*We're hoping **for** a lot of rain – the garden's very dry.*
*We've been waiting **for** rain for weeks.*
*I'm looking forward **to** the autumn.*
I expect Jack to arrive about ten o'clock. (NOT ~~*I expect for him to arrive*~~ . . .)
*I'm hoping **for** him to come up with some new ideas.*
*I'm still waiting **for** him to pay me back that money.*

After *look forward to*, we use the *-ing* form of a verb (► 104.2).

*I look forward to **talking** to him.* (NOT . . . ~~*to talk to him.*~~)
*I look forward to **hearing** from you.* (in an email / a letter)

6 simple and progressive forms

Before an infinitive, simple and progressive forms of *hope*, *expect* and *look forward to* can often be used with little difference of meaning.

*We **hope** / **We're hoping** to get to Scotland next weekend.*
*We **expect** / **We're expecting** to hear from Lucy today.*
*I **look forward** / **I'm looking forward** to the day when the children leave home.* →

7 *that*-clauses

Expect and *hope* can be used before a *that*-clause.

I ***expect (that)*** *she'll be here soon.* *I* ***hope (that)*** *I'll recognise her.*

BUT NOT ~~*I'm waiting that she arrives.*~~

Progressive forms of *expect* are not normally used before *that*-clauses.

I expect that we'll have a lot to talk about. (NOT ~~*I'm expecting that we'll*~~ . . .)

Hope (that) is often followed by a present tense with a future meaning (► 490).

I hope (that) she ***doesn't*** *miss the train.*

8 *expect*: other points

Expect is often used with **object + infinitive** to talk about people's duties.

We ***expect you to work*** *on the first Saturday of every month.*

Passive versions of the structure are also common.

Staff ***are expected to start*** *work punctually at 8.30.*

I expect (that) can be used to talk about the present or past, with the meaning 'I suppose', 'I have good reason to think'.

I expect *you're all tired after your journey.*

Sarah isn't here. ***I expect*** *she was too tired to come.*

We can say that we *expect something of somebody*, to express our feelings about how somebody ought to behave.

My parents ***expected too much of me*** *when I was at school. They were terribly upset when I failed my exams.*

For *hope* and *expect* in negative clauses, ► 219. For *not* and *so* after *hope* and *expect*, ► 585.
For *and* after *wait*, ► 99. For *wish*, ► 632.

458 *experiment* and *experience*

An *experiment* is a test which somebody does to see what the result will be, to prove something, or to see how well something works. *Experiment* is generally used with the verb *do*. There is also a verb *to experiment*.

We ***did an experiment*** *in the chemistry lesson, to see if you could get chlorine gas from salt.* (NOT ~~*We did an experience*~~ . . .)

I'm ***experimenting*** *with a new way of organising my work.*

An *experience* is something that you live through; something that happens to you in life. *Experience* is generally used with the verb *have*. There is also a verb *to experience*.

I had a lot of interesting ***experiences*** *during my year in Africa.*
(NOT ~~*I made a lot of interesting experiences*~~ . . .)

Have you ever ***experienced*** *the feeling that you were going mad?*
(NOT ~~*Have you ever experimented the feeling*~~ . . .?)

The uncountable noun *experience* means 'the knowledge that you get from doing things'.

Sales person wanted – ***experience*** *unnecessary.*

459 *explain*

After *explain*, we use *to* before an indirect object.

Can you explain ***to me*** *how to get to your house?*
(NOT ~~*Can you explain me . . .?*~~)

I explained my problem ***to her***. (NOT ~~*I explained her my problem.*~~)
(NOT ~~*Can you explain me*~~)

facing, opposite and *in front of* ► 549

460 *fairly, quite, rather* and *pretty*: adverbs of degree

These four modifiers differ somewhat in strength, though their exact force depends on the context. This entry gives a brief explanation of their use with gradable descriptive words (► 189) in British English. Note also that *quite* and *rather* (in the senses discussed here) are more common in British than American English, as is *fairly*. For more information about *quite* and *rather*, ► 564–565.

1 *fairly*

Fairly generally modifies adjectives and adverbs. It does not suggest a very high degree: if you say that somebody is *fairly nice* or *fairly clever*, for example, he or she will not be very pleased.

*'How was the film?' '****Fairly*** *good. Not the best one I've seen this year.'*
I speak Russian ***fairly*** *well – enough for everyday purposes.*

2 *quite*

Quite (especially in British English) can suggest a higher degree than *fairly*.

*'How was the film?' '****Quite*** *good. You ought to go.'*
It's ***quite*** *a difficult book – I had trouble with it.*
He's lived in St Petersburg, so he speaks Russian ***quite*** *well.*

Quite can also modify verbs and nouns.

I ***quite enjoyed*** *myself at your party.* *The room was* ***quite a mess****.*

3 *rather*

Rather is stronger than *quite*. It can suggest 'more than is usual', 'more than was expected', 'more than was wanted', and similar ideas.

*'How was the film?' '****Rather*** *good – I was surprised.'*
Maurice speaks Russian ***rather*** *well. People often think he is Russian.*
I think I'll put the heating on. It's ***rather*** *cold.*
I've had ***rather a long day****.*

Rather can modify verbs (especially verbs that refer to thoughts and feelings) and nouns.

I ***rather think*** *we're going to lose.* *She* ***rather likes*** *gardening.*
It was ***rather a disappointment****.*

For word order rules and other details of the use of *rather*, ► 565. →

4 *pretty*

Pretty (informal) is like *rather*, but only modifies adjectives and adverbs.

*'How's things?' '**Pretty** good. You OK?'* *You're driving **pretty** fast.*

Pretty well means 'almost'.

*I've **pretty well** finished.*

461 *far* and *a long way*

1 *far* in questions and negatives

Far is most common in questions and negative clauses.

*How **far** did you walk?* *The youth hostel is not **far** from here.*

In affirmative clauses we usually prefer *a long way*.

*We walked **a long way**.* (NOT ~~*We walked far.*~~)

*The station is **a long way** from here.* (More natural than *The station is far from here.*)

2 *far* in affirmative clauses

However, *far* is normal in affirmative clauses with *too*, *enough*, *as* and *so*.

*'She's gone **far enough**.' 'A bit **too far**.'*

*It's ready **as far** as I know.* *'Any problems?' 'OK **so far**.'*

3 *far* with comparatives, etc

Far is also used (in all kinds of clauses) to modify comparatives, superlatives and *too*.

*She's **far older** than her husband.* *This bike is **by far the best**.*

*You're **far too young** to get married.*

4 before a noun: *a far country*

Far can be used as an adjective before a noun, meaning 'distant'. This is rather formal and old-fashioned.

*Long ago, in a **far** country, there lived a woman who had seven sons.*

Much, *many* and *long* (for time) are also more common in questions and negative sentences (▸ 165, 517).

462 *farther* and *further*

1 distance

We can use both *farther* and *further* to talk about distance. They mean the same. *Further* is not generally used in this sense in American English, and is becoming much less common in British English.

*Edinburgh is **farther/further** away than York.*

2 'additional'

Further (but not *farther*) can mean 'additional', 'extra', 'more advanced'.

*For **further** information, see page 6.* *College of **Further** Education*

463 *feel*

Feel has several different meanings. Progressive forms can be used with some meanings, but not with others. *Feel* can be a linking verb (► 11), followed by an adjective or noun complement. It can also be an ordinary verb, followed by a direct object.

1 linking verb: *I feel fine.*

Feel can be used to talk about one's physical or mental sensations. Adjective or (in British English) noun complements are used.

*I **feel** fine.* *Do you **feel** happy?*
*Andrew was beginning to **feel** cold.*
*When Louise realised what she had done, she **felt** a complete idiot.* (BrE)

In this sense *feel* is not normally used with reflexive pronouns (*myself*, etc).

*He always **felt** inferior when he was with her.*(More natural than *He always felt himself inferior . . .*)

To talk about feelings that are going on at a particular moment, simple or progressive forms can be used. There is little difference of meaning.

*I **feel** fine. / I'**m feeling** fine.*
*How **do** you **feel**? / How **are** you **feeling**?*

2 linking verb: *That feels nice!*

Feel can also be used to say that something causes sensations. Progressive forms are not used.

***That feels** nice!* ***The glass felt** cold against my lips.*

3 linking verb: *feel like; feel as if/though*

Feel can be followed by *like* or *as if/though*.

*My legs **feel like** cotton wool.*
*Alice **felt as if/though** she was in a very nice dream.* (*Alice felt like she was . . .* is also possible, ► 378.)

4 *feel like* meaning 'want'

Feel like can also mean 'want', 'would like'.

*I **feel like** a drink. Have you got any beer?*

In this sense, *feel like* is often followed by an *-ing* form.

*I **felt like laughing**, but I didn't dare.*

Compare:

*I **felt like** swimming.* (= I wanted to swim.)
*I felt **like** / **as if** I was swimming.* (= It seemed as if I was swimming.)

5 reactions and opinions

Feel is often used to talk about reactions and opinions. Progressive forms are not usually used in this case.

*I **feel sure** you're right.* (NOT ~~*I'm feeling sure*~~ . . .)
*He says he **feels doubtful** about the new plan.*

That-clauses are common.

*I **feel (that)** she's making a mistake.* →

A structure with **object + *to be* + complement** is possible in a formal style, but it is not very often used.

*I **felt her to be unfriendly**.* (More normal: *I felt that she was unfriendly.*)

There is also a structure ***feel it* (+ *to be*) + adjective/noun**.

*We **felt it necessary** to call the police.*

*I **felt it (to be) my duty** to call the police.*

6 'receive physical sensations'

Feel can be used with a direct object to talk about the physical sensations that come to us through the sense of touch.

*I suddenly **felt an insect** crawling up my leg.*

Progressive forms are not used, but we often use *can feel* to talk about a sensation that is going on at a particular moment.

*I **can feel** something biting me!*

7 'touch'

Feel can also be used with a direct object to mean 'touch something to learn about it or experience it'. Progressive forms are possible.

***Feel the photocopier**. It's very hot.*

*'What are you doing?' '**I'm feeling the shirts** to see if they're dry.'*

464 *female* and *feminine*; *male* and *masculine*

Female and *male* refer to the sex of people, animals and plants.

*A **female** fox is called a vixen.* *A **male** duck is called a drake.*

Feminine and *masculine* are used for qualities and behaviour that are felt to be typical of men or women.

*She has a very **masculine** laugh.* *It was a very **feminine** bathroom.*

Feminine and *masculine* are used for grammatical forms in some languages.

*The word for 'moon' is **feminine** in French and **masculine** in German.*

465 *finally*, *at last*, *in the end* and *at the end*

1 *finally*

Finally can suggest that one has been waiting a long time for something. In this sense, it often goes in mid-position (with the verb, ► 200).

*After trying three times, she **finally** managed to pass her exam.*

*Josh has **finally** found a job.*

Finally can also introduce the last element in a series, like *lastly* (► 284.1).

*We must increase productivity. We must reduce unemployment. And **finally**, we must compete in world markets.*

2 *at last*

At last also suggests – very strongly – the idea of impatience or inconvenience resulting from a long wait or delay.

*James has paid me that money **at last**.*

*When **at last** they found him he was almost dead.*

At last can be used as an exclamation. (*Finally* cannot be used in this way.)
At last! Where have you been?
Note that *lastly* (introducing the last item in a series) is not the same as *at last.*
Firstly, we need to increase profits. Secondly, . . . Thirdly, . . . And ***lastly****, we need to cut down administrative expenses.* (NOT . . . ~~*And at last we need to cut down*~~ . . .)

3 *in the end*

In the end suggests that something happens after changes or uncertainty.
We made eight different plans for the weekend, but ***in the end*** *we went to Brighton.*
I left in the middle of the film. Did they get married ***in the end?***
The tax man will get you ***in the end.***
Another use of *in the end* is to mean 'after we have considered everything'.
In the end*, you can't get fit without exercise.*
In the end*, Mother knows best.*

4 *at the end*

At the end simply refers to the position of something. There is no sense of waiting or delay.
A declarative sentence has a full stop ***at the end.***
I wish I was paid at the beginning of the week and not ***at the end.***

For *eventually*, ► 453.

finish and *end* ► 448

466 *finished*

Finished can be used as an adjective meaning 'ready'.
Is the report ***finished*** *yet?*
With personal subjects, *to be finished* is often used in an informal style with the same meaning as *to have finished.*
How soon will you ***be/have finished****, dear?*
I went to get the car from the garage, but they ***weren't/hadn't finished.***

first and *at first* ► 388

467 *fit* and *suit*

These words do not mean exactly the same.

Fit refers to size and shape: if your clothes *fit* you, they are neither too big nor too small.

*These shoes don't **fit** me – have you got a larger size?*

Suit refers to style, colour, etc.

*Red and black are colours that **suit** me very well.* (NOT . . . ~~*colours that fit me very well.*~~)

*Do you think this style **suits** me?*

Suit can also be used to say whether arrangements are convenient.

*Tuesday would **suit** me very well for a meeting.*

468 *for*: purpose and cause

1 people's purposes: *I went for an interview.*

For can be used to talk about somebody's purpose in doing something, but only when it is followed by a noun.

*We stopped at the pub **for a drink**.*

*I went to the college **for an interview** with Professor Taylor.*

For is not used before a verb in this sense. The infinitive alone is used to express a person's purpose (▶ 112).

*We stopped at the pub **to have** a drink.*

(NOT . . . ~~*for having a drink*~~ OR ~~*for to have a drink*~~)

*I went to the college **to see** Professor Taylor.*

(NOT . . . ~~*for seeing Professor Taylor.*~~)

2 the purposes of things: *-ing* forms and infinitives

For can be used before the *-ing* form of a verb to express the 'purpose' of a thing – what it is used for – especially when the thing is the subject.

*Is that cake **for eating** or just **for looking at**?*

*An altimeter is used **for measuring** height above sea level.*

When the clause has a person as subject, an infinitive is often used to express the purpose of a thing.

*We use altimeters **to measure** height above sea level.*

3 causes of reactions

For . . .ing can also be used after a description of a positive or negative reaction, to explain the behaviour that caused it.

*We are grateful to you **for helping** us out.*

*I'm angry with you **for waking** me up.*

*They punished the child **for lying**.*

*He was sent to prison **for stealing**.*

for, as, because and *since* ▶ 377

for and *during* ▶ 440

469 *for, since, in* and *from*: time

1 *for*

We use *for* for duration – to say how long something lasts.

for + period of time

*I studied the guitar **for three years** at school.*
*That house has been empty **for six months**.*
*We go away **for three weeks** every summer.*
*My boss will be in Italy **for the next ten days**.*

To measure duration up to the present, we use a present perfect tense (► 52.1), not a present tense.

*I've **known** her for a long time.* (NOT ~~*I know her for a long time.*~~)
*We've **lived** here for 20 years.* (NOT ~~*We live here for 20 years.*~~)

A present tense with *for* refers to duration into the future. Compare:

*How long **are** you here **for**?* (= Until when . . .?)
*How long **have** you **been** here **for**?* (= Since when . . .?)

We can often leave out *for* in an informal style, especially with *How long . . .?* And *for* is not usually used before *all*.

***How long** have you been waiting **(for)**?*
*We've been here **(for) six weeks**.*
*I've had a headache **all day**.*

2 *for* and *since* with perfect tenses: the difference

For and *since* can both be used with a present perfect to talk about duration up to the present. They are not the same. Compare:

for + period

*I've known her **for three days**.* (NOT . . . ~~*since three days.*~~)
*It's been raining **for weeks**.*

since + starting point

*I've known her **since Tuesday**.*
*It's been raining **since the beginning of the month**.*

With a past perfect, *for* and *since* refer to duration up to a particular past moment.

*She'd been working there **for a long time**.* (NOT . . . ~~*since a long time.*~~)
*She'd been working there **since 1988**.*

3 *in* after negatives and superlatives

After negatives and superlatives, *in* can be used to talk about duration. This is normal in American English.

*I **haven't** seen him **for**/**in months**.*
*It was the **worst** storm **for**/**in ten years**.*

→

4 *from* and *since*

From and *since* give the starting points of actions, events or states: they say when things begin or began.

from/*since* + starting point

I'll be here ***from three o'clock*** *onwards.*
I work ***from nine*** *to five.*
From now *on, I'm going to go running every day.*
From his earliest childhood *he loved music.*
I've been waiting ***since six o'clock.*** *I've known her* ***since January.***

We use *since* (with a perfect tense) especially when we measure duration from a starting point up to the present, or up to a past time that we are talking about.

I've been working ***since*** *six o'clock, and I'm getting tired.* (NOT ~~*I've been working from six o'clock*~~. . .)
I ***had been working since*** *six o'clock, and I was getting tired.*

From is used in other cases.

The shop was open ***from eight*** *in the morning, but the boss didn't arrive till ten.* (NOT ~~*The shop was open since eight*~~. . .)
I'll be at home ***from Tuesday morning (on).*** (NOT . . . ~~*since Tuesday morning.*~~)

From is sometimes possible with a present perfect, especially in expressions that mean 'right from the start'.

She's been like that ***from her childhood.*** (OR . . . ***since*** *her childhood.*)
From/***Since*** *the moment they were married, they've quarrelled.*
From/***Since*** *the dawn of civilisation, people have made war.*

For *from . . . to* and *from . . . until*, ► 613. For more about tenses with *since*, ► 579.
For *since* meaning 'as' or 'because', ► 377.

470 *forget* and *leave*

We can use *forget* to talk about accidentally leaving things behind.

Oh damn! I've ***forgotten*** *my umbrella.*

However, we normally use *leave* if we mention the place.

Oh damn! I've ***left*** *my umbrella at home.* (NOT ~~*I've forgotten my umbrella at home.*~~)

from and ***since***: time ► 469

471 *fun* and *funny*

Fun is normally an uncountable noun. It can be used after *be* to say that things or people are enjoyable or entertaining.

The party was ***fun****, wasn't it?* (NOT ~~*The party was funny.*~~)
Anne and Sam are a lot of ***fun.***

In informal English, *fun* can also be used as an adjective before a noun.

That was a really ***fun party.***

Funny is an adjective, and is used to say that something makes you laugh.
*Why are you wearing that **funny** hat?*
Note that *funny* has another meaning: 'strange', 'peculiar'.
*'A **funny** thing happened.' 'Do you mean **funny** ha-ha or **funny** peculiar?'*

further* and *farther ► 462

game* and *play ► 555

472 *get*: basic structures and meanings

Get is one of the commonest words in English, and is used in many different ways. It is sometimes avoided in a very formal style, but it is correct and natural in most kinds of speech and writing. The meaning of *get* depends on what kind of word comes after it. With a direct object, the basic meaning is 'obtain', 'come to have'; with other kinds of word, the basic meaning is 'become', 'come to be'.

1 *get* + noun/pronoun: *I got an email.*

With a direct object (noun or pronoun), *get* usually means 'receive', 'fetch', 'obtain', 'catch' or something similar. The exact meaning depends on the object.
*I **got an email** from Lucy this morning.*
*Can you come and **get me** from the station when I arrive?*
*If I listen to loud music I **get a headache**.*
*If you **get a number 6 bus**, it stops right outside our house.*
Get can be used with two objects (► 8).
*Let me **get you a drink**.*
Other meanings are sometimes possible.
*I didn't **get the joke**.* (= understand)
*I'll **get you for this!*** (= punish, make suffer)
***Get* + noun** is not normally used to mean 'become'. To express this meaning, we can use ***get to be* + noun** (► 472.5 below).
*Wayne's **getting to be** a lovely kid.* (NOT ~~*Wayne's getting a lovely kid.*~~)

2 *get* + adjective: *getting old*

Before an adjective, *get* usually means 'become'.
*As you **get old**, your memory **gets worse**.* *My feet are **getting cold**.*
With **object + adjective**, the meaning is 'make somebody/something become'.
*It's time to **get the kids ready** for school.* *I can't **get my hands warm**.*
*We must **get the house clean** before your mother arrives.*

For ***go* + adjective** (*go green, go blind*, etc), and the differences between *get, go, become, turn*, etc, ► 394.

3 *get* + adverb particle or preposition: *get out*

Before an adverb particle (like *up, away, out*) or a preposition, *get* nearly always refers to a movement of some kind. (For the difference between *get* and *go*, ► 473.)
*I often **get up** at five o'clock.* *I went to see him, but he told me to **get out**.*
*Would you mind **getting off** my foot?* →

In some idioms the meaning is different – e.g. *get to a place* (= arrive at . . .); *get over something* (= recover from); *get on with somebody* (= have a good relationship with).

With an object, the structure usually means 'make somebody/something move'.

You can't ***get him out of*** *bed in the morning.*
Would you mind ***getting your papers off*** *my desk?*
Have you ever tried to ***get toothpaste back*** *into the tube?*
The car's OK – it ***gets me from*** *A to B.*

4 *get* + past participle: *get washed, dressed, married,* etc

Get can be used with a past participle. This structure often has a reflexive meaning, to talk about things that we 'do to ourselves'. Common expressions are *get washed, get dressed, get lost, get drowned, get engaged/married/divorced.*

You've got five minutes to ***get dressed.*** *She's* ***getting married*** *in June.*

5 *get . . .ing; get* + infinitive

Get . . .ing is sometimes used informally to mean 'start . . .ing', especially in the expressions *get moving, get going.*

We'd better ***get moving*** *– it's late.*

With an infinitive, *get* can mean 'manage', 'have an opportunity' or 'be allowed'.

We didn't ***get to see her*** *– she was too busy.*
When do I ***get to meet*** *your new boyfriend?*

Get + **infinitive** can also suggest gradual development.

He's nice when you ***get to know*** *him.*
You'll ***get to speak*** *English more easily as time goes by.*

6 *got* and *gotten*

In British English the past participle of *get* is *got*. In American English the past participle is *gotten* (e.g. *You've* ***gotten*** *us in a lot of trouble*) except in the structure *have got* (► 24).

For *get* as a passive auxiliary (e.g. *I* ***get paid*** *on Fridays*), ► 60.
For causative and other uses of ***get*** + **object + verb form**, ► 108.

473 *get* and *go*: movement

Go is used to talk about a whole movement.
Get is used when we are thinking mainly about the end of a movement – the arrival. Compare:

– *I* ***go*** *to work by car and Lucy* ***goes*** *by train.*
I usually ***get*** *there first.*
– *I* ***went*** *to a meeting in Bristol yesterday.*
I ***got*** *to the meeting at about eight o'clock.*

We often use *get* to suggest that there is some difficulty in arriving.

It wasn't easy to ***get*** *through the crowd.*
I don't know how we're going to ***get*** *over the river.*
Can you tell me how to ***get*** *to the police station?*

For *get* and *go* meaning 'become', ► 394.

***get, become, go, grow,* etc: changes** ► 394

474 *give* with action nouns

1 *give a cough*, etc

We can replace certain verbs by a structure with *give* and a noun. This often happens in British English, for example, with verbs referring to sounds made by people (e.g. *cough, cry, scream, chuckle, laugh, shout*).

*He **gave a cough** to attract my attention.*
*Suddenly she **gave a loud scream** and fell to the ground.*

2 *give somebody a smile*, etc

The structure is also used with an indirect object (in both British English and American English) to replace transitive verbs, especially in an informal style. Common expressions:

give somebody a smile, a look, a kiss, a hug, a call
give something a push, a kick *give it a try, a go, a shot*
give it a miss (BrE) *not give it a thought*

*She **gave me a strange look**.* *I'll **give you a call** if I hear anything.*
*If the car won't start, we'll **give it a push**.*
*'Perhaps salt will make it taste better.' 'OK, let's **give it a try**.'*
*'Are you coming to the film?' 'No, I'm tired. I'll **give it a miss**'.* (BrE)
*He seemed to be in a bad temper, but I didn't **give it a thought**.*

For other structures in which nouns replace verbs, ► 132. For more about structures with *give*, ► 8.

go and *come* ► 424

go and *get*: movement ► 473

go, become, get, grow, etc: changes ► 394

475 *go/come for a . . .*

We can use the structure *go/come for a . . .* in some fixed expressions referring to actions, mostly leisure activities. Using this structure makes the action sound casual and probably rather short. (Compare *go . . .ing*, ► 476.) Common examples:

go/come for a walk, a run, a swim, a ride, a drive, a drink, a meal
go for a bath, a shower

*We need some fresh air. Let's **go for a walk**.*
*Would you like to **come for a drink** this evening?*
*I'm **going for a shower**. Can you answer my phone if it rings?*

This structure is only used with certain action-nouns – we would probably not say, for example, *Come for a climb with us* or *I'm going for a read.*

For other structures in which nouns are used to refer to actions, ► 132.

476 *go/come . . .ing*

1 *go . . .ing*

We use *go* with an *-ing* form to talk about activities in which people move about, and which do not have a fixed beginning or end. The structure is common in expressions referring to sport and leisure activities – for example *go climbing, go dancing, go fishing, go hunting, go riding, go sailing, go shooting, go skating, go skiing, go swimming, go walking.*

Let's ***go climbing*** *next weekend.* *Did you* ***go dancing*** *last Saturday?*

Go . . .ing is also used to talk about looking for or collecting things.

I think I'll ***go shopping*** *tomorrow.*
In June all the students ***go looking*** *for jobs.*
Anne's ***going fruit-picking*** *this weekend.*

We do not use *go . . .ing* to talk about activities that have a more definite beginning and end (NOT ~~*go boxing, go watching a football match*~~).

2 *come . . .ing*

Come . . .ing is also possible in certain situations (for the difference between *come* and *go*, ► 424).

Come swimming *with us tomorrow.*

3 prepositions

Note that prepositions of place, not direction, are used after *go/come . . .ing.*

I went swimming ***in*** *the river.* (NOT ~~*I went swimming to the river.*~~)
She went shopping ***at*** *Harrods.* (NOT . . . ~~*to Harrods.*~~)

477 *gone* with *be*

Gone can be used like an adjective after *be*, to say that somebody is away, or that something has disappeared or that there is no more.

She's ***been gone*** *for three hours – what do you think she's doing?*
You can go out shopping, but don't ***be gone*** *too long.*
When I came back my car ***was gone.*** *Is the butter all* ***gone?***

For *been* used as a past participle of *go* or *come*, ► 395.

grateful* and *thankful ► 604

great, big* and *large ► 404

***grow, become, get, go,* etc: changes** ► 394

478 *half*

1 *half (of)*

We use *half* or *half of* mostly before a noun with a determiner (article, possessive or demonstrative). We do not normally put *a* or *the* before *half* in this case.

*She spends **half (of) her time** travelling.* (NOT ~~*She spends a/the half . . .*~~)
*I gave him **half (of) a cheese pie** to keep him quiet.*

When *half (of)* is followed by a plural noun, the verb is plural.

*Half (of) my **friends live** abroad.* (NOT ~~*Half of my friends lives . . .*~~)

Of is not used in expressions of measurement and quantity.

*I live **half a mile** from here.* (NOT . . . ~~*half of a mile . . .*~~)
*I just need **half a loaf** of bread.* (NOT . . . ~~*half of a loaf . . .*~~)
*The train was **half an hour** late.* (AmE also . . . *a half hour . . .*)

We use *half of* before pronouns.

*'Did you like the books?' 'I've only read **half of them**.'*

2 no following noun

Half can be used without a following noun, if the meaning is clear.

*I've bought some chocolate. You can have **half**.* (NOT . . . ~~*the half*~~)

3 *the half*

We use *the* before *half* if we are saying which half we mean. Before a noun, *of* is used in this case.

*Would you like **the big half** or **the small half**?*
*I didn't like **the second half of** the film.*

4 *half a* and *a half*

Half usually comes before the article *a/an*, but it is possible to put it after in expressions of measurement.

*Could I have **half a pound** of grapes?* (OR . . . ***a half pound** . . .*)

5 *one and a half*

The expression *one and a half* goes with a plural noun. Compare:

*I've been waiting for **one and a half hours**.* (NOT . . . ~~*one and a half hour.*~~)
*I've been waiting for **an hour and a half***

For more information about numbers and counting expressions, ▸ 322.
For *half* in clock times (e.g. *half past two*), ▸ 325.

479 *happen to . . .*

Happen can be used with a following infinitive to suggest that something happens unexpectedly or by chance.

*If you **happen to see** Imogen, ask her to phone me.*
*One day I **happened to get** talking to a woman on a train, and she turned out to be a cousin of my mother's.* →

In sentences with *if* or *in case*, the idea of *by chance* can be emphasised in British English by using *should* before *happen*, but this is no longer very common.

Let me know if you ***should happen*** *to need any help.*
I'll take my swimming things, in case I ***should happen*** *to find a pool open.*

480 *hardly, scarcely* and *no sooner*

These three expressions can be used (often with a past perfect tense, ► 53) to suggest that one thing happened very soon after another. Note the sentence structure:

. . . hardly . . . when/before . . .
. . . scarcely . . . when/before . . .
. . . no sooner . . . than . . .

I had ***hardly/scarcely*** *closed my eyes* ***when*** *the phone rang.*
She was ***hardly/scarcely*** *inside the house* ***before*** *the kids started screaming.*
I had ***no sooner*** *closed the door* ***than*** *somebody knocked.*
We ***no sooner*** *sat down in the train* ***than*** *I felt sick.*

In a formal or literary style, inverted word order is possible (► 270.7).

Hardly had I *closed my eyes when I began to imagine fantastic shapes.*
No sooner had she *agreed to marry him than she started to have doubts.*

481 *hear* and *listen (to)*

1 *hear*: meaning

Hear is the ordinary word to say that something 'comes to our ears'.

Suddenly I ***heard*** *a strange noise.* (NOT ~~*Suddenly I listened to a strange noise.*~~)
Can you ***hear*** *me?*

2 *listen (to)*: meaning

Listen (to) is used to talk about paying attention to sounds that are going on, in progress. It emphasises the idea of concentrating, trying to hear as well as possible. You can hear something without wanting to, but you can only listen to something deliberately. Compare:

I ***heard*** *them talking upstairs, but I didn't really* ***listen*** *to their conversation.*
*'****Listen*** *carefully, please.' 'Could you speak louder? I can't* ***hear*** *you very well.'*
I didn't ***hear*** *the phone because I was* ***listening*** *to the radio.*

3 complete experiences: *hear*

Listen (to) is mostly used to talk about concentrating on experiences that are going on, in progress. To talk about the result of listening: experiencing or understanding the whole of a performance, speech, piece of music, broadcast or other communication, we generally use *hear*. Compare:

– *When she arrived, I was **listening to** a recording of Brendel playing Beethoven.* (NOT . . . ~~*I was hearing*~~ . . .)
*I once **heard** Brendel play all the Beethoven concertos.* (NOT ~~*I once listened to Brendel play*~~ . . .)
– *I wish I had more time to **listen to** the radio.* (NOT . . . ~~*to hear the radio*~~.)
*Did you **hear / listen to** the news yesterday?*

4 *hear* not used in progressive forms

Hear is not usually used in progressive forms. To say that one hears something at the moment of speaking, *can hear* is often used, especially in British English (► 84).
*I **can hear** somebody coming.* (NOT ~~*I am hearing*~~ . . .)

5 *listen* and *listen to*

When there is no object, *listen* is used without *to*. Compare:
Listen! (NOT ~~*Listen to!*~~) ***Listen to** me!* (NOT ~~*Listen me!*~~)

There are similar differences between *see, look (at)* and *watch*. ► 575
For ***hear** + object + infinitive/-ing*, ► 110.

482 *hear, see,* etc with *that*-clause

The present-tense forms *I hear (that) . . .* and *I see (that) . . .* are often used to introduce pieces of news which one has heard or seen.
***I hear (that)** Alice is expecting a baby.*
***I see (that)** the firemen are going on strike.*
Some other verbs can be used like this. Common examples are *understand* and *gather*. These are often used to check information.
*'**I understand** you're moving to a new job.' 'Yes, that's right.'*
*'**I gather** you didn't like the party.' 'What makes you say that?'*

483 *help*

After *help*, we can use **object + infinitive** (with or without *to*).
*Can you **help me (to) find** my ring?* (NOT ~~*Can you help me finding my ring?*~~)
*Thank you so much for **helping us (to) repair** the car.*
*Our main task is to **help the company (to) become** profitable.*
Help can also be followed directly by an infinitive without an object.
*Would you like to **help pack?***

For the expression *can't help . . .ing*, ► 418.

484 *here* and *there*

We use *here* for the place where the speaker/writer is, and *there* for other places.
(on the telephone) *'Hello, is Tom **there**?' 'No, I'm sorry, he's not **here**.'*
(NOT . . . ~~*he's not there*~~.)
*Don't stay **there** in the corner by yourself. Come over **here** and talk to us.* →

Note that *here* and *there* cannot normally be used as nouns.

This place is terrible. *It is terrible here.* (BUT NOT ~~*Here is terrible.*~~)

Did you like that place? OR *Did you like it there?* (BUT NOT ~~*Did you like there?*~~)

There are similar differences between *this* and *that* (► 144), *come* and *go* (► 424) and *bring* and *take* (► 409).
For *here's* and *there's* followed by plural nouns, ► 130.6.
For inverted word order after *here* and *there*, ► 271.1. For *Here you are*, ► 329.18.

485 *high* and *tall*

1 What kind of things are *tall*?

We use *tall* mostly for people, trees, buildings with many floors, and a few other things which are higher than they are wide (e.g. factory chimneys or electricity pylons).

*How **tall** are you?* (NOT ~~*How high are you?*~~)

*There are some beautiful **tall** trees at the end of our garden.*

In other cases we usually prefer *high*.

*Mount Elbrus is the **highest** mountain in Europe.*

*The garden's got very **high** walls.*

2 measurements

In measurements, we use *tall* for people, but we prefer *high* for things. Compare:

*I'm 1m 93 **tall**.* *That tree is about 30m **high**.*

3 distance above the ground

We use *high* to talk about distance above the ground. A child standing on a chair may be *higher* than her mother, although she is probably not *taller*.

*That shelf is too **high** for me to reach.* *The clouds are very **high** today.*

4 parts of the body

Parts of the body can be *long*, but not *tall*.

*Alex has got beautiful **long** legs.* (NOT . . . ~~*tall legs.*~~)

486 *hire, rent* and *let*

1 *hire* and *rent*

Hire and *rent* can mean: 'pay for the use of something'. In British English, *rent* is used for arrangements involving a long period of time (one rents a house or a flat). For shorter periods (e.g. paying for a car, a boat, evening dress) *rent* and *hire* can both be used.

*How much does it cost to **rent** a two-room flat?*

*I need to **hire/rent** a car for the weekend.*

Hire (out) and *rent (out)* can also mean 'sell the use of something'.

*There's a shop in High Street that **hires/rents (out)** evening dress.*

In American English, *rent* is the normal word for both longer and shorter arrangements; *hire*, in American English, normally means 'employ'.

2 *let*

Let is used in British English, like *rent (out)*, to talk about selling the use of rooms, houses, etc.

*We **let** the upstairs room to a student.*

487 *historic* and *historical*

Historic is used especially for historically important places, remains, customs, etc, and for moments which 'make history'.

*We spent the summer visiting **historic** houses and castles in France.*
*Our two countries are about to make a **historic** agreement.*

Historical means 'connected with the study of history' or 'really existing in history'.

***historical** research* *a **historical** novel* ***historical** documents*
*Was King Arthur a **historical** figure?*

488 *holiday* and *holidays*

In British English, the plural *holidays* is often used for the 'long holiday' of the year. In other cases we normally use the singular *holiday*. Compare:

*Where are you going for your summer **holiday(s)**?*
*We get five days' Christmas **holiday** this year.*
*Next Monday is a public **holiday**.*

The singular is used in the British expression *on holiday* (note the preposition).

*I met Marianne **on holiday** in Norway.* (NOT . . . ~~*on/in holidays*~~ . . .)

Americans more often use the word *vacation*. (In British English, *vacation* is mainly used for the periods when universities are not teaching.) *Holiday* is most often used in American English for a day of publicly observed celebration (such as Thanksgiving) when people do not have to work.

489 *home*

1 articles and prepositions

No article is used in the expression *at home* (meaning 'in one's own place').

*Is anybody **at home**?* (NOT . . . ~~*at the home*~~?)

At is often dropped, especially in American English.

*Is anybody **home**?*

Home (without *to*) can be used as an adverb referring to direction.

*I think I'll go **home**.* (NOT . . . ~~*to home*~~.)

There is no special preposition in English to express the idea of being at somebody's home (like French *chez*, German *bei*, Danish/Swedish/Norwegian *hos*, etc). One way of saying this is to use *at* with a possessive.

*We had a great evening **at Philip's**.*
*Ring up and see if Jacqueline is **at the Smiths'**, could you?* →

2 *house* and *home*

House is an emotionally neutral word: it just refers to a particular type of building. *Home* is used more personally: it is the place that somebody lives in, and can express the idea of emotional attachment to a place. Compare:

There are some horrible new ***houses*** *in our village.*
I lived there for six years, but I never really felt it was my ***home****.*

490 *hope*

1 tenses after *hope*

After *I hope*, we often use a present tense with a future meaning.

I hope she ***likes*** (= will like) *the flowers.* *I hope the bus* ***comes*** *soon.*

For a similar use of present tenses after *bet*, ▸ 401.

2 negative sentences

In negative sentences, we usually put *not* with the verb that comes after *hope*.

*I hope she does****n't wake up****.* (NOT ~~*I don't hope she wakes up.*~~)

For negative structures with *think*, *believe*, etc, ▸ 219.

3 special uses of past tenses

We can use *I was hoping . . .* to introduce a polite request.

I was hoping *you could lend me some money.*

I had hoped . . . refers to hopes for things that did not happen.

I had hoped *that Jennifer would study medicine, but she didn't want to.*

For more about the use of past tenses in polite requests, ▸ 311. For *I hope so/not*, ▸ 585.
For the differences between *hope*, *expect*, *wait* and *look forward*, ▸ 457.

hope, expect, wait and _look forward_ ▸ 457

491 *hopefully*

One meaning of *hopefully* is 'full of hope', 'hoping'.

She sat there waiting ***hopefully*** *for the phone to ring.*

Another meaning is 'it is to be hoped that' or 'I hope'.

Hopefully*, inflation will soon be under control.*
Hopefully *I'm not disturbing you?*

492 *how*

1 use and word order

How is used to introduce questions or the answers to questions.

How *did you do it?* *Tell me* ***how*** *you did it.* *I know* ***how*** *he did it.*

We also use *how* in exclamations (► 223). The word order is not the same as in questions. Compare:

- *How cold **is it**?*
  *How cold **it is**!*
- *How **do you like** my hair?*
  *How **I love** weekends!* (NOT ~~*How do I love weekends!*~~)
- *How **have you** been?*
  *How **you've** grown!* (NOT ~~*How have you grown!*~~)

When *how* is used in an exclamation with an adjective or adverb, this comes immediately after *how*.

***How beautiful** the trees are!* (NOT ~~*How the trees are beautiful!*~~)
***How well** she plays!* (NOT ~~*How she plays well!*~~)

2 with adjectives/adverbs: *how*, not *how much*

We use *how*, not *how much*, before adjectives and adverbs.

***How tall** are you?* (NOT ~~*How much tall are you?*~~)
*Show me **how fast** you can run.* (NOT . . . ~~*how much fast*~~ . . .)

3 comparisons: *how* not used

In comparisons we use *as* or *like* (► 515) or *the way* (see below), not *how*.

*Hold it in both hands, **as** / **like** / **the way** Mummy does.*
(NOT . . . ~~*how Mummy does.*~~)

4 *how*, *what* and *why*

These three question words can sometimes be confused. Note particularly the following common structures.

***How** do you know?* (NOT ~~*Why do you know?*~~)
***What** do you call this?* (NOT ~~*How do you call this?*~~)
***What's** that called?* (NOT ~~*How is that called?*~~)
***What** do you think?* (NOT ~~*How do you think?*~~)
***What? What** did you say?* (NOT ~~*How? How did you say?*~~)
***Why** should I think that?*

Both *What about . . .?* and *How about . . .?* are used to make suggestions, and to bring up points that have been forgotten.

***What/How about** eating out this evening?*
***What/How about** the kids? Who's going to look after them?*

In exclamations (► 223), *what* is used before noun phrases; and *how* is used before adjectives (without nouns), adverbs and verb phrases.

***What** a wonderful house!* ***How** wonderful!*
***How** you've changed!*

5 *how much*, *how many*, *how old*, *how far*, etc

Many interrogative expressions of two or more words begin with *how*. These are used to ask for measurements, quantities, etc. Examples:

***How much** do you weigh?* ***How many** people were there?*
***How old** are your parents?* ***How far** is your house?*
***How often** do you come to New York?*

→

Note that English does not have a special expression to ask for ordinal numbers (*first, second,* etc).

'It's our wedding anniversary.' 'Congratulations. Which one?'
(NOT . . . ~~*the how-manyeth?*~~)

6 *the way*

The way (► 620) can often be used instead of non-interrogative *how*.
Note that *the way* and *how* are not used together.

Look at ***the way*** *those cats wash each other.* OR *Look at* ***how*** *those cats . . .*
(NOT . . . ~~*the way how those cats wash*~~ . . .)

The way *you organise the work is for you to decide.* OR ***How*** *you organise . . .*
(NOT ~~*The way how you organise*~~ . . .)

For *how to . . .*, ► 111. For *how ever*, ► 627. For *learn how to . . .*, ► 508.
For *however*, ► 252 (conjunction) , ► 371 (adverb).
For *how*-clauses as objects, subjects, etc (e.g. *Don't ask me how the journey was; How you divide up the money is your business*), ► 266.

493 *how* and *what . . . like?*

1 changes: *How's Ron?*

We generally use *how* to ask about things that change – for example people's moods and health. We prefer *what . . . like* to ask about things that do not change – for example people's character and appearance. Compare:

– *'**How**'s Ron?' 'He's very well.'*
*'**What**'s Ron **like**?' 'He's quiet and a bit shy.'*
– *'**How** does she look today?' 'Tired.'*
*'**What** does she look **like**?' 'Short and dark, pretty, cheerful-looking.'*

2 reactions: *How was the film?*

We often use *how* to ask about people's reactions to their experiences.
What . . . like is also possible.

*'**How** was the film?' 'Very good.'* (OR ***What*** *was the film* ***like . . .?***)
How*'s your steak?* ***How****'s the new job?*

however, although, though* and *but ► 371

if* and *when ► 623

494 *ill* and *sick*

Ill and *sick* are both used to mean 'unwell'. (In American English *ill* is less usual except in a formal style.)

George didn't come in last week because he was ***ill/sick.***

Ill is not very common before a noun.

I'm looking after my ***sick*** *mother.* (More normal than . . . *my ill mother.*)

Be sick can meant 'vomit' (= bring food up from the stomach) in British English.

I was sick *three times in the night.*

495 *immediately, the moment,* etc: conjunctions

In British English, *immediately* and *directly* can be used as conjunctions, to mean 'as soon as'.

*Tell me **immediately** you have any news.*
*I knew something was wrong **immediately** I arrived.*
***Directly** I walked in the door, I smelt smoke.*

The moment (that), the instant (that), the second (that) and *the minute (that)* can be used in the same way (in both British and American English).

*Telephone me **the moment (that)** you get the results.*
*I loved you **the instant (that)** I saw you.*

As with other time conjunctions, we use present tenses when talking about the future.

*I'll let you know the moment I **have** some definite information.*

***in, at* and *on*: place ▸ 384**

***in, at* and *on*: time ▸ 386**

***in* and *during* ▸ 441**

***in* and *for*: time ▸ 469**

496 *in* and *into, on* and *onto*: prepositions

1 position and direction

We generally use *in* and *on* to talk about the positions of things – where they **are**; and *into* and *onto* to talk about directions and destinations – where things are **going**. Compare:

– *A moment later the ball was **in** the goal.*
*The ball rolled slowly **into** the goal.* (NOT . . . ~~*rolled slowly in the goal.*~~)
– *She was walking **in** the garden.*
*Then she walked **into** the house.*
– *The cat's **on** the roof again.*
*How does it get **onto** the roof?*

Note that *into* and *onto* are normally written as single words. *On to* is also possible in British English.

2 *in* and *on* for movement

After some verbs (e.g. *throw, jump, push, put, fall*) we can use both *in* and *into*, or *on* and *onto*, to talk about directional movement. We prefer *into*/*onto* when we think of the movement itself, and *in*/*on* when we think more of the end of the movement – the place where somebody or something will be. Compare:

– *The children keep jumping **into** the flowerbeds.*
*Go and jump **in** the river.* →

– *In the experiment, we put glowing magnesium* ***into*** *jars of oxygen.*
Could you put the ham ***in*** *the fridge?*
– *He was trying to throw his hat* ***onto*** *the roof.*
Throw another log ***on*** *the fire.*

We use *in* and *on* after *sit down* and *arrive.*

He sat down ***in*** *the armchair, and I sat down* ***on*** *the floor.*
(NOT ~~*He sat down into.*~~ . . . OR ~~*I sat down onto*~~ . . .)
We arrive ***in*** *Athens at midday.* (NOT USUALLY ~~*We arrive into Athens*~~ . . .)

For *arrive at* . . ., ▸ 384.

3 *into* for change

We normally use *into* after verbs suggesting change.

When she kissed the frog, it ***changed into*** *a handsome prince.*
(NOT . . . ~~*changed in a handsome prince.*~~)
Can you ***translate*** *this* ***into*** *Chinese?* (NOT . . . ~~*translate this in Chinese?*~~)

Cut can be followed by *into* or *in.*

Cut *the onion* ***in(to)*** *small pieces.*

And note the expression *in half.*

I broke it ***in half.*** (NOT . . . ~~*into half.*~~)

4 *in* and *on* as adverbs

In and *on* are used as adverbs for both position and movement.

I stayed ***in*** *last night.* *Come* ***in!*** (NOT ~~*Come into!*~~)
What have you got ***on?*** *Put your coat* ***on.***

For the difference between *in* and *to*, ▸ 385.

in* and *later ▸ 506

in/at* and *to ▸ 385

497 *indifferent*

Indifferent is not the opposite of *different.* It is used to say that one has no interest in something that other people might be concerned about.

He's quite ***indifferent*** *to people's opinion of his work.*
You can't be ***indifferent*** *to climate change.*

Another meaning is 'not very good'.

The team's performance has been ***indifferent*** *all year.*

in front of* and *before ▸ 397

in front of* and *opposite ▸ 549

in order that* and *so that ▸ 588

498 *in spite of*

In spite of is used as a preposition. ***In spite of*** **+ noun** means more or less the same as ***although*** **+ clause.**

*We went out **in spite of** the rain.* (= . . . although it was raining.)

*We understood him **in spite of** his accent.* (= . . . although he had a strong accent.)

In spite of is the opposite of *because of*. Compare:

*She passed her exams **in spite of** her terrible teacher.*

*She passed her exams **because of** her wonderful teacher.*

In spite of can be followed by an *-ing* form.

***In spite of having** a headache I enjoyed the film.*

In spite of cannot be followed directly by a *that*-clause. Instead, we can use *in spite of the fact that*.

*He is good company, **in spite of the fact that** he talks all the time.*

This is rather heavy: *although* means the same, and is more common.

In more formal English, *despite* can be used in the same way as *in spite of*.

in the end, at the end, at last and *finally* ▸ 465

499 *indeed*

1 *very . . . indeed*

Indeed can be used to emphasise *very* with an adjective or adverb. This is rather formal, and is unusual in American English.

*I was **very pleased indeed** to hear from you.*

*He was driving **very fast indeed**.* *Thank you **very much indeed**.*

Indeed is unusual in this sense without *very*, and is not normally used after *extremely* or *quite*.

NOT ~~*He was driving fast indeed.*~~

NOT ~~*He was driving quite/extremely fast indeed.*~~

2 *indeed* with verb

Indeed can also be used after *be* or an auxiliary verb in order to suggest confirmation or emphatic agreement. This is rather formal. It is common in short answers (▸ 308).

*We are **indeed** interested in your offer, and would be glad to have prices.*

*'It's cold.' 'It is **indeed**.'*

*'Henry made a fool of himself.' 'He did **indeed**.'*

500 *instead* and *instead of*

1 preposition: *instead of*

Instead is not used alone as a preposition; we use the two words *instead of*.

*I'll have tea **instead of** coffee, please.* (NOT . . . ~~*instead coffee*~~ . . .) →

Can you work with Sophie ***instead of*** *me today, please?*

Instead of is not usually followed by an infinitive.

I stayed in bed all day ***instead of going*** *to work.* (NOT . . . ~~*instead of (to) go to work.*~~)

2 *instead of* and *without*

Instead of suggests that one person, thing or action replaces another. *Without* suggests that one person, thing, etc is not together with another. Compare:

– *Ruth was invited to the reception, but she was ill, so Lou went* ***instead of*** *her.* (Lou replaced Ruth.) (NOT . . . ~~*Lou went without her.*~~)

Max and Jake were invited, but Max was ill, so Jake went ***without*** *him.* (Normally they would have gone together.)

– *She often goes swimming* ***instead*** (NOT ~~*She often goes swimming instead of*~~ s school.) (NOT ~~*She often goes swimming without going to school.*~~)

She often goes swimming ***without*** *telling her mother.* (Swimming and telling her mother should go together.) (NOT ~~*She often goes swimming instead of telling her mother.*~~)

3 adverb: *instead*

Instead (without *of*) is an adverb. It usually begins or ends a clause.

She didn't go to Greece after all. ***Instead****, she went to America.*

Don't marry Jake. Marry me ***instead****.*

We do not use *instead* to mark a contrast, in the sense of 'on the other hand'.

He's a rather anti-social person. ***On the other hand****, he's very generous.* (NOT ~~*Instead, he's very generous.*~~)

501 *its* and *it's*

These two words are often confused by native speakers of English as well as by foreign learners.

Its is a possessive word (like *my*, *your*).

Every country has ***its*** *traditions.* (NOT . . . ~~*it's traditions.*~~)

It's is the contracted form of *it is* or *it has*.

It's *raining again.* (NOT ~~*Its raining again.*~~)

Have you seen my camera? ***It's*** *disappeared.* (NOT . . . ~~*Its disappeared.*~~)

There is a similar difference between *whose* and *who's*, ► 629. For more about contractions, ► 337.

502 *it's time*

1 followed by infinitive

It's time (or *it is time*) can be followed by an infinitive.

It's time to buy *a new car.*

To say who should do something, we use ***for*** **+ object + infinitive** (► 113).

It's time ***for her to go*** *to bed.*

2 followed by past tense with present or future reference

It's time can also be followed by a subject with a past tense verb. The meaning is present.

***It's time she was** in bed.* ***It's time you washed** those trousers.*
*I'm getting tired. **It's time we went** home.*

The expression *It's high time . . .* is often used in this structure, to say that something is urgent.

***It's high time you got** a job.*

For other structures in which a past tense has a present or future meaning, ▸ 46.

journey, travel, trip and *voyage* ▸ 612

503 *just*

1 meanings

Just has several meanings.

a time

Just often emphasises the idea of 'at this moment' or 'close to the present'.

*I'll be down in a minute – I'm **just** changing my shirt.* (= right now)
*Alice has **just** phoned.* (= a short time ago)
*Sam's still around. I saw him **just** last week.* (= as recently as)

In expressions like *just after, just before* and *just when, just* suggests closeness to the time in question.

*I saw him **just after** lunch.* (= . . . very soon after lunch.)

b 'only', 'scarcely'

Just can mean 'only', 'nothing more than', 'scarcely'.

*Complete set of garden tools for **just** £15.99!*
*I **just** want somebody to love me – that's all.*
*We **just** caught the train.*

This meaning can be emphasised by *only*.

*There was **only just** enough light to read by.*

Can/Could I just . . .? can make a request seem less demanding.

***Could I just** use your phone for a moment?*

c 'exactly'

Just often means 'exactly'.

*'What's the time?' 'It's **just** four o'clock.'*
*Thanks. That's **just** what I wanted.*
*She's **just** as bad-tempered as her father.*

d emphasiser

Just can emphasise other words and expressions, with the sense of 'simply', 'there's no other word for it'.

*You're **just** beautiful.* *I **just** love your dress.* →

2 tenses

When *just* means 'a moment ago', past and present perfect tenses are both possible in British English. A present perfect is preferred when we are giving news. Compare:

*I've **just had** a brilliant idea.*
*Jack('s) **just called**. His wife's **had** a baby.* (The news is the baby, not the phone call.)

In American English a past tense is also very common.

*'Where's Sam?' 'He **just went out**.'*
*Alice **(has) just left**.* *I **just had** a brilliant idea.*

3 *just now*

Just now can mean either 'at this moment' or 'a few moments ago'. Compare:

*She's not in **just now**. Can I take a message?*
*I saw Jake **just now**. He wanted to talk to you.*

When *just now* means 'a few moments ago', two positions are possible:

a in end-position, usually with a past tense.
*I telephoned Anna **just now**.*

b in mid-position (► 200) with the verb, with a present perfect or past tense.
*I('ve) **just now** realised what I need to do.*

kind of, sort of and *type of* ► 592

504 *know*

1 *know how* + infinitive

Know is not followed directly by infinitives. We use know *how to* (► 111).

*I **know how to make** Spanish omelettes.* (NOT ~~*I know to make*~~ . . .)

2 object + infinitive

In a formal style, *know* is sometimes followed by **object + infinitive**.

*They **knew him to be** a dangerous criminal.*

The passive equivalent is quite common in a formal style.

*He **was known to be** a dangerous criminal.*

In a less formal style, *that*-clauses are more usual.

*They **knew that** he was a dangerous criminal.*

Know means 'experience' in the common structure ***I've never known*** + **object** + **infinitive**; an infinitive without *to* is possible in British English.

*I've never **known it (to) rain** like this.*

3 tenses

Know cannot usually be used in progressive forms (► 4).

*I **know** exactly what you mean.* (NOT ~~*I am knowing*~~ . . .)

A present perfect tense is used to say how long one has known somebody or something. (► 52 for more details.)

*We've **known** each other since 1994.* (NOT ~~*We know each other since 1994.*~~)

4 *know* and *know about/of*

Know + **object** is used mainly to talk about knowledge that comes from direct personal experience. In other cases, we normally use *know about/of, have heard of* or another structure. Compare:

*'You don't **know** my mother, do you?' 'No, I've never met her.'*
*We all **know about** Abraham Lincoln.* (NOT ~~*We all know Abraham Lincoln.*~~)

5 *know* and *find out*, etc

Know is not normally used to talk about finding something out: to know something is ***to have learnt*** it, not ***to learn*** it. To talk about getting knowledge we can use for example *find out, get to know, learn, hear, can tell.*

*'She's married.' 'Where did you **find** that **out**?'* (NOT . . . ~~*Where did you know that?*~~)
*I want to travel round the world and **get to know** people from different countries.* (NOT . . . ~~*and know people*~~ . . .)
*He's from Liverpool, as you can **tell** from his accent.* (NOT . . . ~~*as you can know from his accent.*~~)

6 *I know* and *I know it*

Note the difference between these two short answers.
I know refers to facts – it could be completed by a *that*-clause.
*'You're late.' '**I know**.'* (= I know that I'm late.)
I know it generally refers to things – *it* replaces a noun.
*'I went to a nice restaurant called The Elizabeth last night.' '**I know it**.'* (= I know the restaurant.)

For ways of using *you know*, ▸ 301.3.

large, great and *big* ▸ 404

505 *last, the last, the latest*

1 *last week, month*, etc; *the last week, month*, etc

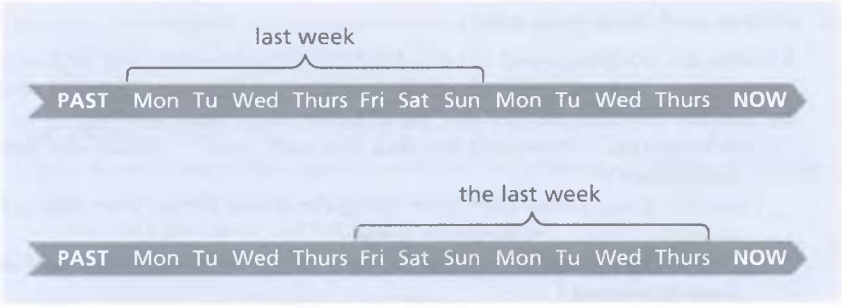
Last week, month, etc (without *the*) is the week, month, etc just before this one. If I am speaking in July, *last month* was June; in 2016, *last year* was 2015.
The last week, month, etc is the period of seven/thirty, etc days up to the moment of speaking. On July 15th 2016, *the last month* is the period from June 16th to July 15th; *the last year* is the 12 months starting in July 2015. →

Compare:

– *I was ill* ***last week****, but I'm OK this week.* (NOT ~~*I was ill the last week*~~ . . .)
I've had a cold for ***the last week****. I feel terrible.*

– *We bought this house* ***last year****.*
We've lived here for ***the last year****, and we're very happy with the place.*

The difference between *next* and *the next* is similar. ► 533



2 *the last three . . .*, etc

Note the word order in expressions with numbers.

I've been busy for ***the last three*** *months.* (NOT . . . ~~*for the three last months.*~~)

We generally say *the last few days/weeks*, etc, not *the last days/weeks*, etc.

The last few days *have been busy.* (NOT ~~*The last days*~~ . . .)

3 the last in a series

The last can also mean 'the last in a series'.

In ***the last*** *week of the trip something funny happened.*
This is going to be ***the last*** *Christmas I'll spend at home.*

4 *latest* and *last*

We can use *latest* to talk about something new, and *last* to mean 'the one before'. Compare:

– *Her* ***latest*** *book's being published next week.* (NOT ~~*Her last book*~~ . . .)
She thinks it's much better than her ***last*** *one.*

– *He's enjoying his* ***latest*** *job.* (NOT ~~*He's enjoying his last job.*~~)
But it doesn't pay as much as his ***last*** *one.*

For tenses with *This is the last time . . .*, etc, ► 56.

506 *later* and *in*

With a time expression, we generally use *later* to mean 'after that time', and *in* to mean 'after now'. Compare:

She got married on her 18th birthday; ***six months later*** *she was divorced.*
Penny's coming on July 1st, and Tom will arrive about ***a week later****.*
I'll see you ***in a few days****.* (NOT ~~*I'll see you a few days later.*~~)

But without a time expression, *later* can be used to mean 'after now'.

Bye! See you ***later****!*

507 *lay* and *lie*

There are three similar verbs that can be confused: *lay* (regular except for spelling), *lie* (irregular) and *lie* (regular).

1 *lay*

Lay is a regular verb except for its spelling. Its forms are:

infinitive: *(to) lay* past participle: *laid*
-ing form: *laying* past: *laid*

Lay means 'put down carefully' or 'put down flat'. It has an object.
***Lay the tent** down on the grass and I'll see how to put it up.*
*I **laid the papers** on the table and sat down.* (NOT ~~*I lay*~~ . . .)
Note the expressions ***lay a table*** (= put plates, knives, etc on a table) and ***lay an egg*** (a bird's way of having a baby).

2 *lie* (irregular)

The forms of the irregular verb *lie* are:

infinitive: *(to) lie* past: *lay*
-ing form: *lying* past participle: *lain* (used mostly in a formal/literary style)

Lie (irregular) means 'be down', 'be/become horizontal'. It has no object.
*Don't **lie** in bed all day. Get up and do some work.* (NOT ~~*Don't lay*~~ . . .)
*I **lay** down and closed my eyes.* (NOT ~~*I laid down*~~ . . .)

3 *lie* (regular)

The regular verb *lie* (*lied*) means 'say things that are not true'.
*You **lied** to me when you said you loved me.*

4 dialect forms

In many British and American dialects, different forms of *lay* and irregular *lie* are used. *Lay* is often used in cases where standard English has *lie*.
*I'm going to **lay** down for a few minutes.* (Standard English . . . *lie down* . . .)

508 *learn*

1 forms

Learn is often irregular in British English (*learn/learnt*) and normally regular in American English (*learn/learned*). For other verbs like this, ► 1.2.

For the adjective *learned* (/'lɜːnɪd/), ► 191.

2 *learn (how) to . . .*

To talk about consciously learning a method or technique for doing something, we can use *learn to . . .* or *learn how to . . .*
*She enjoyed **learning (how) to look after young animals**.*
*It's time you **learnt (how) to change the oil** in the car.*

When we talk about less conscious skills and other kinds of knowledge, we generally use *learn to . . . .*

Children usually ***learn to walk*** *at around one year old.*

In the new job, I soon ***learnt to keep my mouth shut****.*

leave and *forget* ► 470

509 *left*

The past participle of *leave* – *left* – can be used in a special way, to mean 'remaining', 'not used', 'still there'.

What did you do with the money that was ***left****?*

After the explosion, only two people were ***left*** *alive.*

Left is common after *there is* and *have got.*

There's *nothing* ***left*** *in the fridge.*

I ***haven't got*** *any money* ***left****: can you get the tickets?*

lend and *borrow* ► 408

510 *lesser*

Lesser is used in a few expressions (in a rather formal style) to mean 'smaller' or 'not so much'.

the ***lesser*** *of two evils* *a* ***lesser****-known writer*

511 *lest*

Lest has a similar meaning to *in case* (► 248) or *so that . . . not* (► 588). It is rare in British English, and is found mostly in older literature and in ceremonial language. It is a little more common in formal American English.

They kept watch all night ***lest*** *robbers should come.*

We must take care ***lest*** *evil thoughts enter our hearts.*

Lest can be followed by a subjunctive verb (► 232).

The government must act, ***lest*** *the problem of child poverty* ***grow*** *worse.*

512 *let*

1 followed by infinitive without *to*

Let is followed by **object + infinitive without *to*.**

We usually ***let the children stay*** *up late on Saturdays.* (NOT . . . ~~*let the children to stay / staying*~~ . . .)

She didn't ***let me see*** *what she was doing.* (NOT . . . ~~*let me saw*~~ . . .)

Note the expressions *let . . . know* (= tell, inform) and *let . . . have* (= send, give).
I'll ***let you know*** *my travel dates next week.*
Could you ***let me have*** *the bill for the car repair?*
Let go of means 'stop holding'.
Don't ***let go of*** *Mummy's hand.*

2 not used in passives

This structure is unusual in passive forms; we prefer *allow*.
After questioning he ***was allowed*** *to go home.*

3 with object + preposition / adverb particle

Let can be followed by an object and a prepositional phrase or adverb particle expressing movement.
You'd better ***let the dog out*** *of the car.*
Let him in*, could you?* *Those kids* ***let my tyres down****.*
This structure is also common in the passive.
He ***was let out*** *of prison early for good behaviour.*

For *let* introducing first- and third-person imperatives (e.g. *Let's go for a walk*; *Let me see*; *Let the prayers begin*), ▸ 225. For more about infinitives without *to*, ▸ 91.

let, _allow_ and _permit_ ▸ 365

let, _rent_ and _hire_ ▸ 486

lie and _lay_ ▸ 507

513 *life*: countable or uncountable noun

When we talk about life in general, or about a kind of life, *life* is normally uncountable.
Life is complicated. *Anna enjoys* ***life****.*
I think I would enjoy city ***life****.* (NOT . . . ~~*a city life.*~~)
When we describe particular people's lives, *life* is normally countable.
My grandmother had ***a*** *hard* ***life****.* (NOT . . . ~~*had hard life.*~~)
My mother's parents lived interesting ***lives****.*

For more about countable and uncountable nouns, ▸ 119.

514 *like*: verb

1 not used in progressive forms

Like is not usually used in progressive forms (▸ 4).
'What do you think of the soup?' 'I ***like*** *it.'* (NOT . . . ~~*I'm liking it.*~~)

2 not used without an object

Like cannot normally be used without an object.

*'How do you feel about ballet?' 'I **like it**.'* (NOT . . . ~~*I like.*~~)

For exceptions, ► 514.7 below.

3 *very much*: position

We can use *very much* with *like*, but not *very* alone.

*I **very much** like his latest film.* (NOT ~~*I very like his latest film.*~~)

Very much does not come between *like* and its object (► 196).

*I **like** you and your sister very much.* OR *I very much **like** you and your sister.*
(NOT ~~*I like very much you and your sister.*~~)

4 *like . . .ing*: enjoyment

To talk about enjoying activities in general, we can use *like . . .ing* (especially common in British English) or ***like* + infinitive**.

*I really **like walking / to walk** in the woods.*

*Children always **like listening / to listen** to stories.*

To talk about enjoying something on one occasion, we use *like . . .ing*.

*I really **liked working** with him on his boat last week.*

***Like* + object + verb** is possible.

*I don't **like people phoning / to phone** me in the middle of the night.*

5 *like* + infinitive: choices and habits

We can use ***like* + infinitive** to talk about choices and habits.

*I **like to do** the shopping early on Saturday mornings.*

*When I'm pouring tea **I like to put** the milk in first.*

Not like to can mean 'think it better not to'.

*'Why didn't you tell me before?' 'I **didn't like to disturb** you at home.'*

***Like* + object + infinitive** is possible.

***She likes the children to go** to bed early during the week.*

6 *would like*

We use ***would like* + infinitive** as a polite way of saying 'want', especially in requests and offers.

*I'**d like** two kilos of tomatoes, please.*

*'**Would** you **like** to dance?' 'Yes, OK.'* (NOT ~~*Would you like dancing?*~~ . . .)

Do you like . . .? is not used in this way.

NOT ~~*Do you like some more coffee?*~~

Would like to can be used instead of repeating a whole infinitive (► 280).

*'How about playing tennis?' 'I'**d like to**.'*

Polite requests often begin *If you would like . . .* ; the following clause is sometimes dropped.

***If you would like** to take a seat, I'll see if Mr Smithers is free.*

***If you would like** to come this way . . .*

Would is sometimes dropped in this structure.

***If you like** to come this way . . .*

For *would like* with a perfect infinitive (e.g. *I would like to have seen that*), ► 90.

7 *if you like*, etc

When we offer people a choice, we often use *like* to mean 'want (to)' in subordinate clauses. Note that *to* is not used.

*'Can I go now?' 'If you **like**.'* (NOT ~~*If you like to.*~~)
*Do it **any** way you **like**.* *Come **when** you **like**.*
*You can sit **wherever** you **like**.*

515 *like* and *as*: similarity, function

We can use *like* or *as* to say that things are similar.
We can also use *as* to talk about function – the jobs that people or things do.

1 *like* (similarity): *like me*

Like can be a preposition. We use *like*, not *as*, before a noun or pronoun to talk about similarity.

like + noun/pronoun

*My sister looks **like me**.* (NOT . . . ~~*as me.*~~)
*He ran **like the wind**.* (NOT . . . ~~*as the wind.*~~)
***Like his parents**, he is a vegetarian.*

We can use *very*, *quite* and other adverbs of degree before *like*.

*He's **very like** his father.* *She looks **a bit like** Queen Victoria.*

We can use *like* to give examples.

*She's good at scientific subjects, **like mathematics**.* (NOT . . . ~~*as mathematics.*~~)
*In mountainous countries, **like Peru**, . . .*

2 *as* (similarity): *as I do*

As is a conjunction. We use it before a clause, and before an expression beginning with a preposition.

as + clause
as + preposition phrase

*Nobody knows her **as I do**.*
*We often drink tea with the meal, **as they do** in China.*
*In 1939, **as in 1914**, everybody seemed to want war.*
*On Friday, **as on Tuesday**, the meeting will be at 8.30.*

3 *like I do* (informal)

In modern English, *like* is often used as a conjunction instead of *as*. This is most common in an informal style.

*Nobody loves you **like I do**.*

4 inverted word order: *as did all his family*

In a very formal style, *as* is sometimes followed by **auxiliary verb + subject** (note the inverted word order, ► 270).

*She was a Catholic, **as were** most of her friends.*
*He believed, **as did** all his family, that the king was their supreme lord.* →

5 *as you know*, etc

Some expressions beginning with *as* are used to introduce facts which are 'common ground' – known to both speaker/writer and listener/reader. Examples are *as you know*, *as we agreed*, *as you suggested*.

__As you know__, next Tuesday's meeting has been cancelled.

I am sending you the bill for the repairs, __as we agreed__.

There are some passive expressions of this kind – for example *as is well known*; *as was agreed*. Note that there is no subject *it* after *as* in these expressions (► 256).

__As is well known__, more people get colds in wet weather. (NOT ~~*As it is well known* . . .~~)

I am sending you the bill, __as was agreed__. (NOT . . . ~~*as it was agreed.*~~)

6 comparison with *as* and *like* after negatives

After a negative clause, a comparison with *as* or *like* usually refers only to the positive part of what comes before.

I don't __smoke, like Megan__. (Megan smokes.)

I am not __a Conservative, like Joe__. (Joe is a Conservative.)

Before a negative clause, the comparison refers to the whole clause.

__Like Emily, I don't smoke__. (Emily doesn't smoke.)

__Like James, I am not a Conservative__. (James is not a Conservative.)

7 function or role: *He worked as a waiter.*

Another use of *as* is to say what function or role a person or thing has – what jobs people do, what purposes things are used for, what category they belong to, etc. In this case, *as* is a preposition, used before a noun.

He worked __as a waiter__ for two years. (NOT . . . ~~*like a waiter.*~~)

Please don't use that knife __as a screwdriver__.

A crocodile starts life __as an egg__.

Compare this use of *as* with *like*.

__As your brother__, I must warn you to be careful. (I am your brother.)

__Like your brother__, I must warn you to be careful. (I am not your brother, but he and I have similar attitudes.)

Note that *as* is often pronounced /əz/ (► 315).
For comparisons with *as . . . as*, ► 203. For *alike*, ► 363. For *like* used instead of *as if*, ► 378.
For *the same as*, ► 571. For *What . . . like?*, ► 493. For *such as*, ► 596.6.
For *like* used to join two infinitive structures, ► 91.4.

like and *as if* ► 378

516 *likely*

1 meaning

Likely is an adjective with a similar meaning to *probable*.

I don't think a Labour victory is __likely__. *What's a __likely__ date for the election?*

The opposite is *unlikely*.

Snow is very __unlikely__.

Note also the informal adverb phrases *very/most likely*.

I think she'll __very/most likely__ be late.

2 *it is (un)likely + that*-clause

We can use *it* as a preparatory subject or object for a *that*-clause (► 268–269).

***It's likely that** the meeting will go on late.*
*I thought **it unlikely that** she would come back.*

3 infinitive after *be (un)likely*

Be + (un)likely is often followed by an infinitive.

*I'm **likely to be** busy tomorrow.* *Do you think it's **likely to rain?***
*He's **unlikely to agree.***

listen (to) and *hear* ► 481

little and *small* ► 580

lonely and *alone* ► 367

(a) long way and *far* ► 461

517 *long* and *(for) a long time*

1 *long* in questions and negatives

Long (meaning '(for) a long time') is most common in questions and negative clauses, and with restrictive words like *hardly, seldom.*

*Have you been waiting **long?*** *It doesn't take **long** to get to her house.*
*She seldom stays **long.***

2 *(for) a long time* in affirmative clauses

In affirmative clauses we usually prefer *(for) a long time.*

*I waited **(for) a long time**, but she didn't arrive.* (NOT ~~*I waited long*~~ . . .)
*It takes **a long time** to get to her house.* (NOT ~~*It takes long*~~ . . .)

3 *long* in affirmative clauses

However, *long* is used in affirmative clauses with *too, enough, as* and *so,* and in a few other common expressions.

*The meeting went on much **too long.***
*I've been working here **long enough**. Time to get a new job.*
*You can stay **as long** as you want.*
*Sorry I took **so long**.* *I'll be back **before long.***
*She sits dreaming **all day long.*** (also *all night/week/year long*)

Long is also used in affirmative clauses to modify adverbs and conjunctions.

*We used to live in Paris, but that was **long before** you were born.*
***Long after** the accident he used to dream that he was dying.*
***Long ago**, in a distant country, there lived a beautiful princess.* (rather formal)

→

4 *for a long time* in negative clauses

When *for a long time* is used in a negative clause, it sometimes has a different meaning from *for long*. Compare:

– *She didn't speak* ***for long.*** (= She only spoke for a short time.)
She didn't speak ***for a long time.*** (This could mean 'She was silent for a long time' – the same as *For a long time she didn't speak*).
– *He didn't work* ***for long.*** (= He soon stopped working.)
He didn't work ***for a long time.*** (This could mean 'He was unemployed for a long time' – the same as *For a long time he didn't work*).

The reason for the difference is to do with the 'scope of negation': in the first and third sentences, *not* goes with *for long*, but in the second and fourth *for a long time* is outside the influence of *not* (it could go at the beginning of the clause).

5 *How long are you here for?*

Questions like *How long are you here for?* refer to the future. Compare:

'***How long are you here for?***' *'Until the end of next week.'*
'***How long have you been here for?***' *'Since last Monday.'*

6 comparative

The comparative of *for a long time* is *(for) longer.*

I hope you'll stay longer next time. (NOT . . . ~~*for a longer time.*~~)

For *no longer*, ► 535.
Much, many and *far* are also more common in questions and negative clauses (► 165, 461).

518 *look*

1 linking verb (= 'seem')

Look can mean 'seem' or 'appear'. In this case it is a linking verb (► 11) and can be followed by adjectives or (in British English) nouns.

You ***look angry*** *– what's the matter?* (NOT ~~*You look angrily*~~ . . .)
I ***looked a real fool*** *when I fell in the river.* (BrE)
The garden ***looks a mess.*** (BrE)

To talk about a temporary appearance, we can use simple or progressive forms; there is not much difference of meaning.

You look / You're looking *very unhappy. What's the matter?*

Look can be followed by *like* or *as if* (► 378). Progressive forms are not usually used in this case.

She ***looks like*** *her mother.*
It ***looks as if*** *it's going to rain.* (NOT ~~*It's looking as if*~~ . . .)
She ***looks as if*** *she's dreaming.*
She ***looks like*** *she's dreaming.* (informal) (NOT ~~*She looks like dreaming.*~~)

Look like . . .ing . . . (informal) is used with future reference in British English.

It ***looks like being*** *a wet night.* (= It looks as if it will be . . .)

Look + infinitive is also sometimes used in informal British English.

The team ***look to repeat*** *their success.* (= It looks as if they will . . .)

2 ordinary verb (= 'direct one's eyes')

When *look* means 'direct one's eyes', it is used with adverbs, not adjectives. Before an object, a preposition is necessary (usually *at*).

*The boss **looked at me angrily**.* (NOT ~~*The boss looked at me angry.*~~)

A preposition is not used when there is no object.

***Look!** It's changing colour.* (NOT ~~*Look at!*~~ . . .)

3 not followed by *if*

Before *if* or *whether*, we use *see* or *look to see*, not *look*.

*Could you **see if** Anna's in the kitchen?* (NOT ~~*Could you look if Anna's in the kitchen?*~~)

*'What are you doing?' 'I'm **looking to see whether** these batteries are OK.*
(NOT ~~*I'm looking whether*~~. . .)'

4 *look after* and *look for; fetch*

These are not the same. *Look after* means 'take care of'; *look for* means 'try to find'. Compare:

*Could you **look after** the kids while I go shopping?*
*I spent ages **looking for** her before I found her.*

Fetch, not *look for*, is used in British English, if we know where people or things are.

*I'm going to the station at three o'clock **to fetch** Daniel.*
(NOT . . . ~~*to look for Daniel.*~~)

For *Look!* used in persuading, ▸ 301.2. For the difference between *look (at)*, *watch* and *see*, ▸ 575. For other uses of *look*, see a good dictionary.

look (at), see and *watch* ▸ 575

look forward, hope, expect and *wait* ▸ 457

519 *lose* and *loose*

Lose (pronounced /luːz/) is an irregular verb (*lose – lost – lost*).
Loose (pronounced /luːs/) is an adjective (the opposite of *tight*).

*I must be **losing** weight – my clothes all feel **loose**.* (NOT ~~*I must be loosing weight*~~. . .)

520 *loudly* and *aloud*

Loudly is used (like *loud*) to talk about the strength of a noise.
The opposite is *quietly*.

*They were talking **so loudly** I couldn't hear myself think.*

Aloud is often used with the words *read* and *think*, to say that words are spoken, and not just 'said' silently in the head.

*She has a very good pronunciation when she **reads aloud**.*
*'What did you say?' 'Oh, nothing. I was just **thinking aloud**.'*

521 *magic* and *magical*

Magic is the more common word, and is used in a number of fixed expressions.

a ***magic*** *wand* (= a magician's stick)

the ***magic*** *word* *a* ***magic*** *carpet*

Magical is sometimes used instead of *magic*, especially in metaphorical senses like 'mysterious', 'wonderful' or 'exciting'.

It was a ***magical*** *experience.*

522 *make*: prepositions

We usually say that something is *made of* a particular material.

Most things seem to be ***made of*** *plastic these days.*

All our furniture is ***made of*** *wood.*

When a material is changed into a completely different form to make something, we often use *make from*.

Paper is ***made from*** *wood.* (NOT ~~*Paper is made of wood.*~~)

When we talk about the process of manufacture, we can also use *out of*.

He ***made*** *all the window-frames* ***out of*** *oak; it took a long time.*

To mention one of several materials (e.g. in cooking), we can use *make with*.

'The soup's good.' 'Yes, I ***make*** *it* ***with*** *lots of garlic.'*

For causative structures with *make* (e.g. *He made us laugh*), ▸ 107.

make and *do* ▸ 435

male and *masculine* ▸ 464

523 *marry* and *divorce*

1 *get married/divorced*

In an informal style, *get married* and *get divorced* are more common than *marry* and *divorce* when there is no object.

Lulu and Joe ***got married*** *last week.* (*Lulu and Joe married . . .* is more formal.)

The Robinsons are ***getting divorced.***

In a more formal style, *marry* and *divorce* are preferred.

Although she had many lovers, she never ***married.***

After three very unhappy years they ***divorced.***

2 no preposition before object

Before a direct object, *marry* and *divorce* are used without prepositions.

She ***married a builder.*** (NOT ~~*She married with a builder.*~~)

Andrew's going to ***divorce Carola.***

3 *get/be married to*

We can also use *get/be married to* with an object.

*She **got married to** her childhood sweetheart.*

*I've **been married to** you for 25 years and I still don't understand you.*

524 *the matter (with)*

We use *the matter (with)* after *something, anything, nothing* and *what.* It means 'wrong (with)'.

*Something's **the matter with** my foot.* *Is anything **the matter?***

*Nothing's **the matter with** the car – you're just a bad driver.*

*What's **the matter with** Frank today?*

There is often used as a 'preparatory subject' (► 20).

***There**'s something **the matter with** the TV.*

*Is **there** anything **the matter?***

For *no matter what*, etc, ► 253.

525 *maybe* and *perhaps*

These two words mean the same. They are both common. In British English, *perhaps* is used more often than *maybe* in a formal style, and in this case it may go in mid-position (► 200).

***Maybe/Perhaps** it'll stop raining soon.*

*Julius Caesar is **perhaps** the greatest of Shakespeare's early plays.*

Perhaps is often pronounced 'praps' by British people.

526 *mean*

1 questions

Note the structure of questions with *mean.*

*Excuse me. What **does** 'hermetic' **mean?*** (NOT ~~*What means 'hermetic'?*~~)

Note also the preposition in *What do you mean **by** 'hermetic'?* (= In what sense are you using the word?)

2 *mean* and *think*, *meaning* and *opinion*

Mean and *meaning* are 'false friends' for speakers of some European languages. They are not usually used for 'think' or 'opinion'.

***I think** that Labour will win the next election.* (NOT ~~*I mean that Labour will win . . .*~~)

*What's your **opinion?*** (NOT ~~*What's your meaning?*~~)

3 structures

Mean (= intend, plan) can be followed by **(object) + infinitive.**

*Sorry – I didn't **mean to interrupt** you.*

*Did you **mean Jack to pay** for everybody?*

Mean (= involve, have as a result) can be followed by a noun or an *-ing* form.

The Fantasians have invaded Utopia. This ***means war****!*

If you decide to try the exam, it will ***mean studying*** *hard.*

4 *I mean*

I mean is used informally as a 'discourse marker' to introduce explanations or additional details.

He's funny – ***I mean****, he's really strange.*

It was a terrible evening. ***I mean****, they all sat round and talked politics.*

Would you like to come out tonight? ***I mean****, only if you want to, of course.*

When *I mean* introduces a comment it can be close to *I think* or *I feel*, but it is not followed by *that*.

A hundred pounds for a thirty-hour week. ***I mean****, it's not right, is it?*

(BUT NOT ~~*I mean that it's not right*~~ . . .)

In informal speech, *I mean* often acts as a connector or 'filler', with little real meaning.

Let's go and see Jake on Saturday. ***I mean****, we could make an early start . . .*

I mean is also used to introduce corrections.

She lives in Southport – ***I mean*** *Southampton.*

5 *What do you mean . . .?*

What do you mean . . .? can express anger or protest.

What do you mean*, I can't sing?*

What do you mean *by waking me up at this time of night?*

6 no progressive form

Mean is not normally used in progressive forms when it refers to meanings.

What ***does*** *that strange smile* ***mean?*** (NOT ~~*What is that strange smile meaning?*~~)

But perfect progressive forms can be used to refer to intentions.

I've ***been meaning*** *to phone you for weeks.*

527 *means*

1 singular and plural ending in *-s*

Both the singular and the plural of *means* end in *-s*.

In the 19th century a new ***means*** *of communication was developed – the railway.* (NOT . . . ~~*a new mean of communication*~~ . . .)

There are several ***means*** *of transport on the island.*

For other words with singular forms ending in *-s*, ► 117.3.

2 *by all/any/no means*

By all means is not the same as *by all possible means*. It is used to give permission or to encourage somebody to do something, and means 'of course' or 'it is all right to . . .' Compare:

'*Can I borrow your sweater?*' '***By all means.***'

By all means *get a new coat, but don't spend more than £150.*

We must help her ***by all possible means****.* (NOT ~~*We must help her by all means.*~~)

By no means (or *not by any means*) is not the opposite of *by all means*. It is similar to *definitely not*, or *not by a long way*.

*'Is that all you've got to say?' '**By no means**.'*

*Galileo was **by no means** the first person to use a telescope.*

528 *mind*: do you mind, etc

1 meaning and use

Mind can mean 'dislike', 'be annoyed by', 'object to'. We use *mind* mostly in questions and negative clauses.

*'**Do you mind** the smell of tobacco?' 'Not at all.'*

***Do you mind** if we leave a bit earlier today?* ***I don't mind** if you use my car.*

After *mind*, we can use an *-ing* form, or **object + *-ing* form**.

*Do you **mind waiting** a few minutes?* (NOT . . . ~~*to wait*~~ . . .)

*I don't **mind you coming** in late if you don't wake me up.*

2 *Would you mind . . .?*

We can use *Would you mind . . .?* to ask people to do things, or to ask for permission.

***Would you mind** opening the window?* (= Please open . . .)

***Would you mind** if I opened the window?*

3 *Do/Would you mind my . . .ing?*

In a slightly more formal style, we can use *my*, *your*, etc with an *-ing* form after *mind* (► 94.3–94.4).

*Do you mind **my** smoking?* (More informal: . . . *me smoking?* (OR . . . *if I smoke?*)

4 answers

After *Would/Do you mind . . .?*, we use *No* or *Not at all* (more formal) to give permission (but we often add more words to make the meaning quite clear).

*'Do you mind if I look at your paper?' '**No, please do / that's OK / sure**.'*

5 tenses

In subordinate clauses after *mind*, a present tense is usually used if we want to express a future meaning (► 231).

*I don't mind what the children **do** after they leave home.*

(NOT ~~*I don't mind what the children will do*~~ . . .)

529 *miss*

1 'fail to contact', 'be late for'

Miss often expresses the idea of failing to contact somebody/something, or being late for somebody/something.

*How could he **miss** an easy goal like that?*

*The station's about five minutes' walk, straight ahead. You can't **miss** it.*

*If you don't hurry we'll **miss** the train.* (NOT . . . ~~*lose the train.*~~)

*You've just **missed** her – she went home five minutes ago.* →

An *-ing* form can be used after *miss*.

I got in too late and ***missed seeing*** *the news on TV.*

2 'be sorry to be without'

We can use *miss* to say that we are sorry because we are no longer with somebody, or no longer have something.

Will you ***miss*** *me when I'm away?*

He's not happy in the country – he ***misses*** *city life.*

Note that *regret* is not used in the same way. Compare:

I ***miss*** *working with you.* (= I'm sorry I'm no longer with you.)

I ***regret*** *working with you.* (= I'm sorry I was with you.)

3 'notice the absence of'

Another meaning of *miss* is 'notice that somebody/something is not there'.

The child ran away in the morning, but nobody ***missed*** *her for hours.*

4 *miss* not used

Miss is not used simply to say that somebody has not got something.

In some of the villages they ***haven't got*** *electricity.* (NOT . . . ~~*they miss electricity.*~~)

In a formal style, the verb or noun *lack* can be used to express this idea.

. . . they ***lack*** *electricity.*

I am sorry that ***lack*** *of time prevents me from giving more details.*

5 *missing*

Missing is often used as an adjective, meaning 'lost'.

When did you realise that the money was ***missing?***

The ***missing*** *children were found at their aunt's house.*

We can use *missing* after a noun. This often happens in clauses beginning with *there is*.

There's ***a page missing*** *from this book.*

In an informal style, a structure with *have . . . missing* is also possible.

We've got some plates ***missing*** *– do you think Luke's borrowed them?*

He ***had*** *several teeth* ***missing****.*

the moment: conjunction ► 495

530 *name*

A person's *name* is the whole expression that identifies them – for example *Andy Barlow, William Shakespeare, Carol Jane Griffiths, Naseem Khan, Li Wei.* The word *name* does not mean just one or other part of this – though of course only one part may be used, depending on the situation.

*'****Name****, please?' 'Alan Bennett.'*

'Hi. Come in. What's your ***name****.' 'Jenny.'*

My ***name****'s Smith. I have an appointment with Mr Andrews.*

The *surname, family name* or *last name* is the part which, in many cultures, is typically passed from parents to children – for example *Barlow, Shakespeare.* *First names, Christian names* or *given names* (AmE) are the parts which children are given at birth – for example *Jessica, George Thomas, Alice Catherine.* (The expression *Christian name* is generally avoided in multi-cultural contexts.) Americans often use two given names, or one and an initial (e.g. *Philip C. Walter, F. Scott Fitzgerald.* The second of these is generally called the 'middle name'. British people use middle names less often.
Note that the terms *first name* and *last name* can sometimes cause confusion, since in some cultures it is common to give the family name first.

For more about the use of names, ► 327.

531 *near (to)*

Near can be used as a preposition. *Near to* is also possible with the same meaning, but is less common.

*We live **near (to)** the station.* *I put my bag down **near (to)** the door.*
*She was **near (to)** despair.*

Near (to) can be followed by an *-ing* form.

*I came very **near (to) hitting** him.*

For *-ing* forms after *to*, ► 104.2. For the difference between *nearest* and *next*, ► 533.

near and *by* ► 415

nearest and *next* ► 533

nearly, almost and *practically* ► 366

532 *need*

1 ordinary verb: *Everybody needs to rest.*

Need most often has ordinary verb forms: the third person singular has *-s*, and questions and negatives are made with *do*. *Need* is usually followed by an infinitive with *to*.

*Everybody **needs to rest** sometimes.*
*Do we **need to reserve** seats on the train?*

2 modal auxiliary forms: *he needn't; need I?*

Need can also have the same present-tense forms as modal auxiliary verbs: the third person singular has no *-s*, and questions and negatives are made without *do*. In this case, *need* is normally followed by an infinitive without *to*.

*She **needn't reserve** a seat – there'll be plenty of room.*

These forms are used mainly in negative sentences (*needn't*); but they are also possible in questions, after *if*, and in other 'non-affirmative' structures (► 222). →

*You **needn't fill** in a form.* *Need I **fill** in a form?*
*I wonder **if I need fill** in a form.* *This is the only form you **need fill** in.*
BUT NOT ~~*You need fill in a form.*~~

These forms are more common in British English; in American English *have to / don't have to* are preferred.

3 *needn't, need I?*: immediate necessity

These modal forms of *need* normally refer to immediate necessity. They are often used to ask for or give permission – usually permission not to do something. They are not used to talk about habitual, general necessity. Compare:

*It's OK – you **needn't / don't need to pay** for that phone call.*
*You **don't need to pay** for emergency calls in most countries.*
(NOT ~~*You needn't pay . . . in most countries.*~~)

4 talking about the future

Present tense forms of *need* are used when making decisions about the future.

*Need I **come** in tomorrow?*
*Tell her she **doesn't need to work** tonight.*

Will need to . . . can be used to talk about future obligation, and give advice for the future. It can make orders and instructions sound less direct.

*We'll **need to repair** the roof next year.*
*You'll **need to start** work soon if you want to pass your exams.*
*You'll **need to fill** in this form before you see the Inspector.*

For similar uses of *have to*, ▸ 74.

5 *need . . .ing*: The sofa needs cleaning.

After *need* an *-ing* form can be used with the same meaning as a passive infinitive, especially in British English.

*That sofa **needs cleaning** again.* (= . . . needs to be cleaned . . .)

A structure with **object** + ***. . .ing*** or **past participle** is also possible in some cases.

*You **need your head examining**.* (BrE) (OR . . . *examined.*)

6 *need not have . . .*

If we say that somebody *need not have done something*, we mean that he or she did it, but that it was unnecessary – a waste of time.

*You **needn't have woken** me up. I don't have to go to work today.*
*I **needn't have cooked** so much food. Nobody was hungry.*

On the other hand, if we say that somebody *did not need to do something*, we are simply saying that it was not necessary (whether or not it was done). Compare:

*I **needn't have watered** the flowers. Just after I finished it started raining.*
*It started raining, so I **didn't need to water** the flowers.*

Need never have . . . is a more emphatic version of *need not have . . .*

*I **need never have** packed all that suncream – it rained every day.*

7 *need not* and *must not*

Need not or *do not need to* is used to say that there is no obligation; *must not* is used to say that there is an obligation not to do something.

Compare:

*You **needn't** tell Jennifer – she already knows.*

*You **mustn't** tell Charlotte – I don't want her to know.*

Need not is also sometimes used to say that something is not necessarily true.

*'She looks quite ill. I'm sure it's flu.' 'It **needn't** be – maybe she's just over-tired.'*

For *there is no need to . . .* ▸ 20.

533 *next* and *the next*; *nearest*

1 *next week, month,* etc; *the next week, month,* etc

Next week, month, etc (without *the*) is the week, month, etc just after this one. If I am speaking in July, *next month* is August; in 2016, *next year* is 2017.

The next week, month, etc is the period of seven, thirty, etc days starting at the moment of speaking. On July 15th 2016, *the next month* is the period from July 15th to August 15th; *the next year* is the period from July 2016 to July 2017.

Compare:

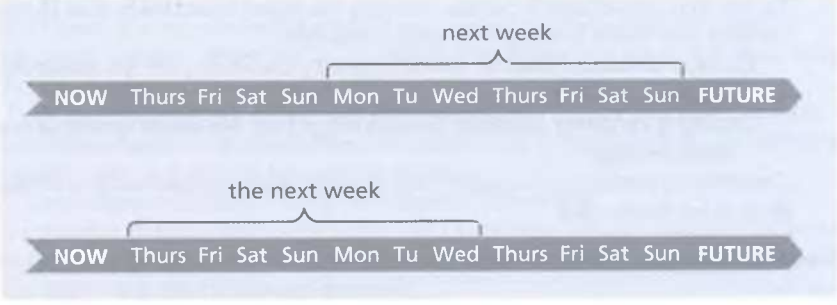
– *Goodbye – see you **next week**.* (NOT . . . ~~*see you the next week.*~~)

*I'll be busy for **the next week**.* (= the seven days starting today)

– ***Next year** will be difficult.* (= the year starting next January)

***The next year** will be difficult.* (= the twelve months starting now)

The difference between *last* and *the last* is similar, ▸ 505.



2 *the next three . . .*, etc

Note the word order in expressions with numbers.

*I'll be at college for **the next three years**.* (NOT . . . ~~*the three next years.*~~)

We generally say *the next few days*, not ~~*the next days*~~.

***The next few days** will be wet.*

3 *next Sunday,* etc

When *next* is used with the names of days or months, it is not always clear exactly what is meant.

*'See you **next Sunday**.' 'Do you mean this coming Sunday or the one after?'*

To avoid misunderstanding, one can say for example (1) *on Sunday, this Sunday, the/this Sunday coming, the/this coming Sunday* or *(on) Sunday this week,* and (2) *on Sunday week, a week on Sunday* or *(on) Sunday next week.* →

4 place: *next* and *nearest*

The nearest is generally preferred for place – it means 'most near in space'.

Excuse me. Where's ***the nearest*** *bank?* (NOT . . . ~~*the next bank.*~~)

If you want to find Luke, just look in ***the nearest*** *pub.*

The next can be used for place if we are talking about movement or direction. It means 'after this/that one'.

We get off at ***the next*** *station.* (= the station that we will come to next.)

It's not on this shelf; it's on ***the next*** *shelf up.*

Next can also be used to talk about the nearest position in a row.

My girlfriend lives ***next*** *door.* *Who works in the* ***next*** *office?*

The people at the ***next*** *table were having a terrible argument.*

Next to means 'beside'.

Come and sit ***next to*** *me.*

no and *not* ▸ 536

534 *no doubt*

No doubt expresses a personal opinion. It means'probably' or 'I suppose'; it does not mean 'certainly'.

No doubt *it'll rain soon.*

You're tired, ***no doubt****. I'll make you a cup of tea.*

To say that something is certain, we can use *there is no doubt that* (formal), *without any doubt* (formal), *certainly, definitely.*

There is no doubt that *the world is getting warmer.* (NOT ~~*No doubt the world is getting warmer.*~~)

Cycling is ***certainly*** *healthier than driving.* (NOT ~~*No doubt cycling is healthier than driving.*~~)

Doubtless is similar to *no doubt* (but more formal); *undoubtedly* is similar to *there is no doubt that.*

For structures with the verb *doubt*, ▸ 436.

535 *no more, not any more, no longer, not any longer*

We use *no more* with nouns to talk about quantity or degree – to say how much.

There's ***no more*** *bread.*

We do not use *no more* in standard modern English as an adverb to express the idea of actions and situations stopping. Instead, we use *no longer* (usually before the verb), *not . . . any longer* or *not . . . any more.*

I ***no longer*** *support the Conservative party.* (NOT ~~*I no more support*~~ . . .)

This ***can't*** *go on* ***any longer.*** *I'm* ***not*** *helping you* ***any more.***

Anymore may be written as one word, especially in American English.

Annie doesn't live here ***anymore.***

no sooner, hardly* and *scarcely ► 480

***north* and *northern*, etc** ► 442

536 *not* and *no*

To make a word, expression or clause negative, we use *not*.

***Not surprisingly**, we missed the train.* (NOT ~~*No surprisingly* . . .~~)

*The students went on strike, but **not the teachers**.* (NOT . . . ~~*but no the teachers.*~~)

*I can see you tomorrow, but **not on Thursday**.*

*I **have not received** his answer.*

We can use *no* with a noun or *-ing* form to mean 'not any', or 'not a/an'.

***No teachers** went on strike.* (= There weren't any teachers on strike.)

*I've got **no Thursdays** free this term.* (= I haven't got any Thursdays . . .)

*I telephoned, but there was **no answer**.* (= There wasn't an answer.)

NO SMOKING

Sometimes sentences constructed with **verb** + ***not*** and ***no*** + **noun** have similar meanings. The structure with *no* is usually more emphatic.

*There **wasn't** an answer. / There was **no answer**.*

537 *nought, zero, nil*, etc

The figure *0* is usually called *nought* or *zero* in British English and *zero* in American English. When we say numbers one figure at a time, *0* is often called *oh* (like the letter *O*).

*My account number is four one three **oh** six.* OR *. . . four one three **zero** six.*

In measurements of temperature, *0* is called *zero* in both British and American English. *Zero* is followed by a plural noun.

***Zero degrees** Celsius is thirty-two degrees Fahrenheit.*

Zero scores in team games are called *nil* (American *zero* or *nothing*). In tennis and similar games, the word *love* is used (originally from French *l'oeuf*, meaning 'the egg' – the figure *0* is egg-shaped).

*And the score at half-time is: Scotland three, England **nil**.*

*Forty-**love**; Andrews to serve.*

538 *now (that)*

Now (that) can be used as a conjunction. In an informal style, *that* is often dropped, especially in British English (► 265).

***Now (that)** Andrew is married, he has become much more responsible.*

***Now** the exams are over I can enjoy myself.*

539 *nowadays*

Nowadays is an adverb meaning 'these days', 'at the present time'.
People seem to be very depressed ***nowadays****.*
Nowadays *we think nothing of space travel.*
Nowadays cannot be used as an adjective.
I don't like ***modern*** *fashions.* (NOT ~~*I don't like the nowadays fashions.*~~)

540 *of course*

We use *of course (not)* to mean 'as everybody knows' or 'as is obvious'.
It looks as if the sun goes around the earth, but ***of course*** *that's not true.*
We'll leave at eight o'clock. Granny won't be coming, ***of course****.*
Of course can be used as a polite reply to a request.
'*Could you help me?*' '***Of course.***'
But *of course* is not always a very polite reply to a statement of fact.
'*It's cold.*' '*It certainly is.*' (NOT ~~*Of course it is.*~~ – this would suggest that the first speaker had said something too obvious to be worth mentioning.)

For the use of *of course* to structure arguments, ► 284.2, 301.3.

541 *often*

Often is mostly used for habitual behaviour, to mean 'a lot of times on different occasions'. To say 'a lot of times on one occasion', we normally use another expression (e.g. *a lot of times, several times, keep . . .ing*). Compare:
I ***often*** *fell in love when I was younger.*
I fell ***several times*** *yesterday when I was skiing.* OR *I* ***kept falling*** *yesterday . . .*
(NOT ~~*I often fell yesterday*~~ . . .)
Note that *often* has two common pronunciations, with and without *t*: /'ɒfən/ and /'ɒftən/.

For the position of *often* and other adverbials of indefinite frequency, ► 198.1.

on* and *about ► 352

***on, in* and *at*: place** ► 384

***on, in* and *at*: time** ► 386

542 *once*: adverb

When *once* means 'at some time', we use it for the past but not for the future. To refer to an indefinite future time, we can use *sometime* or *one day*. Compare:

– *I met her* ***once*** *in Venezuela.*
  Once *upon a time there was a beautiful princess.*
– *Come up and see me* ***sometime****.* (NOT ~~*Come up and see me once.*~~)
  We must go walking ***one day****.* (NOT ~~*We must go walking once.*~~)

When *once* has the more precise meaning of 'one time (not twice or three times)', it can be used to talk about any time, including the future.

  I'm only going to say this ***once****.*

Note that *at once* means 'immediately'.

  *'Can I have the bill?' '****At once****, sir.'*

543 *once*: conjunction

Once can be used as a conjunction, meaning 'after', 'as soon as'. It often suggests that something is finished or completed, and is most often used with a perfect tense.

  Once *you've passed your test I'll let you drive my car.*
  Once *he had found somewhere to live he started looking for work.*
  Once *you know how to ride a bike you never forget it.*

Note that we do not use *that* after *once* (NOT ~~*Once that you've passed your test*~~ . . .).

For present perfect instead of future perfect after conjunctions, ► 231.

544 *one of . . .*

After *one of* we normally use a plural form.

  one of our ***cats*** (NOT ~~*one of our cat*~~)

Occasionally *one of* is used with a singular noun referring to a group.

  Why don't you ask ***one of the crew****?*

A following verb is normally singular.

  One of our cats ***has*** *disappeared.* (NOT ~~*One of our cats have disappeared.*~~)

After *one of*, a noun phrase must have a determiner (e.g. *the, my, those*).

  one of the/my/those *horses* (BUT NOT ~~*one of horses*~~)

Of cannot be dropped.

  one of *my friends* (NOT ~~*one my friend*~~ OR ~~*one my friends*~~)

For sentences like *She's one of the few women who have/has climbed Everest*, ► 130.1.

545 *only*: focusing adverbial

Only can be used as a focusing adverbial (► 199). It can refer to different parts of a sentence.

1 referring to the subject

Only normally comes before a subject that it refers to.

***Only you** could do a thing like that.*
***Only my mother** really understands me.*

2 referring to other parts of a sentence

When *only* refers to another part of a sentence, it often goes in 'mid-position' with the verb (► 200 for details).

*She **only reads** biographies.* *She **is only** on duty on Tuesdays.*
*I **only like** swimming in the sea.* *I've **only been** to India once.*
*She **was only** talking like that because she was nervous.*

3 ambiguous sentences

Sometimes sentences with *only* are ambiguous (they can be understood in more than one way).

*I **only** kissed your sister last night.* (The sense can be 'only kissed', 'only your sister' or 'only last night'.)

In speech, the meaning is usually clear because the speaker stresses the part of the sentence that *only* refers to. Even in writing, the context generally stops sentences like these from being really ambiguous. However, if necessary *only* can be put directly before the object, complement or adverbial expression that it refers to. This is generally rather formal. Compare:

*They **only** play poker on Saturday nights.* (could be ambiguous)
*They play **only poker** on Saturday nights.*
*They play poker **only on Saturday nights**.*

The meaning can also be made more precise with a relative structure.

*Poker is **the only game** (that) they play on Saturday nights.*
*Saturday nights are **the only time (that) they play poker**.*

4 *only today*, etc

Only with a time expression can mean 'as recently as' or 'not before'.

*I saw her **only today** – she looks much better.*
***Only then** did she realise what she had agreed to.*
*My shoes will **only** be ready **on Friday**.*

For inverted word order after *only*, as in the last example but one, ► 270.7.
Only can also be a determiner in a noun phrase (e.g. *You are my only real friend*).

546 *open*

1 *open* and *opened*

We normally use *open*, not *opened*, as an adjective.

*I can read you like an **open** book.* (NOT . . . ~~*an opened book.*~~)
*Are the banks **open** this afternoon?* (NOT ~~*Are the banks opened . . .?*~~)

Opened is used as the past tense and past participle of the verb *open*, to talk about the action of opening.

*She **opened** her eyes and sat up.* *The safe was **opened** with dynamite.*

2 when *open* is not used

Note that *open* is not the normal word to refer to the fastenings of clothes, or to switches or taps.

*I can't **untie/undo** this shoelace.* (NOT ~~*I can't open this shoelace.*~~)
*How do you **unfasten** this belt?*
*Could you **turn/switch** the radio **on**?* (NOT . . . ~~*open the radio?*~~)
*Who left the taps **turned on**?* (NOT ~~*Who left the taps open?*~~)

For *closed* and *shut*, ► 422.

547 *opportunity* and *possibility*

We often say that somebody *has the opportunity to do / of doing* something.

*I **have the opportunity to go** to Denmark next year.* (= I **can** go . . .)

Possibility is not often used in this structure. It is more normal to say that *there is a possibility of something happening.*

***There's a possibility of my going** to Denmark next year.* (= I **may** go . . .)
(More natural than *I have the possibility to go to Denmark . . .*)

548 *opposite* (adjective): position

We put the adjective *opposite* before a noun when we are talking about one of a pair of things that naturally face or contrast with each other.

*I think the picture would look better on the **opposite wall**.*
*She went off in the **opposite direction**.*
*I've got exactly the **opposite opinion** to yours.*
*His brother was fighting on the **opposite side**.*

We put *opposite* after the noun when it means 'facing the speaker or listener' or 'facing a person or place that has already been mentioned'.

*I noticed that the **man opposite** was staring at me.*
(NOT . . . ~~*the opposite man was staring at me.*~~)
*The woman she was looking for was in the **house** directly **opposite**.*

For *opposite* and *contrary*, ► 428.

549 *opposite, facing* and *in front of*

1 'across a road/room, etc from': *opposite/facing*

We do not use *in front of* to mean 'across a road/river/room, etc from'. This idea is usually expressed with *opposite* or *facing* (AmE also *across from*).

*There's a garage **opposite** my house.* (NOT . . . ~~*in front of my house.*~~)
*She stood at the other side of the table **facing** me.* (NOT . . . ~~*in front of me.*~~)
*The man sitting **across from** me was smoking a pipe.* (AmE) →

2 *in front of* and *opposite*

Compare:

There's a bus stop ***in front of*** *the school.* (The bus stop is on the same side of the road as the school.)

There's a bus stop ***opposite*** *the school.* (The bus stop is on the other side of the road from the school.)

In front of is often the opposite of *behind.*

The woman ***in front of*** *me at the ticket window had a complicated problem.*

I always find myself ***behind*** *people like that.*

3 *in front of* and *in the front of*

If you are **in front of** a place, vehicle, etc you are outside it; if you are **in the front of** it you are inside. Compare:

We stood ***in front of*** *her car so that she couldn't drive off.*

Her husband was sitting ***in the front of*** *the car. He looked frightened.*

For the difference between *before* and *in front of*, ▸ 397.

550 *other(s)* and *another*

1 *other* and *others*

When *other* is used with a noun it has no plural form.

Where are the ***other*** *photos?* (NOT . . . ~~*the others photos?*~~)

But used alone, without a noun, it can have a plural form.

I've got one lot of photos. Where are the ***others?***

These are too small. Have you got any ***others?***

Normally, *other(s)* is only used alone if it refers to a noun that has been mentioned before. An exception is the common plural use of *(the) others* to mean *(the) other people.*

He never thinks of ***others.*** *Jake's arrived – I must tell* ***the others.***

BUT NOT ~~*On the phone, one cannot see the other*~~ OR ~~*He never listens to another*~~

2 not used like an adjective

Other is a determiner or pronoun; it is not used exactly like an adjective. So it cannot normally have an adverb before it, or be used after a linking verb.

I'd prefer a ***completely different*** *colour.* (NOT . . . ~~*a completely other colour.*~~)

You ***look different*** *with a beard.* (NOT ~~*You look other*~~ . . .)

For *one another*, ▸ 179.

3 'additional, extra'

Another (spelt as one word) can mean 'an additional, extra'. It is used with singular countable nouns.

Could I have ***another piece*** *of bread?* (NOT . . . ~~*an other piece of bread.*~~)

Another can be used without a noun, or with *one*, if the meaning is clear from what has come before.

Those cakes are wonderful. Could I have ***another (one)****?*

With uncountable and plural nouns, we normally use *more*, not *other*, with this meaning.

Would you like some ***more meat?*** (NOT . . . ~~*other meat?*~~)

Would you like some ***more peas?*** (NOT . . . ~~*other peas?*~~)

However, we can use *another* before a plural noun in expressions with *few* or a number.

I'm staying for ***another few weeks.***

We need ***another three chairs.***

For other cases where *a(n)* is followed by a plural, ► 130.7.

4 'alternative'

(An)other can also mean '(an) alternative', 'besides / instead of this/these'.

I think we should paint it ***another*** *colour.*

Have you got any ***other*** *cakes, or are these the only ones?*

Other people often means 'people besides oneself'.

Why don't you think more about ***other people?***

551 *out of*

1 movement

The opposite of the preposition *into* is *out of*.

She ran ***out of*** *the room.*

(NOT ~~*She ran out the room.*~~ OR ~~*She ran out from the room.*~~)

I took Harry's photo ***out of*** *my pocket.*

Out of is also used to mean 'through', when we mention the opening through which somebody/something goes out.

I walked ***out of the front door*** *without looking back.*

Why did you throw the paper ***out of the window?***

In American English, *out* is normally used without *of* in this case.

She turned and went ***out the back door.*** (AmE)

2 position

Out of can also be used to talk about position – the opposite of *in*.

I'm afraid Mr Pallery is ***out of*** *the office at the moment.*

For *into* and *in*, ► 496.

over, across* and *through ► 357

over* and *above ► 354

owing to* and *due to ► 439

552 *own*

1 after possessives

We only use *own* after a possessive word. It cannot directly follow an article.

It's nice if a child can have ***his or her own*** *room.* (NOT . . . ~~*an own room.*~~)

Car rental is expensive. It's cheaper to take ***one's own*** *car.* (NOT . . . ~~*the own car.*~~)

I'm ***my own*** *boss.*

2 *a/some . . . of one's own*

This structure makes it possible to include *a/an*, *some* or another determiner in the phrase.

I'd like to have ***a car of my own.***

It's time you found ***some friends of your own.***

He's got ***no ideas of his own.***

3 *own* with no following noun

We cannot use *mine*, *yours*, etc with *own*, but we can drop a noun after *my own*, *your own*, etc if the meaning is clear.

'Would you like to use my pen?' 'No, thanks. I can only write with ***my own.*** (NOT . . . ~~*mine own.*~~)'

4 *own* and *-self*

The emphatic and reflexive pronouns *myself*, *yourself*, etc (► 178) do not have possessive forms. *My own*, etc is used instead.

I'll do it ***myself****, and I'll do it in* ***my own*** *way.* (NOT . . . ~~*in myself's way.*~~)

She can wash ***herself*** *and brush* ***her own*** *hair now.* (NOT . . . ~~*brush herself's hair.*~~)

5 *on one's own*

Note the two meanings of *on one's own*.

My mother lives ***on her own.*** (without company)

Don't help him. Let him do it ***on his own.*** (without help)

For *by oneself* used in similar ways, ► 178.7.

553 *part*

A is usually dropped before *part of* if there is no adjective.

Part of *the roof was missing.* (BUT ***A large part*** *of the roof was missing.*)

Part of *the trouble is that I can't see very well.* (More natural than *A part of the trouble . . .*)

Jess was in Australia ***part of*** *last year.*

perhaps and *maybe* ► 525

permit, allow and *let* ► 365

554 *place*: a place to live, etc

In an informal style, *place* can often be followed directly by an infinitive or relative clause, with no preposition or relative word.

I'm looking for a ***place to live****.* (More formal: . . . *a place to live in* OR . . . *a place in which to live.*)

There's no ***place to sit down****.*

You remember the ***place we had lunch****?*

(= . . . *the place (that) we had lunch at?* OR *the place where we had lunch?*)

We do not use *a place where* before an infinitive.

I'm looking for ***a place (where) I can*** *wash my clothes. /* ***a place to*** *wash my clothes.* (NOT . . . ~~*a place where to wash my clothes.*~~)

Go places (informal) means 'become very successful in life'.

That boy's going to ***go places****, believe me.*

For similar structures with *way*, *time* and *reason*, ► 237.7.

555 *play* and *game*

1 nouns

A *play* is a piece of dramatic literature for the theatre, radio or television.

'Julius Caesar' is one of Shakespeare's early ***plays****.*

A *game* is an activity like, for example, chess, football or bridge.

Chess is a very slow ***game****.* (NOT . . . ~~*a very slow play.*~~)

The uncountable noun *play* can be used to mean 'playing' in general.

Children learn a great deal through ***play****.*

2 verbs

People *act* in plays or films, and *play* games or musical instruments.

My daughter is ***acting*** *in her school play this year.*

Have you ever ***played*** *rugby football?*

Play can be used with the same meaning as *act* before the name of a character in a play or film.

I'll never forget seeing Olivier ***play*** *Othello.*

556 *please* and *thank you*

1 requests

We use *please* to make requests more polite.

Could I have some more rice, ***please****?*

'Would you like some help?' 'Yes, ***please****.'*

Note that *please* does not change an order into a request. Compare:

Stand over there. (order)

Please *stand over there.* (more polite order)

Could you stand over there, ***please****?* (polite request)

Please do is a rather formal answer to a request for permission.

*'Do you mind if I open the window?' '****Please do****.'* →

2 when *please* is not used

We do not use *please* to ask people what they have said.
*'I've got a bit of a headache.' '**I beg your pardon?**'* (NOT . . . ~~*Please?*~~)
We do not use *please* when we give things to people.
*'Have you got a pen I could use?' 'Yes, **here you are**.'* (NOT . . . ~~*Please.*~~)
Please is not used as an answer to *Thank you* (see below).
*'Thanks a lot.' '**That's OK**'* . (NOT . . . ~~*Please.*~~)

3 *thank you* and *thanks*

Thanks is more informal than *thank you*. Common expressions:
Thank you. (NOT ~~*Thanks you.*~~) *Thank you very much.*
Thanks very much. *Thanks a lot.* (BUT NOT ~~*Thank you a lot.*~~)
Thank goodness it's Friday. (NOT ~~*Thanks goodness*~~ . . .)
Indeed (► 499) can be used to strengthen *very much*. This is rather formal.
*Thank you very much **indeed**.* (BUT NOT USUALLY ~~*Thank you indeed.*~~)
Thank you for / *Thanks for* can be followed by an *-ing* form. Possessives are unnecessary and are not used.
*'**Thank you for coming**.' 'Not at all. **Thank you for having** me.'*
(NOT ~~*Thank you for your coming.*~~)
Some British people say *Cheers* (informal) to mean *Thanks*.

4 accepting and refusing

We often use *Thank you* / *Thanks* like *Yes, please*, to accept offers.
*'Would you like some potatoes?' '**Thank you**.' 'How many?'*
To make it clear that one wishes to refuse something, it is normal to say *No, thank you* / *No, thanks*.
*'Another cake?' '**No, thanks**. I've eaten too many already.'*
Yes, thanks is most often used to confirm that things are all right.
*'Have you got enough potatoes?' '**Yes, thanks**.'*

5 replies to thanks

In English, there is not an automatic answer to *Thank you*; British people, especially, do not usually answer when they are thanked for small things. If a reply is necessary, we can say *Not at all* (rather formal), *You're welcome*, *That's (quite) all right* or *That's OK* (informal). Some people say *No problem* (informal). Compare:
'Could you pass the salt?' 'Here you are.' 'Thanks.' (no answer)
'Here's your coat.' 'Thanks.' (no answer)
*'Thanks so much for looking after the children.' '**That's all right. Any time**.'* (answer necessary)

For more about the language of common social situations, ► 329.

557 *point of view*

Point of view can mean the same as *opinion*.
*Thank you for giving us your **point of view** / **opinion**.*

But *from somebody's point of view* is not quite the same *as in somebody's view/opinion*. It usually means 'as seen from somebody's position in life' (for example as a student, a woman, a Greek or a Catholic), and is used to say how somebody is affected by what happens. Compare:

– ***In my opinion**, war is always wrong.* (= I think war . . .)
(NOT ~~*From my point of view, war is always wrong.*~~)
*He wrote about the war **from the point of view of the ordinary soldier**.*
– ***In my view**, it's a pretty good school.*
*You have to judge a school **from the child's point of view**.*
– ***In Professor Lucas's opinion**, everybody should work a 20-hour week.*
***From the employers' point of view**, this would cause a lot of problems.*

558 *politic* and *political*

Politic is a rather formal word for 'wise', 'prudent'.
*I don't think it would be **politic** to ask for a loan just now.*
Political means 'connected with politics'.
***political** history* *a **political** career*

559 *politics* and *policy*

Politics (usually singular but always with *-s*, ► 117.3) is used to talk about government and related ideas.
*I don't know much about **politics**, but I don't think this is a democracy.*
*You talk beautifully – you should be in **politics**.*
Policy is used for people's rules of behaviour (not necessarily connected with politics).
*After the war, British foreign **policy** was rather confused.*
(NOT . . . ~~*British foreign politics*~~ . . .)
*It's not my **policy** to believe everything I hear.*
*It's the company's **policy** to employ a certain number of disabled people.*

possibility and *opportunity* ► 547

practically, nearly and *almost* ► 366

560 *prefer*

When we say that we prefer one activity to another, two *-ing* forms can be used. The second can be introduced by *to* or *rather than* (more formal).
*I prefer **riding to walking**.* (NOT ~~*I prefer riding to walk.*~~)
*She prefers **making** toys for her children **rather than buying** them.*
Prefer can also be followed by an infinitive (this is normal after *would prefer*). →

We can use an infinitive (without *to*) or an *-ing* form after *rather than* in this case.

*She **prefers to make** toys for her children **rather than buy/buying** them.*
*I **would prefer to stay** at home **rather than drive/driving** to your mother's.*

For more about *to* with *-ing* forms, ► 104.2.

561 *presently*

When *presently* means 'now, at present', it usually comes in mid-position with the verb (► 200).

*Professor Holloway is **presently** working on plant diseases.*
*The Manager is **presently** in Canada, but he will contact you on his return.*

Another meaning of *presently* is 'not now, later', 'in a minute'.
With this meaning, *presently* usually comes in end-position, or separately as a short answer.

*He's having a rest now. He'll be down **presently**.*
*'Can I have an ice cream?' '**Presently**, dear.'*

pretty, fairly, quite and *rather* ► 460

562 *price* and *prize*

The *price* is what you pay if you buy something. A *prize* is what you are given if you have done something exceptional, or if you win a competition.

*What's the **price** of the green dress?* (NOT . . . ~~*the prize of the green dress?*~~)
*She received the Nobel **prize** for physics.* (NOT . . . ~~*the Nobel price*~~ . . .)

563 *principal* and *principle*

These two words have the same pronunciation. The adjective *principal* means 'main', 'most important'.

*What's your **principal** reason for wanting to be a doctor?*
(NOT . . . ~~*your principle reason*~~ . . .)

The noun *principal* means 'head of a school' (especially, in Britain, of a school for adults).

*If you want to leave early, you'll have to ask the **Principal**.*

A *principle* is a scientific law or a moral rule.

*Newton discovered the **principle** of universal gravitation.*
(NOT . . . ~~*the principal of universal gravitation.*~~)
*She's a girl with very strong **principles**.*

quickly, soon and *early* ► 591

564 *quite*

1 two meanings

In British English, *quite* has two common meanings. Compare:

*It's **quite** good, but it could be better.* (= It's OK, not bad.)
*It's **quite** impossible.* (= It's completely impossible.)

Good is a 'gradable' adjective: things can be more or less good. With gradable words, *quite* usually means something similar to *fairly* or *rather* (for the differences, ► 460) in affirmative clauses. *Impossible* is non-gradable: things are either impossible or not; but they cannot be more or less impossible. With non-gradable words, *quite* means 'completely'. Compare:

– *I'm **quite tired**, but I can walk a bit further.*
*I'm **quite exhausted** – I couldn't walk another step.*
– *It's **quite surprising**.* (similar to *fairly surprising*)
*It's **quite amazing**.* (= absolutely amazing)
– *He speaks Portuguese **quite well**, but he's got a strong English accent.*
*He speaks Portuguese **quite perfectly**.*
– *I **quite like** her, but she's not one of my closest friends.*
*Have you **quite finished?*** (= Have you completely finished?)

In American English *quite* with gradable adjectives more often means something like 'very', not 'fairly/rather'.

2 word order with nouns

Quite can be used with ***a/an*** + **noun**. It normally comes before *a/an* if there is a gradable adjective or no adjective.

*It's **quite a nice** day.*
*We watched **quite an interesting** film last night.*
*She's **quite a** woman!* *The party was **quite a** success.*

With non-gradable adjectives, *quite* normally comes after *a/an* in British English.

*It was **a quite perfect** day.* (AmE *It was quite a perfect day.*)

Quite is sometimes used before *the* to mean 'exactly', 'completely'.

*He's going **quite the** wrong way.* ***quite the** opposite*

3 comparisons

Quite is not used directly before comparatives.

*She's **rather / much / a bit older** than me.* (BUT NOT ~~*She's quite older*~~ . . .)

But we use *quite better* to mean 'completely recovered' (from an illness).

Quite similar means 'fairly/rather similar'; *quite different* means 'completely different'.

4 *quite a bit/few/lot*, etc

Quite a bit and *quite a few* (informal) mean almost the same as *quite a lot.*

*We're having **quite a bit** of trouble with the kids just now.*
*We thought nobody would be there, but actually **quite a few** people came.* →

5 *not quite*

Not quite means 'not completely' or 'not exactly'. It can be used before adjectives, adverbs, verbs and nouns, including nouns with *the*.

I'm ***not quite*** *ready – won't be a minute.*
*She did****n't*** *run* ***quite fast*** *enough for a record.*
I ***don't quite*** *agree.* *That's* ***not quite*** *the colour I wanted.*

quite, fairly, pretty and ***rather*** ► 460

565 *rather*: adverb of degree (*rather good*, etc)

1 meaning

Rather can be used as an adverb of degree. The meaning is similar to 'quite' or 'fairly', but more emphatic (► 460). This use of *rather* is less common in American English.

The film was ***rather*** *good.* *Some people* ***rather*** *like being miserable.*
It's ***rather*** *later than I thought.* *I* ***rather*** *think we're going to lose.*

Rather often suggests 'more than is usual', 'more than was expected', 'more than is wanted' and similar ideas.

*'How was the film?' '****Rather*** *good – I was surprised.'*
She sings ***rather*** *well – people often think she's a professional.*
It's ***rather*** *warm in here. Let's open a window.*

2 word order with articles

Rather generally comes before articles, but can also come after *a/an* if there is an adjective.

That's ***rather the*** *impression I wanted to give.* *He's* ***rather a*** *fool.*
Megan's had ***rather a good*** *idea.* (OR *Megan's had* ***a rather good*** *idea.*)

3 plural nouns

Rather is not normally used before a plural noun with no adjective.

NOT ~~*They're rather fools.*~~

566 *rather*: preference

1 *rather than*

This expression is normally used in 'parallel' structures: for example with two adjectives, adverbs, nouns, infinitives or *-ing* forms.

I'd call her hair ***chestnut rather than brown.***
I'd prefer to go ***in August rather than in July.***
We ought to invest in ***machinery rather than buildings.***
I prefer ***starting*** *early* ***rather than leaving*** *things to the last minute.*

When the main clause has a *to*-infinitive, *rather than* is usually followed by an infinitive without *to* or by an *-ing* form.

I decided ***to write rather than phone/phoning.***
Rather than use/using *the car, I decided* ***to go*** *by bike.*

2 *would rather*

This expression means 'would prefer to', and is followed by the infinitive without *to*. We often use the contraction *'d rather*.

***Would** you **rather stay** here or go home?*

*'How about a drink?' 'I**'d rather have** something to eat.'*

The negative is *would rather not*.

*I**'d rather not** go out tonight.* (NOT ~~*I wouldn't rather . . .*~~)

Would sooner is sometimes used in the same way as *would rather*.

Note that *would rather like* (BrE) does not mean 'would prefer'; in this expression, *rather* means 'quite', and does not suggest preference. Compare:

*'I**'d rather like** a cup of coffee.'* (= I'd quite like . . .) *'Oh, would you? I**'d rather have** a glass of beer.'* (= I'd prefer . . .)

3 *would rather*: past tense with present or future meaning

We can use *would rather* to say that a person would prefer somebody to do something. We use a special structure with a past tense.

would rather + subject + past tense

*I**'d rather you went** home now.*

*Tomorrow's difficult. I**'d rather you came** next weekend.*

*My wife **would rather we didn't see** each other any more.*

*'Shall I open a window?' '**I'd rather you didn't**.'*

A present tense or present subjunctive is possible (e.g. *I'd rather **he goes / he go** home now*), but unusual. To talk about past actions, a past perfect tense is possible.

*I'd rather you **hadn't done** that.*

However, this kind of idea is usually expressed with *I wish* (► 632).

***I wish** you hadn't done that.*

In older English, *had rather* was used in the same way as *would rather*. This structure is still found in grammars, but it is not normally used.

For other structures where a past tense has a present or future meaning, ► 46.

4 *or rather*

People often use *or rather* to correct themselves.

*He's a psychologist – **or rather**, a psychoanalyst.*

(NOT . . . ~~*or better, a psychoanalyst.*~~)

5 *would rather* and *had better*

Note that *would rather* (= would prefer) is not the same as *had better* (= should, ► 77). Compare:

*I suppose I'**d better** clean the windows, but I'**d rather** watch TV.*

rather, quite, pretty and *fairly* ► 460

567 *reason*

The preposition *for* is used both before and after *reason*.

I need to talk to you ***for two reasons****.*

What's the real ***reason for*** *your depression?*

(NOT . . . ~~*reason of your depression?*~~)

Reason can be followed by a clause beginning *why* . . . or *that* . . . .

The ***reason why*** *I came here was to be with my family.*

Do you know the ***reason that*** *they're closing the factory?*

In an informal style, *why/that* is often left out.

The reason she doesn't like me is that I make her nervous.

Some people consider it incorrect to use a *because*-clause as a complement after *reason* (as in *Sorry I'm late – the reason is because I overslept*).

568 *remind* and *remember*

1 meaning: *remind* and *remember*

These two verbs are not the same. *Reminding* somebody means 'making somebody remember'. Compare:

– ***Remind*** *me to call Andy.* (NOT ~~*Remember me to call*~~ . . .)

I'm afraid I won't ***remember*** *to call Andy.*

– *This sort of weather* ***reminds*** *me of my home.* (NOT ~~*This sort of weather remembers me*~~ . . .)

This sort of weather makes me ***remember*** *my home.*

But note the special use of *remember* in ***Remember*** *me to your parents* (= 'Give my best wishes to your parents') and similar sentences.

For *remember* + *-ing* form or infinitive, ▸ 105.1

2 structures

After *remind*, we can use an infinitive structure (for actions) or a *that*-clause (for facts).

Please ***remind me to go*** *to the bank.* (NOT ~~*Please remind me of going*~~ . . .)

I ***reminded him that*** *we hadn't got any bread left.*

3 *remind . . . of . . .*

We use *remind . . . of* to say that something/somebody makes us remember the past, or things that have been forgotten.

The smell of hay always ***reminds*** *me* ***of*** *our old house in the country.*

(NOT . . . ~~*reminds me our old house*~~ . . .)

Remind *me* ***of*** *your phone number.*

We can also use *remind . . . of* to talk about similarities.

She ***reminds*** *me* ***of*** *her mother.* (= She is like her mother.)

rent, let and *hire* ▸ 486

569 *(the) rest*

The rest means 'what is left'. It is singular in form, and *the* is always used.

*We only use three rooms. **The rest** of the house is empty.*

To talk about what is left after something has been used up, eaten, destroyed, etc, we often use other words.

*There were **remains** of the meal all over the floor.* (NOT ~~*There were rests*~~. . .)

*Supper tonight is **leftovers** from lunch.* (NOT . . . ~~*rests*~~. . .)

*If you divide 100 by 12, **the remainder** is 4.*

When *the rest* refers to a plural noun, it has a plural verb.

*There are four chocolates for Penny, four for Joe and **the rest are** mine.*
(NOT . . . ~~*the rest is mine.*~~)

rise and *arise* ▸ 375

570 *road* and *street*

1 the difference

A *street* is a road with houses on either side. We use *street* for roads in towns or villages, but not for country roads.

*Cars can park on both sides of the **street** here.*

*Our village has only got one **street**.*

Road is used for both town and country.

*Cars can park on both sides of our **road**.*

*The **road** out of our village goes up a steep hill.*
(NOT ~~*The street out of our village*~~. . .)

2 street names: stress

In street names we normally stress the word *Road*, but the word before *Street*.

Marylebone ˈRoad *ˈOxford Street*

571 *(the) same*

1 *the same (as)*

We normally use *the* before *same*.

*Give me **the same** again, please.* (NOT ~~*Give me same again, please.*~~)

In a comparison, we use *the same (. . .) as*.

*You've got **the same** idea **as** me.* (NOT . . . ~~*my same idea.*~~)

*Her hair's **the same** colour **as** her mother's.* (NOT . . . ~~*the same colour like*~~. . .)

Note the expression *the very same* (= exactly the same).

*Our birthdays are on **the very same** day.*

2 other structures

Before a clause, *the same . . . that* or *the same . . . who* can be used.

*That's **the same** man **that/who** asked me for money yesterday.* →

As is also possible before a clause, especially with a noun that is the object of the following verb.

He's wearing ***the same*** *shirt* ***that/as*** *he had on yesterday.*

As/who/that can be left out when they refer to the object of the following verb.

He's wearing ***the same shirt he had*** *on yesterday.*

Note also the expression *do the same.*

Why do you always try to ***do the same*** *as your brother?*

Joe and Kate went on a camping trip, and we're going to ***do the same.***

572 *say* and *tell*

1 meaning and use

Both *say* and *tell* are used with direct and indirect speech. (*Say* is more common than *tell* with direct speech.)

'Turn right,' ***I said.*** (OR *'Turn right,' I* ***told*** *him.*)

She ***said*** *that it was my last chance.* (OR *She* ***told*** *me that it was my last chance.*)

Tell is only used to mean 'instruct' or 'inform'. So we do not use *tell* with greetings, exclamations or questions, for example.

He ***said****, 'Good morning.'* (BUT NOT ~~*He told them, 'Good morning.'*~~)

Emily ***said****, 'What a nice idea.'* (BUT NOT ~~*Emily told us, 'What a nice idea.'*~~)

'What's your problem?' I ***said.*** (BUT NOT ~~*'What's your problem?' I told her.*~~)

2 *say*: objects

We *say* ***something (to somebody)***, NOT ~~*say somebody something*~~.

He said ***a few words to me*** *in Arabic.* (NOT ~~*He said me a few words in Arabic.*~~)

She said ***that she would be late.*** (NOT ~~*She said me that . . .*~~)

And I ***say to all the people*** *of this great country . . .* (NOT ~~*And I say all the people . . .*~~)

3 *tell*: objects

After *tell*, we usually say who is told.

She ***told me*** *that she would be late.* (NOT ~~*She told that . . .*~~)

Tell is used without a personal object in a few expressions. Common examples: *tell the truth, tell a lie, tell a story/joke.*

I don't think she's ***telling the truth.*** (NOT . . . ~~*saying the truth.*~~)

Note also the use of *tell* to mean 'distinguish', 'understand', as in *tell the difference, tell the time.*

He's seven years old and he still can't ***tell the time.***

Tell is not used before objects like *a word, a name, a sentence, a phrase.*

Alice ***said a naughty word*** *this morning.* (NOT ~~*Alice told . . .*~~)

We do not usually use *it* after *tell* to refer to a fact.

'What time's the meeting?' 'I'll ***tell you*** *tomorrow.'*

(NOT ~~*I'll tell you it tomorrow.*~~)

4 infinitives

Tell can be used before **object + infinitive**, in the sense of 'order' or 'instruct'. *Say* cannot be used like this.

*I **told the children to go** away.* (NOT ~~*I said the children to go away.*~~)

5 indirect questions

Neither *tell* nor *say* can introduce indirect questions (► 260).

*James **asked** whether I wanted to see a film.* (NOT ~~*James said whether I wanted to see a film.*~~ OR ~~*James told me whether . . .*~~)

But *say* and *tell* can introduce the answers to questions.

*Has she **said** who's coming?* *He only **told** one person where the money was.*

For *so* after *say* and *tell*, ► 586.

scarcely, hardly and *no sooner* ► 480

573 *school*

In British English, *school* is not used for a university or similar institution (though university departments may have the word *School* in their name – e.g. *London School of Economics*). A British institution with *High School* in its name is likely to be a secondary school. In American English, *school* includes university-level institutions. Note also that in Britain, the *public schools* are an elite group of expensive private schools such as Eton College – very different from *state schools*.

574 *see*

1 progressive forms not used

When *see* means 'perceive with one's eyes', progressive ('continuous') forms are not normally used.

***Do you see** the woman in blue over there?* (NOT ~~*Are you seeing . . .?*~~)

To talk about seeing something at the moment of speaking, *can see* is often used, especially in British English (► 84).

*I **can see** an aeroplane.* (AmE also *I see an airplane.*)
(NOT ~~*I am seeing an aeroplane.*~~)

But we can say that somebody *is seeing things* if we mean that he/she is imagining things that are not there.

*'Look! A camel!' '**You're seeing things**.'*

When *see* means 'understand' or 'have heard' (► 482), progressive forms are not normally used.

*'We've got a problem.' '**I see**.'*
I see they're talking about putting up taxes again.

2 changes

Progressive forms can be used for changes in people's ability to see.

I'm seeing much better since I got those new glasses.
I'm seeing a lot of things in this book that I missed when I read it before. →

3 'meet', 'arrange', etc

When *see* means 'meet', 'interview', 'talk to', 'go out with' or 'arrange', 'supervise', progressive forms are possible.

*I'm **seeing** the dentist tomorrow.*
*Are you still **seeing** that Henderson woman?*
*Jack's down at the docks. He's **seeing** that our stuff gets loaded correctly.*

4 other meanings: 'consider', etc

See can mean 'consider', 'think', 'find out', 'discuss' or 'decide'.

*'Can I use the car tonight?' 'I'll **see**.'*
*'What time do you want to go to the gym?' 'Let me **see**. How about five o'clock?'*
*I'll call the restaurant and **see** if they've got a table free.*

A preposition is necessary before an object in these cases.

*We'll **see about that** tomorrow.* (NOT ~~*We'll see that tomorrow.*~~)
*You'd better **see about that** with Jim.* (NOT ~~*You'd better see that with Jim.*~~)

See if . . . can often means 'try to'.

__See if__ you can get him to stop talking.

For *see* + object + infinitive /-*ing* form, ▸ 110.

see, hear, etc with *that*-clause ▸ 482

575 *see, look (at)* and *watch*

1 *see*

See is the ordinary verb to say that something 'comes to our eyes', whether or not we are paying attention.

*Suddenly I **saw** something strange.* (NOT ~~*Suddenly I looked at something strange.*~~)
*Did you **see** the article about the strike in today's paper?*

2 *look (at)*

We use *look* to talk about concentrating, paying attention, trying to see what is there. You can *see* something without wanting to, but you can only *look at* something deliberately. Compare:

*I **looked at** the photo, but I didn't **see** anybody I knew.*
*'Do you **see** that man?' 'Yes.' '**Look** again.' 'Oh no! It's Moriarty!'*
*He **looked at** her with his eyes full of love.*

When *look* has an object it is followed by *at*. When there is no object there is no preposition. Compare:

Look at** me!* (NOT ~~*Look me!*~~) ***Look! (NOT ~~*Look at!*~~)

Note that *at* is often dropped before a *wh*-clause.

***Look (at) what** you've done!* ***Look who's** here!*
***Look where** you're going.*

3 *watch*

Watch is like *look at*, but suggests that something is happening or going to happen. We *watch* things that change, move or develop.

***Watch** that man – I want to know everything he does.*
*I usually **watch** a football match on Saturday afternoon.*

4 complete experiences: *see*

Watch is typically used to talk about experiences that are going on, in progress. We often prefer *see* to talk about the whole of a performance, play, film, match, etc. Compare:

*He got into a fight yesterday afternoon while he was **watching** a football match.* (NOT . . . ~~*while he was seeing a football match.*~~)
*Have you ever **seen** Chaplin's 'The Great Dictator'?* (NOT ~~*Have you ever watched Chaplin's 'The Great Dictator'?*~~)

5 *watch TV*

Watch is normally used with *TV*; *watch* and *see* are both used to talk about TV programmes and films.

*You spend too much time **watching TV**.*
*We **watched/saw a great film** on TV last night.*

6 *see if/whether*

See can be followed by *if/whether*, in the sense of 'find out'. *Look* and *watch* are not normally used in this way.

***See if** that suit still fits you.* (NOT ~~*Look if that suit*~~ . . .)
*I'm looking to **see whether** there's any food left.* (NOT ~~*I'm looking whether there's*~~ . . .)
*Phone and **see whether** she's in.*

For infinitives and *-ing* forms after these verbs, ▸ 110.
For other meanings of *see* (and progressive uses), ▸ 482, 4. For other meanings of *look*, ▸ 518.
For *if* and *whether*, ▸ 261. There are similar differences between *hear* and *listen (to)*, ▸ 481.

576 *seem*

1 linking verb: used with adjectives

Seem is a linking verb (▸ 11); it is followed by adjectives, not adverbs.

*You **seem angry** about something.* (NOT ~~*You seem angrily*~~ . . .)

2 *seem* and *seem to be*

Seem is often followed by *to be*. We prefer *seem to be* when we are talking about objective facts – things that seem definitely to be true. *Seem* is used without *to be* when we are talking about subjective impressions. (The difference is not always clear-cut, and both are often possible.) Compare:

– *The bus **seems to be** full.*
*She **seems** excited.*
– *The doctors have done the tests, and he definitely **seems to be** mentally ill.*
*It **seems** crazy, but I think I'm in love with my bank manager.* (NOT ~~*It seems to be crazy*~~ . . .)

– *According to the experts, the north side of the castle* ***seems to be*** *about 100 years older than the rest.*
He ***seems*** *older than he is.* (NOT ~~*He seems to be older than he is*~~ – this would suggest that he might actually be older than he is.)
– *She doesn't* ***seem to be*** *ready yet.*
She ***seems (to be)*** *very sleepy today.*

3 with nouns

Seem to be is normal before noun phrases.
I looked through the binoculars: it ***seemed to be*** *some sort of large rat.* (NOT . . . ~~*it seemed some sort of large rat.*~~)
I spoke to a man who ***seemed to be*** *the boss.* (NOT . . . ~~*who seemed the boss.*~~)
However, *to be* can be dropped before noun phrases which express more subjective feelings, especially in British English.
She ***seems*** *(to be) a nice girl.*
The cup ***seemed*** *almost doll's size in his hands.*
It ***seems*** *a pity, but I can't see you this weekend.* (NOT ~~*It seems to be a pity*~~ . . .)

4 other infinitives

Seem can be followed by the infinitives of other verbs besides *be.*
Anna ***seems to need*** *a lot of attention.*
Perfect infinitives (▶ 89) are possible.
The tax people ***seem to have made*** *a mistake.*
To express a negative idea, we most often use a negative form of *seem*; but in a more formal style *not* can go with the following infinitive. Compare:
He ***doesn't seem to be*** *at home.*
He ***seems not to be*** *at home.* (formal)
Note the structure *can't seem to . . .*
I ***can't seem to*** *get anything right.* (More formal: *I seem not to be able to get anything right.*)

5 *seem like*

We can use *like*, but not *as*, after *seem.*
North Wales ***seems (like)*** *a good place to go climbing.* (NOT . . . ~~*seems as a*~~ . . .)

6 *it seems*

It can be a preparatory subject (▶ 268) for *that-* and *as if*-clauses after *seem.*
It seems that *James and Alice have had a quarrel.*
It seemed as if *the night was never going to end.*

7 *there seems*

There (▶ 605) can be a preparatory subject for *seem to be.*
There seems to be *some mistake.*

For *like* and *as*, ▶ 515. *Appear* is used in similar ways (▶ 374).

577 *sensible* and *sensitive*

A *sensible* person has common sense, and does not make stupid decisions.
*'I want to buy that dress.' 'Be **sensible**, dear. It's much too expensive.'*
A *sensitive* person feels things easily or deeply, and may be easily hurt.
*Don't shout at her – she's very **sensitive**.* (NOT . . . ~~very sensible~~.)
*Have you got a sun cream for **sensitive** skin?* (NOT . . . ~~for sensible skin?~~)
Sensible is a 'false friend' – similar words in some languages mean 'sensitive'.

578 *shade* and *shadow*

Shade is protection from the sun.
*I'm hot. Let's find some **shade** to sit in.*
*The temperature's 30 degrees in the **shade**.*
A *shadow* is the 'picture' made by something that blocks out light.
*In the evening your **shadow** is longer than you are.*
*There's an old story about a man without a **shadow**.*

shut and *close* ▸ 422

sick and *ill* ▸ 494

579 *since*: tenses

1 main clause: *I've known her since . . .*

In sentences with *since* (referring to time), we normally use present perfect and past perfect tenses in the main clause.
*I've **known** her since 2005.* (NOT ~~*I know her since*~~ . . .)
*We **haven't seen** Jamie since Christmas.*
*I was sorry when Jacky moved to America; we **had been** good friends since university days.*
However, present and past tenses are also occasionally found, especially in sentences about changes.
*You're **looking** much better since your operation.*
*She **doesn't come** round to see us so much **since** her marriage.*
*Since last Sunday I **can't stop** thinking about you.*
*Things **weren't going** so well since Father's illness.*

2 *It's a long time since . . .*

In British English, present and past tenses are common in the structure *It is/was . . . since . . .*
***It's** a long time **since** the last meeting.*
***It was** ages **since** that wonderful trip.* →

American English prefers perfect tenses in this structure.

*It's **been** a long time **since** the last meeting.*
*It **had been** ages **since** that wonderful trip.*

3 *since*-clause: *since we were at school*

Since can be used as a conjunction of time, introducing its own clause. The tense in the *since*-clause can be perfect or past, depending on the meaning. Compare:

- *I've known her **since we were at school together**.*
  *I've known her **since I've lived in this street**.*
- *You've drunk about ten cups of tea **since you arrived**.*
  *You've drunk about ten cups of tea **since you've been sitting here**.*
- *We visit my parents every week **since we bought the car**.*
  *We visit my parents every week **since we've had the car**.*

For more about present perfect tenses, including American usage, ► 47–52.
For past perfect tenses, ► 53–55. For the differences between *since*, *for* and *from*, ► 469.
For *since* meaning 'as' or 'because', ► 377.

since, _for_, _in_ and _from_: time ► 469

since, _as_, _because_ and _for` ► 377

580 *small* and *little*

Small simply refers to size. It is the opposite of *big* or *large* (► 404).

*Could I have a **small** brandy, please?*
*You're too **small** to be a police officer.*

The adjective *little* usually expresses some kind of emotion.

***Poor little** thing – come here and let me look after you.*
*'What's he like?' 'Oh, he's a **funny little** man.'*
*What's that **nasty little** boy doing in our garden?*
*They've bought a **pretty little** house in the country.*

In a few fixed expressions, *little* is used in the same way as *small* or *short*.

***little** finger*	*a **little** while*
*the **little** hand of a clock*	*a **little** way*

In British English *little* is unusual in 'predicative' position (after a verb), and comparative and superlative forms are not normally used.

*The puppy was so **small** and sweet.* (More natural in British English than *The puppy was so little . . .*)
*He's the **smallest** baby I've ever seen.*
(More natural than . . . *the littlest baby . . .*)

For *little* used as a determiner meaning 'not much' (e.g. *There's **little** hope*), ► 168.

581 *smell*

1 British and American forms

In British English, regular and irregular past tenses and participles are both common: *smelled* and *smelt*. American forms are usually regular.

2 linking verb

Smell can be used as a linking verb (► 11), followed by an adjective or noun, to say how something smells. Progressive forms are not used.

*Those roses **smell beautiful**.* (NOT . . . ~~*smell beautifully*~~.)

*The soup **smells funny**. What's in it?* (NOT . . . ~~*is smelling funny*~~. . .)

Before a noun, *smell of* and *smell like* are used.

*The railway carriage **smelt of beer** and old socks.*

*His aftershave **smelt like an explosion** in a flower shop.*

Smell is sometimes used to mean 'smell bad'.

*That dog **smells**.*

3 transitive verb: 'perceive'

Smell can be used with an object, to say what we perceive with our noses. Progressive forms are not used. We often use *can smell* (► 84).

*As we walked into the house, we **smelt something** burning.*

*I **can smell supper**.*

4 transitive verb: 'investigate'

Another transitive use is to say that we are using our noses to find out something. Progressive forms can be used.

*'What are you doing?' 'I'**m smelling** the meat to see if it's still OK.'*

582 *so*: adverb meaning 'like this/that'

1 after *seem*, *appear*, etc

So can be used in a formal style in a few cases to mean 'like this/that', 'in this/that way'. This happens, for example, after *seem*, *appear*, *remain*, *more* and *less*.

*'Will the business make a loss this year?' 'It **appears so**.'*

*The weather is stormy, and will **remain so** over the weekend.*

*She was always nervous, and after her accident she became even **more so**.*

*I read the front page very carefully, and the rest of the paper **less so**.*

2 not used in other cases

In other cases, *so* is not normally used adverbially to mean 'like this/that', 'in this/that way'.

*Look – hold it up in the air **like this**.* (NOT . . . ~~*hold it up in the air so*~~.)

*When he laughs **like that** I want to scream.* (NOT ~~*When he laughs so*~~ . . .)

*I don't think we should do it **in that way**.* (NOT . . . ~~*do it so*~~.)

*He says he is ill and he looks **it**.* (NOT . . . ~~*he looks so*~~.)

For *so* with *say* and *tell*, ► 586. For *so am I*, etc, ► 309. For *so* with *hope*, *believe*, etc, ► 585. For *do so*, ► 29.

583 *so* (conjunction) and *then*

So and *then* can both be used in replies, to mean 'since that is so', 'it follows from what you have said'.

*'It's more expensive to travel on Friday.' '**Then/So** I'll leave on Thursday.'*
*'I'll be needing the car.' '**Then/So** I suppose I'll have to take a taxi.'*

So (but not *then*) can also be used when the same speaker connects two ideas, to mean 'it follows from what I have said'.

*It's more expensive to travel on Friday, **so** I'll leave on Thursday.*
(NOT . . . ~~*Then I'll leave on Thursday.*~~)

584 *so* (degree adverb): *so tired, so fast*

1 meaning

So means 'that much' or 'to that extent'. It is used when we are talking about a high degree of some quality – in situations where *very* is also a suitable word.

*I'm sorry you're **so** tired.* (= I know you're very tired, and I'm sorry.)
*It was **so** cold that we couldn't go out.* (= It was very cold weather, and because of that we couldn't go out.)
*I wish she didn't drive **so** fast.*

2 *so* and *very*

Very (► 616) is used when we are giving new information. *So* is mainly used to refer to information which has already been given, which is already known, or which is obvious. Compare:

– *You're **very** late.* (giving new information)
*I'm sorry I'm **so** late.* (referring to information which is already known)
– *It was **very** warm in Scotland.* (giving new information)
*I didn't think it would be **so** warm.* (referring to information which is already known)

3 emphatic use

In an informal style, *so* can also be used like *very* to give new information, when the speaker wishes to emphasise what is said. This structure is rather like an exclamation (► 223).

*He's **so** bad-tempered!* (= How bad-tempered he is!) *You're **so** right!*

4 *so . . . that*

We use *so*, not *very*, before *that*-clauses.

*It was **so** cold **that** we stopped playing.* (NOT ~~*It was very cold that we stopped playing.*~~)
*He spoke **so** fast **that** nobody could understand.* (NOT ~~*He spoke very fast that . . .*~~)

5 before adjectives and adverbs

We can use *so* before an adjective alone (without a noun) or an adverb.

*The milk was **so good** that we couldn't stop drinking it.*
*Why are you driving **so fast**?*

So is not used with **adjective + noun**.

I didn't expect ***such terrible weather.*** (NOT . . . ~~*so terrible weather.*~~)

I enjoyed my stay in your country, which is ***so beautiful.*** (NOT ~~*I enjoyed my stay in your so beautiful country.*~~)

For *such*, ▸ 597.

6 *so much*, etc

We can use *so much* and *so many* (▸ 587), *so few* and *so little* with or without nouns.

I've bought ***so many*** *new books; I don't know when I'll read them.*

There were ***so few*** *interesting people there that we decided to go home.*

I've read ***so much*** *and learnt* ***so little.***

7 *so* and *so much*

We use *so*, not *so much*, before adjectives without nouns (▸ 584.5 above). Compare:

– *She had* ***so much heavy luggage*** *that she couldn't carry it.*

Her luggage was ***so heavy*** *that she couldn't carry it.* (NOT ~~*Her luggage was so much heavy*~~ . . .)

– *I've never seen* ***so much beautiful jewellery.***

The jewellery is ***so beautiful!*** (NOT . . . ~~*so much beautiful!*~~)

But we use *so much*, not *so*, before comparatives.

I'm glad you're feeling ***so much better.*** (NOT . . . ~~*so better.*~~)

8 *so . . . as to . . .*

There is a structure with *so* followed by **adjective + *as to* + infinitive**. This is formal and not very common.

Would you be ***so kind as to tell*** *me the time?* (= . . . kind enough to . . .)

(NOT ~~*Would you be so kind and*~~ . . . OR ~~*Would you be so kind to*~~ . . .)

9 *so . . . a . . .*

There is another rather formal structure with ***so*** **+ adjective +** ***a/an*** **+ noun** (▸ 187).

I had never before met ***so gentle a person.*** (= . . . such a gentle person.)

585 *so* and *not* with *hope*, *believe*, etc

1 instead of *that*-clauses

We often use *so* after *believe, hope, expect, imagine, suppose, guess, reckon, think, be afraid*, instead of repeating words in a *that*-clause.

'Is Alex here?' 'I ***think so.*** (NOT . . . ~~*I think that Alex is here.*~~)'

'Do you think we'll be in time?' 'I ***hope so.*** (NOT ~~*I hope.*~~)'

'Did you lose?' 'I'm ***afraid so.***'

We do not use *so* before a *that*-clause.

I hope ***that*** *we'll have good weather.* (NOT ~~*I hope so, that we'll have good weather.*~~)

→

Note the special use of *I thought so* to mean 'my suspicions were correct'.

*Empty your pockets. Ah, **I thought so**! You've been stealing chocolate again.*

So is not used after *know* (► 504).

*'You're late.' 'I **know**.'* OR *I **know that**.* (NOT ~~*I know so.*~~)

2 negative structures

We can make these expressions negative in two ways.

affirmative verb + *not*

*'Did you win?' 'I'**m afraid not**.'*

*'We won't be in time for the train.' 'No, I **suppose not**.'*

negative verb + *so*

*'You won't be here tomorrow?' 'I don'**t suppose so**.'*

*'Will it rain?' 'I don'**t expect so**.'*

Hope and *be afraid* are always used in the first structure.

*I **hope not**.* (NOT ~~*I don't hope so.*~~)

Think is more common in the second structure.

*I don'**t think so**.* (More common than *I think not.*)

3 *so* at the beginning of a clause

We can use *so* at the beginning of a clause with *say, hear, understand, tell, believe* and a number of other verbs. This structure is used to say how the speaker learnt something.

*It's going to be a cold winter, or **so** the newspaper **says**.*

*'Emily's getting married.' 'Yes, **so** I **heard**.'*

*'The Professor's ill.' '**So** I **understand**.'*

586 *so* with *say* and *tell*

1 instead of *that*-clauses

So can be used after *say* and *tell* instead of repeating information in a *that*-clause.

*She's going to be the next president. Everybody **says so**.* (= . . . Everybody says that she's going to be the next president.)

*'You've got to clean the car.' 'Who **says so**?'*

*Taxes are going up. Joseph **told** me **so**.*

Note that *so* is used in this way mostly when we are talking about the authority for statements, about reasons why we should believe them. When we simply want to identify the speaker, we prefer *that*. Compare:

*'Megan's crazy.' 'Who says **so**?' 'Dr Bannister.'*

*'Megan's crazy.' 'Who said **that**?' 'I did.'*

2 *I told you so.*

I told you so usually means 'I warned you, but you wouldn't listen to me'.

*'Mummy, I've broken my train.' '**I told you so**. You shouldn't have tried to ride on it.'*

3 other verbs

So cannot be used after all verbs of saying. We cannot say, for example, ~~*She promised me so.*~~

so and such ► 597

587 *so much* and *so many*

1 the difference

The difference between *so much* and *so many* is the same as between *much* and *many* (► 165). *So much* is used with singular (uncountable) nouns; *so many* is used with plurals.

I had never seen ***so much*** *food in my life.*
She had ***so many*** *children that she didn't know what to do.*
(NOT . . . ~~*so much children*~~ . . .)

We use *so*, not *so much*, to modify adjectives and adverbs (► 584.5).

You're ***so beautiful****.* (NOT ~~*You're so much beautiful.*~~)

But *so much* is used before comparatives (► 207).

She's ***so much more*** *beautiful now.*

2 *so much*/*many* without a noun

We can drop a noun after *so much*/*many*, if the meaning is clear.

I can't eat all that meat – there's ***so much****!*
I was expecting a few phone calls, but not ***so many****.*

3 *so much* as an adverb

So much can be used as an adverb.

I wish you didn't smoke ***so much****.*

4 special structures with *so much*

We can use *not so much . . . as* or *not so much . . . but* to make corrections and clarifications.

*It was****n't so much*** *his appearance I liked* ***as*** *his personality.*
It's ***not so much*** *that I don't want to go,* ***but*** *I just haven't got time.*

In negative and *if*-clauses, *so much as* can be used to mean 'even'.

*He did****n't so much as*** *say thank you, after all we'd done for him.*
If *he* ***so much as*** *looks at another woman, I'll kill him.*

588 *so that* and *in order that*

1 purpose

These structures are used to talk about purpose. *So that* is more common than *in order that*, especially in an informal style. They are often followed by auxiliary verbs such as *can* or *will*; *may* is more formal.

She's staying here for six months ***so that*** *she* ***can*** *perfect her English.* →

I'm putting it in the oven now ***so that*** *it'll be ready by seven o'clock.*
We send monthly reports ***in order that*** *they* ***may*** *have full information.*

In an informal style, *that* can be dropped after *so* (► 265).

I've come early ***so*** *I can talk to you.*

2 present tenses for future

Present tenses are sometimes used for the future.

I'll send the contract express ***so that*** *she* ***gets*** */ she'll get it before Tuesday.*
I'm going to make an early start ***so that*** *I* ***don't****/won't get stuck in the traffic.*
We must write to him, ***in order that*** *he* ***does****/will not feel that we are hiding things.*

3 past structures

In sentences about the past, *would*, *could* or *should* are generally used with verbs after *so that* / *in order that*. *Might* is possible in a very formal style.

Emily talked to the shy girl ***so that*** *she* ***wouldn't*** *feel left out.*
I took my golf clubs ***so that*** *I* ***could*** *play on Sunday.*
They met on a Saturday ***in order that*** *everybody* ***should*** *be free to attend.*
He built a chain of castles ***so that*** *he* ***might*** *control the whole country.*

For the infinitive structures *in order to* and *so as to*, ► 112.2. For *so . . . that* expressing result, ► 584.4.
For *lest* meaning 'so that . . . not', ► 511.

589 *so-and-so; so-so*

1 *so-and-so*

This informal expression is used when one cannot remember a name.

What's happened to old ***so-and-so?*** (= . . . what's his name?)

It can also replace a swear word or an insult.

She's an old ***so-and-so.***

2 *so-so*

This informal expression means 'neither good nor bad.'

*'How are you feeling?' '****So-so****.'* (NOT . . . ~~*So-and-so.*~~)
*'Was the concert any good?' '****So-so****.'*

590 *some time, sometime* and *sometimes*

Some time (with two stresses: /ˌsʌm 'taɪm/) means 'quite a long time'.

I'm afraid it'll take ***some time*** *to repair your car.*
She's lived in Italy for ***some time****, so she speaks Italian quite well.*

Sometime (/'sʌmtaɪm/) refers to an indefinite time, usually in the future.

It can also be written as two words: *some time.*

Let's have dinner together ***sometime*** *next week.*
When will I get married – this year, next year, ***sometime****, never?*

Sometimes (/ˈsʌmtaɪmz/) is an adverb of frequency (► 198.1). It means 'on some occasions', 'more than once' (past, present or future).

*I **sometimes** went skiing when I lived in Germany.*
***Sometimes**, in the long winter evenings, I just sit and think about life.*

For *sometimes* and *once*, ► 542

591 *soon, early* and *quickly*

1 *soon*

Soon means 'a short time after now' or 'a short time after then'.

*Get well **soon**.* (NOT ~~*Get well early.*~~)
*The work was hard at the beginning, but she **soon** got used to it.*
*'I'll pay you **soon**.' 'The sooner the better.'*

For *no sooner . . . than*, ► 480.

2 *early*

The adverb *early* means 'near the beginning of the time-period that we are thinking about'. It does not usually mean 'a short time after now/then'.

***Early** that week, Luke was called to the police station.*
*We usually take a long break **early** in the year.* (NOT . . . ~~*soon in the year.*~~)
*I usually get up **early** and go to bed **early**.* (NOT ~~*I usually get up soon*~~ . . .)

Sometimes *early* means 'before the expected time'.

*The plane arrived twenty minutes **early**.*

Early can also be used as an adjective.

*I caught an **early** train.* *You're very **early**.*
*It's the **earliest** known example of a cave painting.*

In a formal style, the adjective *early* can sometimes have the same kind of meaning as *soon*.

*I should be grateful for an **early** reply.*
*Best wishes for an **early** recovery.*

A watch or clock is *fast* or *slow*, not *early* or *late*.

*My watch is five minutes **fast**.*

3 *quickly*

Quickly refers to the speed with which something is done. Compare:

– *Let's get her to the doctor **quickly**.* (It's urgent – we need to move fast.)
*I ought to see the doctor **soon**.* (not an emergency)
– *He did the repair **quickly** but not very well.*
*I hope you can do the repair **soon** – I need the car.*

592 *sort of, kind of* and *type of*

1 articles

The article *a/an* is usually dropped after *sort of, kind of* and *type of*, but structures with articles are possible in an informal style.

*That's a funny **sort of (a)** car.* *What **sort of (a)** bird is that?* →

2 singular and plural; *these sort of*, etc

When we are talking about one sort of thing, we can use *sort of, kind of* or *type of* followed by a singular noun.

This ***sort of car*** *is enormously expensive to run.*

I'm interested in any new ***type of development*** *in computer science.*

Singular *sort of, kind of* and *type of* can also be followed by plural nouns, especially in an informal style.

I'm interested in any new ***kind of developments*** *. . .*

Plural demonstratives (*these* and *those*) can also be used.

These sort of cars *are enormously expensive to run.*

Do you smoke ***those kind of cigarettes?***

This structure (*these sort of*, etc) is often felt to be incorrect, and is usually avoided in a formal style. This can be done by using a singular noun (see above), by using plural *sorts/kinds/types*, or by using the structure *. . . of this/that sort/kind/type.*

This sort of *car is . . .* ***These kinds of*** *car(s) are . . .*

Cars ***of that type*** *are . . .*

3 softeners

In an informal style, *sort of* and *kind of* can be used before almost any word or expression, or at the end of a sentence, to show that we are not speaking very exactly, or to make what we say less definite.

We ***sort of thought*** *you might forget.*

Sometimes I ***sort of wonder*** *whether I shouldn't* ***sort of get*** *a job.*

I've had ***sort of an idea*** *about what we could do.*

She's ***kind of strange****.* *I've changed my mind,* ***kind of****.*

593 *sound*

Sound is a linking verb (► 11). It is followed by adjectives, not adverbs.

You ***sound unhappy****. What's the matter?*

Progressive forms are not very common.

Your idea ***sounds*** *great.* (NOT ~~*Your idea's sounding great.*~~)

However, progressive forms are possible when there is an idea of change.

The car ***sounds / is sounding*** *a bit rough these days.*

Sound is often followed by *like* or *as if/though.*

That ***sounds like*** *James coming up the stairs.*

It ***sounds as if/though*** *he's had a hard day.*

south and *southern*, etc ► 442

594 *speak* and *talk*

1 little difference

There is little difference between *speak* and *talk*. In certain situations one or the other is preferred, but they are usually both possible.

2 formality

Talk is the more usual word for informal communication.
*When she walked into the room everybody stopped **talking**.*
*Could I **talk** to you about my plans for a few minutes?*
Speak is often used for communication in more serious or formal situations.
*I'll have to **speak** to that boy – he's getting very lazy.*
*They had a fight last week, and now they're not **speaking** to one another.*
*After she had finished explaining her plans, nobody **spoke**.*

3 lectures, etc

Talk is often used for the act of giving an informal lecture (a *talk*); *speak* is preferred for more formal lectures, sermons, etc. Compare:
*This is Patrick Allen, who's going to **talk** to us about gardening.*
*This is Professor Rosalind Bowen, who is going to **speak** to us on recent developments in low-temperature physics.*
*The Pope **spoke** to the crowd for seventy minutes about world peace.*

4 languages

Speak is the usual word to refer to knowledge and use of languages, and to the physical ability to speak.
*She **speaks** three languages fluently.*
*We **spoke** Dutch so that the children wouldn't understand.*
*His throat operation has left him unable to **speak**.*

5 other cases

One usually asks to *speak to* somebody on the phone (AmE also *speak with*).
*Hello. Could I **speak to** Karen, please?*
Talk is used before *sense, nonsense* and other words with similar meanings.
*You're **talking** complete **nonsense**, as usual.*
(NOT ~~*You're speaking complete nonsense*~~ . . .)

start and _begin_ ▸ 398

595 *still, yet* and *already*: time

1 meanings

Still, yet and *already* can all be used to talk about things which are going on, or expected, around the present. Briefly:
– *still* is used to say that something is continuing and has not stopped
– *yet* is used to talk about something that is expected
– *already* is used to say that something has happened early, or earlier than it might have happened.

2 *still*

Still is used to say that something has, perhaps surprisingly, not finished.
*She's **still** asleep.* *Is it **still** raining?*

I've been thinking for hours, but I ***still*** *can't decide.*
You're not ***still*** *seeing that Jackson boy, are you?*

Still usually goes with the verb, in 'mid-position' (► 200).

3 *yet*

Not yet is used to say that something which is expected has not happened (but we think that it will).

*'Is Sophie here?' '****Not yet****.'* *The mail has****n't*** *come* ***yet****.*

In questions, we use *yet* to ask whether something expected has happened.

Is supper ready ***yet****?* *Has the mail come* ***yet****?*

Yet usually goes at the end of a clause, but it can go immediately after *not* in a formal style.

Don't eat the pears – they aren't ripe ***yet****.*
The pears are ***not yet*** *ripe.* (more formal)

4 *already*

Already is used to say that something has happened earlier than expected, or earlier than it might have happened.

'When's Sophie going to come?' 'She's ***already*** *here.'*
'You must go to Scotland.' 'I've ***already*** *been there.'*
Have you ***already*** *finished? That was quick!*

Already usually goes with the verb, in 'mid-position' (► 200). It can also go at the end of a clause, for emphasis.

Are you here ***already****? You must have run all the way.*

We do not usually put *already* before time expressions.

When I was fourteen *I* ***already*** *knew that I wanted to be a doctor.*
(NOT ~~*Already when I was fourteen*~~. . .)

5 *still not* or *not yet*?

Still not looks back towards the past; *not yet* looks towards the future. Compare:

– *She* ***still*** *hasn't got a job.* (Looking back: she hasn't had a job for a long time, and this situation is continuing.)
She hasn't got a job ***yet****.* (Looking forward: she hasn't got a job now, but we're hoping that she will get one.)
– *I* ***still*** *can't speak Russian, after all these years of study.*
I can't speak French ***yet****, but I hope I will be able to soon.*

6 *yet* or *already* in questions

Questions with *already* often suggest that something has happened. Compare:

– *Have you met Professor Hawkins* ***yet****?*
(= I don't know whether you've met him.)
Have you ***already*** *met Professor Hawkins?*
(= I think you've probably met him.)
– *Is my coat dry* ***yet****?*
Is my coat dry ***already****? That was quick!*

7 tenses

Various tenses are possible with all three words. In British English, perfect tenses are common with *already* and *yet*; Americans often use past tenses. Compare:

– *Have you **paid** yet?* (BrE)
*Have you **paid** / **Did** you **pay** yet?* (AmE)
– *She **has** already **left**.* (BrE)
*She **(has)** already **left**.* (AmE)

8 related to a past moment

All three words can be related to a past moment instead of to the present.

*I went to see if she had woken up **yet**, but she was **still** asleep. This was embarrassing, because her friends had **already** arrived.*

9 *yet* meaning 'still'

Yet is normally used in questions and negative sentences. But it is sometimes used in affirmative sentences in a formal style to mean 'still'.

*We have **yet** to hear from the bank.* (= We are still waiting to hear . . .)

10 *all ready*

All ready is not the same as *already*: it simply means the same as ***all*** + ***ready***. Compare:

*'When's Megan coming?' 'She's **already** arrived.'*
*'Are you **all ready**?' 'No, Dan isn't.'*

For *still* as a discourse marker meaning 'however', ▸ 301.2.

street* and *road ▸ 570

596 *such*

1 word order

Such is used with nouns and noun phrases. It comes before *a/an*.

***such** people* ***such** interesting ideas*
***such a** decision* (NOT ~~*a such decision*~~)

2 'of this/that kind'

Such can mean 'like this/that', 'of this/that kind'. This is most common in a formal style, with abstract nouns.

*The committee wishes to raise fees. I would oppose **such** a decision.*
*There are various forms of secret writing. **Such** systems are called 'codes'.*

In an informal style, and with concrete nouns, we prefer *like this/that* or *this/that kind of*.

*. . . systems **like this** are called . . .*
*He's got an old Rolls-Royce. I'd like a car **like that**.* (NOT ~~*I'd like such a car.*~~)

3 high degree

Another use of *such* is to talk about a high degree of some quality. In this sense, *such* is common before **adjective + noun**.

*I'm sorry you had **such a bad journey**.* (= You had a very bad journey, and I'm sorry.)
*It was a pleasure to meet **such interesting people**.*

Such is also possible with this meaning before a noun alone, when the noun has an emphatic descriptive meaning.

I'm glad your concert was ***such a success.***

Why did she make ***such a fuss*** *about the dates?*

4 *such* and *very, great,* etc

Very, great and similar words are also used to talk about a high degree of some quality. The difference is that they give new information; *such* (= like this/that) normally refers to information that is already known. Compare:

- *I've* ***had a very*** *bad day.* (giving information)
  Why did you have ***such*** *a bad day?* (The information is already known.)
- *The weather was* ***very*** *cold.*
  I wasn't expecting ***such*** *cold weather.*
- *There was* ***great*** *confusion*
  Why was there ***such*** *confusion?*

However, in a very informal style *such* can also be used to mean 'very' or 'great', especially in exclamations.

She has ***such*** *a marvellous voice!* *He's* ***such*** *an idiot!*

5 *such . . . that; such . . . as to*

Structures with *very* cannot be followed directly by *that*-clauses. Instead, we can use *such . . . that.*

It was ***such*** *a cold afternoon* ***that*** *we stopped playing.* (NOT ~~*It was a very cold afternoon that . . .*~~)

There is also a structure with *such* followed by **. . . + *as to* + infinitive**. This is formal and not very common.

It was ***such*** *a loud noise* ***as to wake*** *everybody in the house.*
(Less formal: . . . ***such*** *a loud noise* ***that it woke*** *. . .)*

6 *such as*

Such as is used to introduce examples.

My doctor told me to avoid fatty foods ***such as*** *bacon or hamburgers.*

7 *such-and-such*

Note this informal expression.

She's always telling you that she's met ***such-and-such*** *a famous person.*
(= . . . one or other famous person.)

597 *such* and *so*

1 *such* before (adjective +) noun

We use *such* before a noun (with or without an adjective).

They're ***such fools.*** (NOT ~~*They're so fools.*~~)

It was ***such good milk*** *that we couldn't stop drinking it.* (NOT ~~*It was so good milk that . . .*~~)

Such comes before *a/an.* ~~*They're so fools.*~~)

She's ***such a*** *baby.*

I've never met ***such a*** *nice person.* (NOT . . . ~~*a such/so nice person.*~~)

2 *so* before adjective, adverb, etc

We use *so* before an adjective alone (without a noun) or an adverb.

She's ***so babyish****.* (NOT ~~*She's such babyish.*~~)

The milk was ***so good*** *that we couldn't stop drinking it.*

Why do you talk ***so slowly?***

We can also use *so* before *much, many, few* and *little.*

We've got ***so much*** *to do, and* ***so little*** *time.*

We use *so much*, not *so*, before comparatives.

I'm glad you're feeling ***so much better****.* (NOT . . . ~~*so better.*~~)

For *so beautiful a day*, etc, ► 187.
For more about the meaning and use of *such*, ► 596. For more about *so*, ► 584.

598 *suggest*

1 infinitive not used

Suggest is not followed by **object + infinitive**. *That*-clauses and *-ing* structures are common.

Her uncle ***suggested that*** *she (should) get a job in a bank.*

Her uncle ***suggested getting*** *a job in a bank.*

(NOT ~~*Her uncle suggested her to get a job in a bank.*~~)

2 indirect object not used

Suggest is not normally followed by an indirect object without a preposition. (~~*Her uncle suggested her to get a job in a bank.*~~)

Can you ***suggest*** *a restaurant* ***to us?*** (NOT ~~*Can you suggest us a restaurant?*~~)

3 verb forms in *that*-clauses

In *that*-clauses after *suggest*, various verb forms are possible when we suggest what people should do.

Ordinary present and past tenses can be used.

Her uncle ***suggests*** *that she* ***gets*** *a job in a bank.*

He ***suggested*** *that she* ***got*** *a job in a bank.*

Should + infinitive without *to* is common.

He ***suggests*** *that she* ***should get*** *a job in a bank.*

He ***suggested*** *that she* ***should get*** *a job in a bank.*

Subjunctives (► 232) are also used, especially in American English.

He ***suggests*** *that she* ***get*** *a job in a bank.*

He ***suggested*** *that she* ***get*** *a job in a bank.*

4 direct suggestions

In direct suggestions ('I suggest . . .'), *should* is not generally used.

I suggest (that) ***you get*** *. . .* (NOT ~~*I suggest that you should get.*~~)

suit and *fit* ► 467

599 *suppose, supposing* and *what if*

Suppose, supposing and *what if* can all be used with present tenses to make suggestions about things that might happen.

*'I haven't got a tablecloth.' '**Suppose** we **use** a sheet.'*
*'Let's go to the beach.' '**Supposing** it **rains**.'*
***What** if we **invite** your mother next weekend and go away the week after?*

A past tense makes the suggestion sound less definite.

*'Daddy, can I watch TV?' '**Suppose** you **did** your homework first.'*
*'I'm going to climb up there.' 'No! **supposing** you **slipped**!'*
***What if** I **came** tomorrow instead of this afternoon?*

In sentences about the past, past perfect tenses are used to talk about situations that did not occur.

*That was very clever, but **supposing** you **had slipped**?*

For more about past tenses with present or future meanings, ► 46.

600 *surely*

Surely is more common in British than American English.

1 not the same as *certainly*

Surely does not usually mean the same as *certainly*. We use *certainly* when we simply tell people that something is true. We use *surely* mostly to ask for people's agreement: to persuade them that something must be true, or that there are good reasons for believing it. Compare:

– *House prices are **certainly** rising fast at the moment.* ('I know this is so.')
*House prices will **surely** stop rising soon.* ('I believe this must be so.')
– *I **certainly** transferred the money on Monday.* ('I know.')
*She's **surely** got the money by now.* ('It seems very probable.')

2 belief in spite of . . .

Surely can be used when we say that we think something is true in spite of reasons to believe the opposite, or in spite of suggestions to the contrary. These sentences are often like questions.

*'I'm going to marry Sonia.' '**Surely** she's married already?'*
***Surely** that's Henry over there? I thought he was in Scotland.*
*'Is it tonight we're going out?' 'No, tomorrow, **surely**?'*

With *not*, *surely* can express difficulty in believing something.

*'Tim failed his exam.' 'Oh, **surely not**?'*
***Surely** you're **not** going out in that hat?*
*You **don't** think I'm going to pay for you, **surely**?*

601 *sympathetic*

Sympathetic usually means 'sharing somebody's feelings' or 'sorry for somebody who is in trouble'.

*I'm **sympathetic** towards the strikers.*
*She's always very **sympathetic** when people feel ill.*

Sympathetic is a 'false friend' for speakers of certain languages. It does not usually mean the same as, for example, *sympatyczny, sympathisch, sympatisk* or *simpático*.

*The people in my class are all very **nice / pleasant / easy to get along with**.*
(NOT . . . ~~*are all very sympathetic.*~~)

602 *take*: time

We can use *take* to say how much time we need to do something. Five structures are common

1 The person is the subject:

person + *take* + time + infinitive

I took three hours to get home last night.
***She** takes all day to get out of the bathroom.*
***They** took two hours to unload the ferry.*

2 The activity is the subject:

activity + *take* (+ person) + time

***The drive** took me three hours.* ***Gardening** takes a lot of time.*
***Unloading** the ferry took them two hours.*

3 The object of the activity is the subject:

object of activity + *take* (+ person) + infinitive

***The ferry** took them two hours to unload.*
***This house** will take all week to clean.*

4 Preparatory *it* is the subject:

It + *take* (+ person) + time + infinitive

***It** took me three hours to get home last night.*
***It** takes ages to do the shopping.*

5 *Before/until* is used:

It + *take* (+ person) + time + *before/until.*

*It took us six weeks **before/until** we got the house clean.*
*It took a long time **before/until** she felt comfortable in her new school.*

take and *bring* ► 409

talk and *speak* ► 594

tall and *high* ► 485

603 *taste*

1 linking verb

Taste can be used as a linking verb (► 11), followed by an adjective or noun, to say how something tastes. Progressive forms are not used.

This ***tastes nice****. What's in it?* (NOT . . . ~~*tastes nicely.*~~)

The wine ***tastes funny****.* (NOT . . . ~~*is tasting funny*~~ . . .)

Before a noun, *taste of* and *taste like* are used.

The fish soup ***tasted*** *mostly* ***of garlic****.*

Her lips ***tasted like*** *wild* ***strawberries****.*

2 transitive verb: 'perceive'

Taste can be used with an object, to say what we perceive with our sense of taste. Progressive forms are not used. We often use *can taste* (► 84).

I ***can taste onion*** *and mint in the sauce.* (NOT ~~*I am tasting*~~ . . .)

3 transitive verb: 'investigate'

Another transitive use is to say that we are using our sense of taste to find out something. Progressive forms can be used.

*'Stop eating the cake.' '****I'm*** *just* ***tasting*** *it to see if it's OK.'*

tell and *say* ► 572

thank you ► 556

604 *thankful* and *grateful*

Grateful is the normal word for people's reactions to kindness, favours, etc.

I'm very ***grateful*** *for all your help.* (NOT ~~*I'm very thankful*~~ . . .)

She wasn't a bit ***grateful*** *to me for repairing her car.*

Thankful is used especially for feelings of relief at having avoided a danger, or at having come through an unpleasant experience.

I'm ***thankful*** *that we got home before the storm started.*

We feel very ***thankful*** *that she didn't marry him after all.*

Well, I'm ***thankful*** *that's over.*

then and *so* ► 583

605 *there*

The spelling *there* is used for two words with completely different pronunciations and uses.

1 adverb of place

There (pronounced /ðeə(r)/) is an adverb meaning 'in that place'.

What's that green thing over ***there****?*
There*'s the book I was looking for.*

For the difference between *here* and *there*, ▸ 484.

2 introductory subject

There (most often pronounced /ðə(r)/) is used as an introductory subject in sentences beginning *there is, there are, there might be,* etc. For details, ▸ 20.

There*'s a book under the piano.*

there and *here* ▸ 484

606 *think*

1 'have an opinion': not progressive

When *think* is used for opinions, progressive forms are unusual.

I ***don't think*** *much of his latest book.* (NOT ~~*I'm not thinking much . . .*~~)
Who ***do*** *you* ***think*** *will win the election?* (NOT ~~*Who are you thinking . . .?*~~)

2 other meanings: progressive possible

When *think* has other meanings (e.g. *consider* or *plan*) progressives are possible.

You're looking worried. What ***are*** *you* ***thinking*** *about?* (NOT . . . ~~*What do you think about?*~~)
*I****'m thinking*** *of changing my job.*

3 *-ing* forms

After *think*, *-ing* forms can be used, but infinitives are not usually possible unless there is an object (▸ 606.4 below).

She's ***thinking of going*** *to Brazil next year.* (NOT ~~*She's thinking to go . . .*~~)

However, ***think*** + **infinitive** can be used when we talk about remembering to do something, or having the good sense to do something.

Did you ***think to close*** *the windows when it started raining?*

4 *think* + object (+ *to be*) + complement

In a very formal style, *think* is sometimes followed by an object and an adjective or noun complement.

They ***thought her fascinating.*** *We* ***thought him a fool.***

It can be used as a preparatory object (▸ 269) for an infinitive or clause.

I thought ***it better to pretend that I knew nothing.***
We thought ***it important that she should go home.***

→

To be is occasionally used before the complement (suggesting objective judgement rather than subjective impression), but this is very unusual.

They thought him ***to be*** *a spy.*

In more normal styles, *that*-clauses are preferred after *think.*

They ***thought that*** *she was fascinating.*

We ***thought that*** *he was a fool.*

However, the passive equivalent of the **object + complement** structure is reasonably common, usually with *to be.*

He ***was thought to be*** *a spy.*

5 transferred negation: *I don't think . . .*

When *think* is used to introduce a negative clause, we most often put *not* with *think*, rather than with the following clause (► 219).

I ***don't think*** *it will rain.* (More natural than *I think it won't rain.*)

Emily ***doesn't think*** *she can come.*

However, we can express surprise with *I thought . . . not.*

Hello! I ***thought*** *you* ***weren't*** *coming!*

6 indirect speech

Think does not usually introduce indirect questions.

I ***was wondering*** *if I could do anything to help.* (More natural than *I was thinking if . . .*)

7 *I thought . . .*

Note the use of stressed *I thought . . .* to suggest that the speaker was right. Compare:

'It isn't very nice.' 'Oh, dear. I thought you'd LIKE *it. (But I was wrong.)'*

'It's beautiful!' 'Oh, I am glad. I THOUGHT *you'd like it. (And I was right.)'*

8 *I had thought . . ., I should think,* etc

Past perfect forms can suggest that the speaker was mistaken, especially when *had* is stressed.

I ***had thought*** *that we were going to be invited to dinner.*

I should think and *I should have thought* (also *I would / I'd . . .*) are used (mostly in British English) to introduce guesses.

I should think *we'll need at least twelve bottles of wine.*

I'd have thought *we could expect at least forty people.*

This structure can also introduce criticisms.

I should have thought *he could have washed his hands, at least.*

For *I (don't) think so* and *I thought so*, ► 585.

though and *although* ► 371

607 *through*: time

In American English, *through* can be used to mean 'up to and including'.

The park is open from May ***through*** *September.*

In British English, *through* is not normally used in this way. Instead, British people say, for example, *to . . . inclusive*, or *until the end of . . .*

*The park is open from May **to** September **inclusive**.* (OR *. . . from May **until the end of** September.*)

through, across and *over* ► 357

608 *time*

1 countability and article use

Time has various uses, some countable and some uncountable (for full details see a good dictionary). Most of these are straightforward, but there are problems in two areas:

a measure of duration: how long

When we talk about the number of hours, days, etc that are needed to complete something, *time* is generally uncountable (and therefore used without *a*).

*How **much time** do we need to load the van?*
*It took quite **some time** to persuade her to talk to us.*
*Don't worry – there's plenty of **time**.* *This is a complete waste of **time**.*

However, *time* is countable in certain expressions like *a long/short time* and *quite a time* (BrE).

*I took **a long time** to get to sleep.* *She was away for **quite a time**.*

The time can be used to mean 'enough time'; *the* is often dropped.

*Just come with me – I haven't got **(the) time** to explain.*

For the use of *take* with expressions of time, ► 602.

b clock times

When we talk about clock times, *time* is countable.

*Six o'clock would be **a good time** to meet.*
*She phoned me at various **times** yesterday.*

The is dropped in the expression *it's time.*

***It's time** to stop.* (NOT ~~*It's the time to stop.*~~)

2 without preposition

Prepositions are often dropped before some common expressions with *time.*

*He's busy. Why don't you come **another time?*** (More natural than *. . . at another time.*)
***What time** does the match start?* (More natural than *At what time . . .?*)
*You won't fool me **this time**.*

In relative structures after *time*, *that* is often used instead of *when* in an informal style (or dropped).

*Do you remember the time **(that) Freddy pretended to be a ghost?***
*You can come up and see me any time **(that) you like**.*
*The first time **(that) I saw her**, my heart stopped.*

For similar structures with other time words, and with *place*, *way* and *reason*, ► 237.7. →

3 *on time* and *in time*

On time means 'at the planned time', 'neither late nor early'. The opposite is 'early' or 'late'. It is often used to refer to timetabled events.

Only one of the last six trains has been ***on time****.* (NOT . . . ~~*in time.*~~)
Daniel wants the discussion to start exactly ***on time****.* (NOT . . . ~~*in time.*~~)

In time means 'with enough time to spare', 'before the last moment'. The opposite is *too late.*

We arrived ***in time*** *to get good seats.* (NOT . . . ~~*on time to get good seats.*~~)
He would have died if they hadn't got him to the hospital ***in time****.*
(NOT . . . ~~*got him to the hospital on time.*~~)
I nearly drove into the car in front, but I stopped just ***in time****.*

For structures after *It's time*, ► 502. For ways of telling the time, ► 325. For *by the time*, ► 414.
For tenses with *this is the first time . . ., this is the last time . . .* and similar structures, ► 56.

to and *at/in* ► 385

609 *tonight*

Tonight refers to the present or coming night, not to the past night (*last night*). Compare:

I had a terrible dream ***last night****.* (NOT ~~*I had a terrible dream tonight.*~~)
I hope I sleep better ***tonight****.*

610 *too*

1 *too* and *very*

Too is different from *very* – *too* means 'more than enough', 'more than necessary' or 'more than is wanted'. Compare:

– *He's a* ***very*** *intelligent child.*
He's ***too*** *intelligent for his class – he's not learning anything.*
– *It was* ***very*** *cold, but we went out.*
It was ***too*** *cold to go out, so we stayed at home.*

2 *too* and *too much*

Before adjectives without nouns and before adverbs we use *too*, not *too much.*

You're ***too kind*** *to me.* (NOT ~~*You're too much kind to me.*~~)
I arrived ***too early****.* (NOT ~~*I arrived too much early.*~~)

Too much is used, for example, before nouns. For details, ► 611.

I've got ***too much work****.*

3 modification: *much too, far too,* etc

Expressions which modify comparatives (► 207) also modify *too.*

much *too old* (NOT ~~*very too old*~~)	***a little*** *too confident*
a lot *too big*	***a bit*** *too soon*
far *too young*	***rather*** *too often*

4 not used before adjective + noun

Too is not normally used before **adjective + noun**.

I put down the bag because it was too heavy. (NOT . . . ~~*the too heavy bag.*~~)

She doesn't like men who are too tall. (NOT ~~*She doesn't like too tall men.*~~)

Let's forget this problem – it's too difficult. (NOT . . . ~~*this too difficult problem.*~~)

In a rather formal style, *too* can be used before **adjective + *a/an* + noun** (► 187). Note the word order.

*It's **too cold a day** for tennis.*

5 *too . . .* + infinitive

We can use an infinitive structure after ***too*** **+ adjective/adverb**.

*He's **too old to work**.* *It's far **too cold to go** out.*

We can also use an infinitive structure after *too much/many*.

*There was **too much snow to go** walking.*

If the infinitive has its own subject, this is introduced by *for* (► 113).

*It's too late **for the pubs** to be open.*

*There was too much snow **for us** to go walking.*

6 *too salty to drink*, etc

The subject of a sentence with *too* can also be the object of a following infinitive. (For more about this structure, ► 101.4). Object pronouns are not normally used after the infinitive in this case.

The water is too salty to drink. (NOT ~~*The water is too salty to drink it.*~~)

However, object pronouns are possible in structures with *for*.

*The water is too salty **for us** to drink **(it)**.*

Note the two possible meanings of sentences like *He's too stupid to teach*:

1. *He's too stupid to be a teacher.*
2. *He's too stupid for anyone to teach – he can't be taught.*

7 *That's really too kind of you.*

In informal speech *too* can sometimes be used to mean 'very'.

*Oh, that's really **too** kind of you – thank you so much.*

*I'm not feeling **too** well.*

8 *only too . . .*

The expression *only too* is used to mean 'very', 'extremely'. It is common in formal offers and invitations.

*We will be **only too** pleased if you can spend a few days with us.*

For *too* meaning 'also', ► 369.

too, also and *as well* ► 369

611 *too much* and *too many*

1 the difference

The difference between *too much* and *too many* is the same as the difference between *much* and *many* (► 165). *Too much* is used with singular (uncountable) nouns; *too many* is used with plurals.

You put ***too much salt*** *in the soup.*

I've had ***too many*** *late* ***nights*** *recently.* (NOT . . . ~~*too much late nights*~~ . . .)

2 *a bit too much, rather too many,* etc

Expressions which modify comparatives (► 207) and *too* can also modify *too much* and *too many*.

She's wearing ***a bit too much*** *make-up for my taste.*

I've been to ***rather too many*** *parties recently.*

However, *much too many* is unusual.

You ask ***far too many*** *questions.* (NOT . . . ~~*much too many questions.*~~)

3 *too much/many* without a noun

We can drop a noun after *too much/many*, if the meaning is clear.

You've eaten ***too much****.*

*'Did you get any answers to your advertisement?' '****Too many****.'*

For the difference between *too* and *too much*, ► 610.2.

town and ***city*** ► 420

612 *travel, journey, trip* and *voyage*

Travel means 'travelling in general'. It is normally uncountable.

My interests are music and ***travel****.*

The plural *travels* is sometimes used; it suggests a rather grand programme of travelling or exploration.

He wrote a wonderful book about his ***travels*** *in the Himalayas.*

A *journey* (more common in British English) is one 'piece' of travelling.

Did you have a good ***journey?*** (NOT ~~*Did you have a good travel?*~~)

I met Megan on my last ***journey*** *to England.* (NOT . . . ~~*my last travel.*~~)

A *trip* is a return journey together with the activity (business or pleasure) which is the reason for the journey.

I'm going on a business ***trip*** *next week.* (= I'm going on a journey and I'm going to do some business.)

Daniel's school is organising a skiing ***trip*** *to the Alps.*

Compare:

'How was your ***journey?*** *' 'The train broke down.'*

'How was your ***trip?*** *' 'Successful.'*

We do not so often use *trip* for expeditions which have a very serious purpose, are very hard and/or take a very long time.

In 1863 the President ***travelled*** *to Dakota to make peace with the Indians.* (NOT . . . ~~*made a trip to Dakota to make peace*~~ . . .)

Amundsen made his ***journey*** *to the South Pole in 1911.* (NOT ~~*Amundsen made his trip to the South Pole*~~ . . .)

A long sea journey is often called a *voyage.*

Note the preposition: ***on*** *a journey/trip/voyage.*

type of, kind of and *sort of* ► 592

(the) United Kingdom, England, Britain and *the British Isles* ► 411

613 *until*

1 *until* and *till*

These two words can be used both as prepositions and conjunctions. They mean exactly the same. *Till* (AmE also *'til* or *til*) is informal.

OK, then, I won't expect you ***until/till*** *midnight.*

I'll wait ***until/till*** *I hear from you.*

The new timetable will remain in operation ***until June 30****.*

2 *until/till* and *to*

To can sometimes be used as a preposition of time with the same meaning as *until/till.* This happens after *from* . . .

I usually work ***from*** *nine* ***to*** *five.* (OR . . . ***from*** *nine* ***until/till*** *five.*)

We can also use *to* when counting the time until a future event.

It's another three weeks ***to*** *my birthday.* (OR . . . ***until/till my birthday.***)

In other cases, *to* is not generally used.

I waited for her ***until*** *six o'clock, but she didn't come.* (NOT ~~*I waited for her to six o'clock*~~ . . .)

For American English *from . . . through,* ► 607.

3 distance and quantity: *until/till* not used

Until/till is used only to talk about time. To talk about distance, we use *to, as far as* or *up to*; *up to* is also used to talk about quantity.

We walked ***as far as/up to*** *the edge of the forest.* (NOT . . . ~~*till the edge*~~ . . .)

The minibus can hold ***up to*** *thirteen people.* (NOT . . . ~~*until thirteen people.*~~)

You can earn ***up to*** *£1,500 a week in this job.*

4 tenses with *until*

Present tenses are used to refer to the future after *until* (► 231).

I'll wait ***until*** *she* ***gets*** *here.* (NOT . . . ~~*until she will get here.*~~)

Present perfect and past perfect tenses can emphasise the idea of completion.

You're not going home ***until*** *you've* ***finished*** *that report.*

I waited ***until*** *the rain* ***had stopped.***

5 structure with *Not until . . .*

In a literary style it is possible to begin a sentence with *Not until . . .*, using inverted word order in the main clause (► 270).

*Not until that evening **was she** able to recover her self-control.*
*Not until I left home **did I** begin to understand how strange my family was.*

6 *until* and *by*: states and actions

We use *until* to talk about a situation or state that will continue up to a certain moment. We use *by* (► 414) to say that an action or event will happen at or before a future moment. Compare:

– *Can I stay **until the weekend**?*
*Yes, but you'll have to leave **by twelve on Monday** at the latest.*
(= at twelve on Monday or before)
– *Can you repair my watch if I leave it **until Saturday**?*
*No, but we can do it **by next Tuesday**.* (NOT . . . ~~*until next Tuesday*~~.)

7 *until* and *before*

Not until/till can mean the same as *not before*.

*I won't be seeing Judy **until/before** Tuesday.*

And both *until* and *before* can be used to say how far away a future event is.

*It'll be ages **until/before** we meet again.*
*There's only six weeks left **until/before** Christmas.*

614 *up, down*

1 'towards/away from the centre'

Up and *down* are not only used to refer to higher and lower positions. They can also refer to more or less important or central places. (Trains to London used to be called 'up trains', and trains from London 'down trains'.)

*The ambassador walked slowly **up** the room towards the Queen's throne.*
*She ran **down** the passage, out of the front door and **down** the garden.*
*We'll be going **down** to the country for the weekend.*

But in the US *downtown* refers to the central business/entertainment area.

2 north and south

People often use *up* and *down* for movements towards the north and south (perhaps because north is at the top of a map page).

*I work in London, but I have to travel **up** to Glasgow every few weeks.*

3 'along'

Sometimes both *up* and *down* are used to mean 'along', 'further on', with little or no difference of meaning.

*The nearest bank is about half a mile **up/down** the road.*

615 *(be) used to*

1 meaning

If a person *is used to* something, it is familiar; he or she has experienced it so much that it is no longer strange or new.

*I've lived in Central London for six years now, so **I'm used to** the noise.*
*At the beginning I couldn't understand Londoners because I **wasn't used to** the accent.*

2 structures

Be used to can be followed by *-ing* forms, but not infinitives (► 104.2).

*I'm used **to driving** in London now, but it was hard at the beginning.*
(NOT ~~*I'm used to drive in London*~~ . . .)
*It was a long time before she was used **to working** with old people.*

Used is an adjective in this structure, and can be modified by *quite* or *very*.

*I'm **quite used** to her little ways.*

3 *get used to . . .ing*, etc

Get, become and sometimes *grow* (► 394) can also be used before *used to (. . .ing)*.

*You'll soon **get used** to living in the country.*
*Little by little, he **became used** to his new family.*
*It took them a long time to **grow used** to getting up in the night.*

4 pronunciation

Note that *used* is pronounced /juːst/ in this structure.

For *used to* + infinitive (e.g. *I used to smoke*), ► 87.

616 *very* and *very much*

1 adjectives and adverbs: *very kind, very quickly*

We use *very*, not *very much*, before adjectives and adverbs.

*You're **very** kind.* (NOT ~~*You're very much kind.*~~)
*The situation is **very** serious.* (NOT . . . ~~*very much serious.*~~)
*I came **very** quickly.* (NOT . . . ~~*very much quickly.*~~)

However, *(very) much* is used before comparatives.

*I'm **(very) much happier** in my new job.* (NOT . . . ~~*very happier*~~ . . .)

For *very* with superlatives (*very first, very best*, etc), ► 207.4. For *the very same*, ► 571.

2 *not very*

Not very expresses quite a low degree.

*It's **not very** warm – you'd better take a coat.*
*That meal **wasn't very** expensive.* (= quite cheap.)

Note that *little* cannot be used in this way.

*He's **not very** imaginative.* (NOT ~~*He's little imaginative.*~~)

3 past participles: *very much loved, very worried*

Before past participles we normally use *very much*.

*She was **very much loved** by her grandchildren.* (NOT ~~*She was very loved.*~~)

*Journey times will be **very much reduced** by the new road.* (NOT . . . ~~*very reduced*~~. . .)

But we use *very* with some past participles that are used as adjectives. For details, ► 96.8.

*I'm **very worried** about Angela.* (NOT . . . ~~*very much worried*~~. . .)

*We were **very surprised** when Dan passed his exam.* (More common than . . . *very much surprised* . . .)

4 *very much* (adverbial)

Very much can be an adverbial.

*We **very much** enjoyed the party.* (NOT ~~*We very enjoyed*~~. . .)

We do not normally put *very much* between a verb and its object.

*I **very much** like mountains.* (NOT ~~*I like very much mountains.*~~)

Very much can also be a determiner before a noun.

*She didn't have **very much money**.*

*Have you got **very much work** to do?*

Very much is not often used as a determiner in affirmative clauses (► 165.4).

*There was **a lot of snow** on the road.* (NOT ~~*There was very much snow*~~ . . .)

For *very . . . indeed*, ► 499.

voyage, journey, travel and *trip* ► 612

617 *wait*

Wait can be followed by an infinitive.

*I'll **wait to hear** from you before I do anything.*

Before a direct object, *wait for* is used.

*Please **wait for me** here.* (NOT ~~*Please wait me here.*~~)

That-clauses are not used, but an **object + infinitive** structure is possible.

*We'll have to wait **for the photos to be** ready.* (NOT . . . ~~*wait that the photos are ready.*~~)

The time preposition *for* is often dropped after *wait*.

*I **waited (for)** a very long time for her answer.*

The transitive verb *await* is formal, and is used mostly with abstract objects.

*We're still **awaiting instructions**.*

For the difference between *wait for* and *expect*, ► 457.

wait, hope, expect and *look forward* ► 457

wake(n) and *awake(n)* ► 389

618 *want*

1 infinitive with *to*

After *want*, we normally use an infinitive with *to*.

I don't ***want to come*** *back here ever again.* (NOT ~~*I don't want come back*~~. . .)

That-clauses are not normally used after *want*, but an **object + infinitive** structure (► 98) is possible.

Do you ***want me to make*** *you some coffee?* (NOT ~~*Do you want (that) I make you some coffee?*~~)

I don't ***want that woman to come*** *here.*

In American English, a structure with ***for*** **+ object + infinitive** is also possible.

Do you want ***for me to make*** *you some coffee?*

2 structure with object complement

Want can be followed by an object together with a complement (adjective, adverbial or past participle) to express ideas such as change or result.

She doesn't want ***him back****.*

We want ***the job finished*** *by Tuesday.*

They wanted ***him dead****.*

I want ***her out*** *of there now.*

To be or *as* is used before a noun complement.

I want you ***to be my friend****.* (OR . . . ***as my friend****.*) (NOT ~~*I want you my friend.*~~)

3 *want* meaning 'need'

In informal British English, we can say that a thing 'wants' (= needs) something, particularly with reference to actions.

That car wants *a clean.* ***Your hair wants*** *a good brush.*

In this case, *want* can be followed by an *-ing* form (like *need*, ► 532).

This coat ***wants cleaning****.* (= . . . needs to be cleaned.)

4 *I wanna hold your hand.*

In informal speech, *want to* often sounds like 'wanna'. It is sometimes spelt like this in order to represent conversational pronunciation – for example in comic strips.

For *to* used instead of a whole infinitive (e.g. *I don't want to, thanks*), ► 280.

want and *will* ► 631

619 *-ward(s)*

Backward(s), forward(s), northward(s), outward(s) and similar words can be used as adjectives or adverbs. →

1 adjectives

When they are used as adjectives, they do not have *-s*.

This country is very ***backward*** *in some ways.*
You're not allowed to make a ***forward*** *pass in rugby.*
He was last seen driving in a ***northward*** *direction.*

2 adverbs

When these words are adverbs, they can generally be used with or without *-s*. The forms with *-s* are generally a little more common in British English, and the forms without *-s* in American English.

Why are you moving ***backward(s)*** *and* ***forward(s)****?*
If we keep going ***upward(s)****, we must get to the top.*
Let's start driving ***homeward(s)****.*

In some figurative expressions such as *look forward to, bring forward, put forward*, the form without *-s* is always used.

I ***look forward to*** *hearing from you.*
She ***put forward*** *a very interesting suggestion.*

3 other words

Towards and *afterwards* are the usual forms in British English; in American English, *toward* and *afterward* are also common.

watch, look (at) and *see* ▸ 575

620 *way*

1 preposition dropped

In an informal style, we usually drop the prepositions *in* or *by* before *way*.

You're doing it ***(in) the wrong way****.* *Come* ***this way****.*
Do it ***(in) any way*** *you like.* *We went there* ***the usual way****.*

2 relative structures

In an informal style, we often say *the way (that)* instead of *the way in/by which*.

I don't like ***the way (that)*** *you talk to me.*
Let's go ***the way (that)*** *we went yesterday.*

3 infinitive or *-ing*

After *way* (meaning 'method'/'manner') we can use an infinitive structure or *of . . .ing*. There is no important difference between the two structures.

There's no ***way to prove*** */* ***of proving*** *that he was stealing.*

4 *way of* and *means of*

Way of is unusual before a noun (except in the common expression *way of life*). We use *means of* or *method of* instead.

The 19th century saw a revolution in ***means of transport****.*
(NOT . . . ~~*ways of transport.*~~)
They tried all possible ***methods of instruction****, but the child learnt nothing.*

5 *in the way* and *on the way*

These expressions are quite different. *In the/my*, etc *way* is used for obstacles – things that stop people getting where they want to.

I can't get the car out because those boxes are ***in the way****.*
Please don't stand in the doorway – you're ***in my way****.*

On the/my, etc *way* means 'during the journey/movement' or 'coming'.

We'll have lunch ***on our way****.* *Spring is* ***on the way****.*

For *by the way*, ► 301.1.

621 *welcome*

Note the common negative meaning of 'welcome to it'.

'Aren't you worried that somebody will steal your car?' 'They're ***welcome to it****. It's more trouble than it's worth.'*

Compare:

Welcome to *London!*
London – you're ***welcome to it!*** (= I hope you like it more than I do.)

622 *well*

1 *well* and *good*

Well and *good* can have similar meanings, but in this case *well* is an adverb, while *good* is an adjective. Compare:

– *The car runs* ***well****.* (adverb modifying *runs*) (NOT ~~*The car runs good.*~~)
It's a ***well****-made car.* (adverb modifying *made*)
It's a ***good*** *car.* (adjective modifying *car*)
– *He teaches very* ***well****.*
I like that teacher. He's ***good****.* (NOT ~~*He's well.*~~)
– *She speaks English* ***well****.* (NOT ~~*She speaks English good.*~~)
She speaks ***good*** *English.*
Her English is ***good****.*

Note that we cannot say ~~*She speaks well English.*~~ (Adverbs cannot usually go between the verb and the object, ► 196.1.)

2 *well* = 'in good health'

There is also an adjective *well*, meaning 'in good health'.

'How are you?' 'Quite ***well****, thanks.'* *I don't feel very* ***well****.*

Note that the adjective *well* is only used to talk about health. Compare:

When I'm in the mountains I am always ***well****.*
When I'm with you I'm ***happy****.* (NOT ~~*When I'm with you I'm well.*~~)

Well is not common before a noun. We can say *She's well*, but it is less usual to say, for example, *She's a well girl.* →

3 *I'm good.*

I'm good is now often used informally to mean 'I'm OK', especially when refusing an offer.

*'More coffee?' 'No, **I'm good**, thanks.'*
*'Want help?' 'It's OK – **I'm good**.'*

For *ill* and *sick*, ► 494. For *well* as a discourse marker, ► 301.3.

west and *western*, etc ► 442

what if ► 599

what . . . like and *how* ► 493

what, which and *who*: question words ► 625

623 *when* and *if*

A person who says *when* (referring to the future) is sure that something will happen. A person who says *if* is unsure whether it will happen. Compare:

*I'll see you at Christmas **when** we're all at Sophie's place.* (We are certain to be at Sophie's place.)
*I'll see you in August **if** I come to New York.* (Perhaps I'll come to New York, perhaps not.)

To talk about repeated, predictable situations and events (in the sense of 'whenever'), both *when* and *if* can be used with little difference of meaning.

***When**/**If** you heat ice it turns to water.*
***When**/**If** I'm in Liverpool I usually stay with my sister.*

624 *where (to)*

To is often dropped after *where*.

***Where** are you going **(to)**?* ***Where** does this road lead **(to)**?*

To is not normally dropped in the short question *Where to?*

*'Could you send this off for me?' '**Where to?**'*

For *where* in relative clauses, ► 233.1

625 *which, what* and *who*: question words

1 *which* and *what*: the difference

Which and *what* are often both possible, with little difference of meaning.

***Which**/**What** is the hottest city in the world?*
***Which**/**What** train did you come on?*
***Which**/**What** people have influenced you most in your life?*

We prefer *which* when we have a limited number of choices in mind.

We've got white or brown bread. ***Which*** *will you have?* (More natural than . . . *What will you have?*)

Which *size do you want – small, medium or large?*

When we are not thinking of a limited number of choices, *what* is preferred.

What *language do they speak in Greenland?* (More natural than *Which language . . .*)

What*'s your phone number?* (NOT ~~*Which is your phone number?*~~)

2 determiners: *which* and *what*

Before nouns, *which* and *what* can be used to ask questions about both things and people.

Which *teacher do you like best?*

Which *colour do you want – green, red, yellow or brown?*

What *writers do you like?* ***What*** *colour are your baby's eyes?*

3 *which of*

Before another determiner (e.g. *the, my, these*) or a pronoun, we use *which of*. *Who* and *what* are not normally used with *of* like this in modern English.

Which of your *teachers do you like best?* (NOT ~~*Who/What of your teachers*~~ . . .)

Which of us *is going to do the cooking?* (NOT ~~*Who of us*~~ . . .*?*)

Which of these *coats is yours?* (NOT ~~*What of these*~~ . . .*?*)

4 without nouns: *who* for people

When these words are not followed by nouns or pronouns, we generally use *who*, not *which*, for people.

Who *won – Smith or Fitzgibbon?* (NOT ~~*Which won*~~ . . .*?*)

Who *are you going out with – Lesley or Maria?*

However, *which* can be used in questions about people's identity, and *what* can be used to ask about people's jobs and functions.

'***Which*** *is your husband?*' '*The one in jeans.*'

So Jessica's the Managing Director. ***What****'s Daniel?*

For relative *who* and *which* (e.g. *the man who . . .*), ► 233.
For relative *what* (e.g. *what I need is . . .*), ► 236.
For singular and plural verbs after *who* and *what*, ► 130.5.

626 *who* and *whom*

Whom is unusual in informal modern English.

1 questions: *Who did they arrest?*

We normally use *who* as an object in questions.

Who *did they arrest?*

Prepositions usually come at the end of *who*-questions (► 209).

Who did she go ***with****?*

In a very formal style, *whom* is sometimes used.

Whom *did they arrest?* (formal)

Prepositions normally come before *whom*.

With whom *did she go?* (very formal)

2 relative clauses: *the man (who) we met*

In identifying relative clauses, (► 234), *whom* is unusual in an informal style. Either we leave out the object pronoun, or we use *that* or *who* (► 233–234 for details).

*There's the man **(that)/(who)** we met in the pub last night.*

In a formal style *whom* is more common.

*She married a man **whom** she met at a conference.*

In non-identifying relative clauses (► 234), we usually use *whom* as an object when necessary (but these clauses are uncommon in informal English).

*This is John Perkins, **whom** you met at the sales conference.*

*I have a number of American relatives, most of **whom** live in Texas.*

3 *who(m) he thought*, etc

In a sentence like *He was trying to find an old school friend, who(m) he thought was living in New Zealand*, people are often unsure whether *whom* is possible (because it seems to be the object of the first following verb) or whether they should use *who* (because it is the subject of the second verb). *Who* is considered more correct, but *whom* is sometimes used. Another example:

*There is a child in this class **who(m)** I believe is a musical genius.*

In cases with a following infinitive, usage is mixed, but *whom* is considered more correct.

*There is a child in the class **who(m)** I believe to be a musical genius.*

627 *who ever, what ever*, etc

These expressions show surprise or difficulty in understanding something.

***Who ever** is that strange girl with George?*

***What ever** are you doing?*

***How ever** did you manage to start the car? I couldn't.*

***When ever** will I have time to do some shopping?*

***Why ever** did I marry you?*

The expressions can also be written as single words: *whoever*, *whatever*, etc. Note that *whose* and *which* are not used with *ever* in this way.

For the conjunctions *whoever*, *whatever*, etc, ► 252.

628 *whose*: question word

1 with a noun or alone

The question word *whose* can be used with a noun as a determiner, like *my*, *your*, etc.

***Whose** car is that outside?*

***Whose** garden do you think looks the nicest?*

Whose can also be used alone, like *mine*, *yours*, etc.

Whose** is that car outside?* 'Whose** is this?' 'Mine.'*

2 prepositions

Prepositions can normally come either before *whose* (more formal) or at the end of the clause (less formal). ► 209 for details.

***For whose** benefit were all these changes made?*
***Whose** side are you **on**?*

In short questions with no verb, prepositions can only come before *whose*.

*'I'm going to buy a car.' '**With whose** money?'* (NOT ~~*Whose money with?*~~)

For the relative pronoun *whose*, ► 235.

629 *whose* and *who's*

Whose is a possessive word meaning 'of whom/which', used in questions and relative clauses. *Who's* is the contraction of *who is* or *who has*. Compare:

– ***Whose** is that coat?* (NOT ~~*Who's is that coat?*~~)
*It was a decision **whose** importance was not realised at the time.*
(NOT . . . ~~*who's importance*~~ . . .)

– *Do you know anybody **who's** going to Poland in the next few days?*
(NOT . . . ~~*anybody whose going*~~ . . .)
*I've got a cousin **who's** never been to London.* (NOT . . . ~~*whose never been*~~ . . .)

There is a similar confusion between *its* and *it's*: ► 501.

630 *why* and *why not*

1 replies

We generally use *Why not?*, not *Why?*, in short replies to negative statements. Compare:

*'They've decided to move to Devon.' '**Why?**'*
*'I can't manage tomorrow evening.' '**Why not?**'* (More natural than *Why?*)

Why not? can also be used to agree to a suggestion.

*'Let's eat out this evening.' 'Yes, **why not?**'*

2 *Why should . . .?*

A structure with *why* followed by *should* can suggest surprise.

*I wonder **why** she **should** want to go out with me.*

The structure can also suggest anger or refusal to do something.

*I don't see **why** we **should** have to pay for your mistake.*
*'Give me a cigarette.' '**Why should** I?'*

For a similar structure with *how*, ► 303.2.

3 infinitive structures

Why can be followed by an infinitive without *to*. This structure can suggest that an action is unnecessary or pointless.

***Why argue** with him? He'll never change his mind.* (NOT ~~*Why arguing*~~ . . .? OR ~~*Why to argue*~~ . . .?)
***Why pay** more at other shops? We have the best value.*

Why not + **infinitive without *to*** is used to make suggestions.
*'Sandy's in a bad mood.' '**Why not give** her some flowers?'*
Why don't . . .? can be used in the same way.
***Why don't you give** her some flowers?*
***Why don't we go** and see Julie?*

wide and *broad* ► 412

631 *will* and *want*

Will and *want* can both be used to talk about wishes, but they are rather different. *Will* is used mostly in 'interpersonal' ways, to express wishes that affect other people through orders, requests, offers, promises, etc. *Want* simply refers to people's wishes – nothing more. *Will* is to do with actions, *want* is to do with thoughts. Compare:
– ***Will** you open the window?* (an order)
*Do you **want** to open the window?* (a question about somebody's wishes)
– *She **won't** tell anybody.* (= She refuses to . . .)
*She **doesn't want** to tell anybody.* (= She prefers not to . . .)
Note that *will* cannot be used with a direct object.
***Do you want** / **Would you like** an aspirin?* (NOT ~~*Will you an aspirin?*~~)

For a comparison between *will* and *going to*, ► 39.

win and *beat* ► 392

632 *wish*

1 *wish* + infinitive

We can use ***wish*** + **infinitive** to mean *want*. *Wish* is very formal in this sense. Note that progressive forms are not used.
*I **wish to see** the manager, please.* (NOT ~~*I'm wishing to see*~~ . . .)
*If you **wish to reserve** a table, please telephone after five o'clock.*
An **object + infinitive** structure is also possible.
*We do not **wish our names to appear** in the report.*
Wish + **direct object** is not normal without a following infinitive.
*I **want** / **would like an appointment** with the manager.*
(NOT ~~*I wish an appointment with the manager.*~~)

2 *I wish you . . .*

Wish is used with two objects in some fixed expressions of good wishes.
*I wish **you a Merry Christmas**.* *We all wish **you a speedy recovery**.*
*Here's wishing **you all the best** in your new job.*

3 *wish* + *that*-clause: meaning

We can also use *wish* with a *that*-clause (*that* can be dropped in an informal style). In this case, *wish* does not mean 'want' – it expresses regret that things are not different, and refers to situations that are unreal, impossible or unlikely. Tenses are similar to those used with *if* (see below).

I ***wish*** *(that) I was better looking.*
Don't you ***wish*** *(that) you could fly?*
We all ***wish*** *(that) the snow would stay forever.*

***Wish* + *that*-clause** is not generally used for wishes about things that seem possible in the future. We often use *hope* in this sense (► 490).

I ***hope*** *you pass your exams.* (NOT ~~*I wish you would pass your exams.*~~)
I ***hope*** *you feel better tomorrow.* (NOT ~~*I wish you felt better tomorrow.*~~)

4 *wish* + *that*-clause: tenses

In a *that*-clause after *wish*, we generally use the same tenses as we would use, for instance, after 'It would be nice if . . .' (► 239). Past tenses are used with a present or future meaning.

I wish I ***spoke*** *Japanese.* (= It would be nice if I spoke Japanese.)
I wish I ***had*** *a yacht.* *I wish tomorrow* ***was*** *Sunday.*
All the staff wish you ***weren't*** *leaving so soon.*
Do you ever wish you ***lived*** *somewhere else?*

Were can be used instead of *was* in this structure, especially in a formal style.

I wish that I ***were*** *better looking.*

Past perfect tenses are used for wishes about the past.

I wish you ***hadn't said*** *that.* (= It would be nice if you hadn't said that.)
Now she wishes she ***had studied*** *harder.*

In informal speech, sentences like *I wish you'd have seen it* sometimes occur.

For similar structures with *if*, ► 245.

5 *wish . . . would*

Would is very common in *that*-clauses after *wish* (much more common than it is in *if*-clauses). Sentences with *wish . . . would* express regret or annoyance that something will not happen.

Everybody wishes you ***would*** *go home.* (= Why won't you go home?)
I wish you ***would*** *stop smoking.* (= Why won't you stop smoking?)
I wish Jack ***would*** *call me.* (But it looks as if he won't.)
I wish it ***would*** *stop raining.* (= It will keep on raining!)
Don't you wish that this moment ***would*** *last forever?*

Sentences with *wish . . . wouldn't* refer to things that do or will happen.

I wish you ***wouldn't*** *keep making that stupid noise.*
(= You will keep making . . .)

Wish . . . would(n't) can be like an order or a critical request. Compare:

– *I wish you* ***wouldn't*** *drive so fast.* (Similar to *Please don't drive so fast.*)
I wish you ***didn't*** *drive so fast.* (More like *I'm sorry you drive so fast.*)
– *I wish you* ***wouldn't*** *work on Sundays.* (= Why don't you stop?)
I wish you ***didn't*** *work on Sundays.* (= It's a pity.)

For similar structures with *if only*, ► 242.
For other cases where past tenses have present or future meanings, ► 46.

633 *with*

1 *trembling with rage, blue with cold*, etc

With is used in a number of expressions which say how people are showing their emotions and sensations.

My father was trembling ***with*** *rage.*
Annie was jumping up and down ***with*** *excitement.*
When I found her she was blue ***with*** *cold.*

white ***with*** *fear/rage*	*green* ***with*** *envy*
red ***with*** *anger/embarrassment*	*shivering* ***with*** *cold*

2 *angry with*, etc

With is also used after a number of adjectives which say how people are feeling towards others.

I'm cross ***with*** *you.*	*furious* ***with***	*upset* ***with***
angry ***with***	*pleased* ***with***	

After words which say how people act towards others (like *kind, nice, polite, rude, good*), we generally use *to*, not *with*.

She was very ***nice to*** *me.* (NOT . . . ~~*nice with me.*~~)

3 *with* meaning 'against'

After *fight, struggle, quarrel, argue, play* and words with similar meanings, *with* can be used with the same meaning as *against*.

Don't ***fight with*** *him – he's bigger than you are.*
Will you ***play*** *chess* ***with*** *me?*

4 accompanying circumstances and reasons

With can introduce accompanying circumstances or reasons (rather like *and there is/was* or *because there is/was*).

The runners started the race ***with a light following wind.***
With all this work to do, *I won't have time to go out.*
With friends like you, *who needs enemies?*

Without can be used in similar ways.

Without Emma and Jake, *we're going to have trouble finishing the repairs.*

5 possession

With is very often used, like *have*, to indicate possession and similar ideas.

There are so many people around ***with no homes.*** (= . . . who have no homes.)
They've bought a house ***with a big garden.***

6 clothing, voices, transport, etc

Note that *in* is often used instead of *with* to refer to articles of clothing.

Who's the man ***in the funny hat?***
Could you go and give this paper to the woman ***in glasses?***

We say *in a . . . voice*, NOT ~~*with a . . . voice*~~.

Why are you talking ***in such a loud voice?***

Note also: ***by*** *car/train*, etc (NOT ~~*with the car, etc*~~), and *write* ***in*** *pencil/ink.*

For the difference between *by* and *with*, ► 416.

with* and *by ▸ 416

634 *worth*

1 *worth a lot*, etc

Worth can be followed by an expression describing the value of something.

That piano must be ***worth a lot****.*
I don't think their pizzas are ***worth the money****.*
'Shall I talk to Rob?' 'It's not ***worth the trouble****.'*

In questions about value, either *what* or *how much* can be used.

What / How much *is that painting worth?*

2 *a million dollars' worth of . . .*

A possessive can be used before *worth* in expressions with numbers.

They've ordered ***a million dollars' worth*** *of computer software.*

3 *It's worth talking to Joe; Joe's worth talking to*

To talk about the value of an activity, we can use an *-ing* form with *worth*. The *-ing* clause cannot be the subject; we often use preparatory *it*.

It's worth talking *to Joe.* (NOT ~~*Talking to Joe is worth.*~~)
It isn't worth repairing *the car.*
Is it worth visiting *Leicester?*

We can also use a structure in which the object of the *-ing* form (*Joe, the car, Leicester*) is made the subject of the sentence.

Joe's *worth talking to.*
The car *isn't worth repairing.* (NOT ~~*The car isn't worth repairing it.*~~ OR ~~*The car isn't worth to be repaired.*~~)
Is ***Leicester*** *worth visiting?*

For more about structures in which the object of a verb is the subject of the sentence (e.g. ***She's easy to amuse***), ▸ 101.4.

4 *It's worth it.*

We often use *It's (not) worth it* to say whether something is worth doing.

If you pay a bit more you get a room to yourself. I think ***it's worth it****.*
'Should we go and see the castle?' 'No, ***it's not worth it****.'*

5 *worthwhile*

Worthwhile (or *worth while*) is sometimes used instead of *worth*, particularly to express the idea 'worth spending time'.

Is it ***worthwhile*** *visiting Leicester?*

Infinitives are also possible after *worthwhile*.

We thought it might be ***worthwhile to compare*** *the two years' accounts.*

Note also the structure *worth somebody's while*.

Would you like to do some gardening for me? I'll make it ***worth your while****.*
(= . . . I'll pay you enough.) →

6 *well worth*

Worth can be modified by *well*.

Leicester's ***well worth*** *visiting.* (NOT . . . ~~*very worth*~~ . . .)

635 *yes* and *no*

1 answers to negatives

In English, *yes* is used with affirmative sentences and *no* with negative sentences. In answers to negative questions and statements, *yes* and *no* are chosen according to the form of the answer, not in order to show agreement or disagreement with the speaker.

'Aren't you going out?' ***'No, I'm not.'*** (NOT ~~*Yes, I'm not.*~~)

'I have no money.' ***'No, I haven't either.'*** (NOT ~~*Yes, I haven't too.*~~)

'Haven't you got a raincoat?' ***'Yes, I have.'*** (NOT ~~*No, I have.*~~)

2 contradicting

Some languages have a special word for contradicting negative statements or suggestions (e.g. French *si* or German *doch*). English does not have a word like this. We often use a short answer structure (► 308).

'The phone isn't working.' ***'(Yes,) it is.'*** (NOT ~~*'The phone isn't working.' 'Yes.'*~~)

Affirmative sentences are contradicted with negative short answers.

'It's raining.' ***'(No,) it isn't.'***

For more about negative questions, ► 218.
For *yes* and *no* in answers to *Do/Would you mind . . .?*, ► 528.

yet, still **and** ***already***: time ► 595

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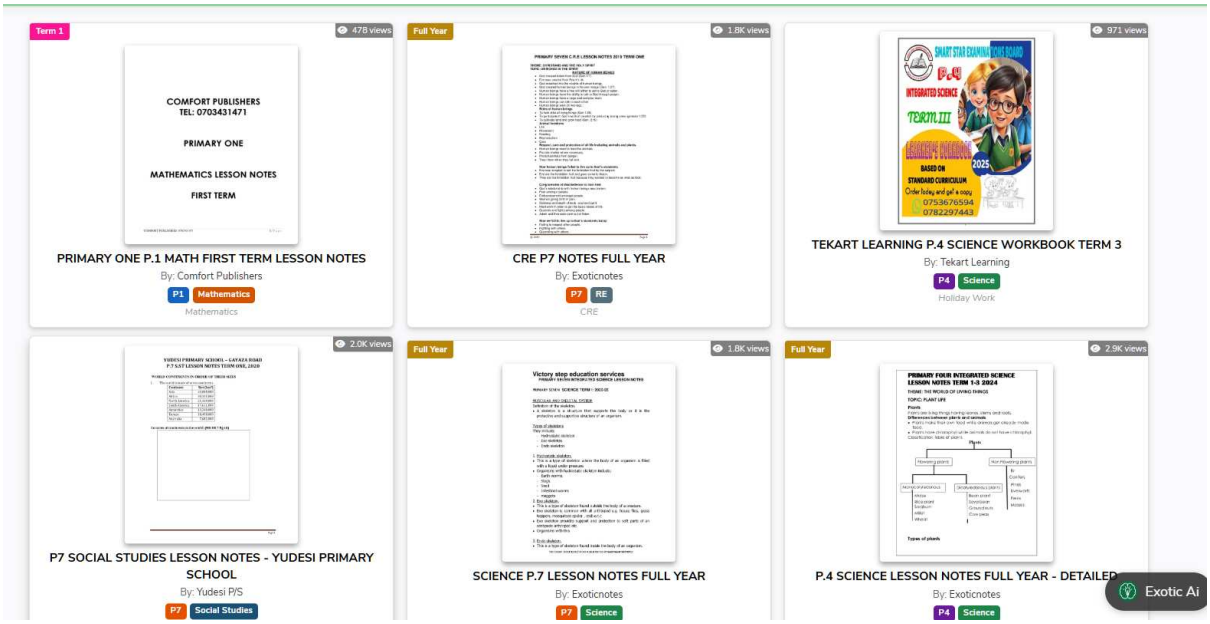
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