

# LESSON 1 INTRODUCTION: THE COMPONENTS OF LANGUAGE

We all use language in some form, and many of us effortlessly combine words to effectively communicate with others. For most people spoken communication is easy, but written communication is difficult. This is because good writing requires good grammar. In spoken communication the speaker uses non-verbal cues such as intonation, pauses, body language, rhythm, inflection and more to help communicate meaning. In writing, however, these cues are unavailable. Instead, we rely on punctuation, proper syntax, and grammar to enhance our communication and reduce misunderstandings.

It is important to understand that while we talk about grammar in terms of syntax and punctuation in this book, true grammar is actually the combination of structures that underpin a language. In this context, however, grammar is a tool through which we can improve our writing. Grammar provides a coherent structure for the expression of thoughts and ideas. By following grammatical rules we are able to compile logical sentences that make sense to the receiver.

We communicate with each other more and more frequently in recent years using mobile phones, internet, and other technologies. For example, we often send email or text messages. Punctuation and grammar help determine the meaning of the message.

For instance, consider the following text:

when we write without punctuation it can become difficult to decipher the meaning exact of a paragraph you cannot tell if something being asked is a question like what do you think it is sometimes difficult to make sense of what someone is trying to get across you would also miss out on things like demonstrating possession like it is janes ball and it would be confusing to see a list such as i like dogs horse cats guineapigs but not snakes

Communication via mobile phone, internet, chat apps, and other digital technologies has become commonplace. In an office environment people often communicate with each other via email. Proper punctuation and grammar help determine the meaning of the message.

## LEARN MORE >>>

### Suggested Tasks

Talk to someone face-to-face.

Try and write out your conversation. Then try to write it down how you should have said it in a grammatically correct way. It is probably very different.

Here's an example just to get you started.

- Hello, how you? D'you fancy going to the pub later? Going about eight.

If you were to write this sentence down, it would be probably be something more like:

- Hello, how are you? Do you fancy going to the pub later? I am going about eight.
- We talk differently to how we write. Give a few sentences a go.

Consider receiving an email with the following punctuation. How does punctuation affect meaning?

Can you finish the report by the end of the day?  
 Can you finish the report by the end of the day...  
 Can you finish the report by the end of the day!  
 Can you finish the report by the end of the day !?  
 Can you finish the report by the end of the day!!!!

Different types of writing have different requirements for formality and accuracy. For example, in formal or academic writing you will need to have a high level of accuracy; in a text or email to a friend you can be more relaxed.

This book is primarily written to help English speakers improve their grammar, particularly in written communication. It is also useful for English as a second language speakers, as a tool to help clarify some of the rules to follow in both spoken and written language. This book as an excellent reference tool that is easy to understand and use.

## THE COMPONENTS OF LANGUAGE

Language is made up of different types of words, including nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections.

- Nouns are words that represent things (e.g. something you can see, touch, hear etc. Nouns can be a place, a living creature, an object, and more.)
- Pronouns are words that stand in for nouns (e.g. “she”, “he”, “it”)
- Verbs are “doing words”, or words that indicate something happening (e.g. “run”, “go”, “appear”, “build”)
- Adjectives are descriptive words – words that say something about a noun or pronoun (e.g. “quick”, “brown”, “sneaky”, “sweaty”)
- Adverbs are words that say something about a verb such as indicating how, when, where, etc. (i.e. they add to the verb – “quickly”, “patiently”)
- Prepositions connect words in a way that denotes a relationship between different words in a sentence (e.g. come home after you finish – “after” relates to both “come” and “home”)
- Conjunctions links different words or phrases in a sentence (e.g. “and”)
- Interjections are words that express a feeling. They add emphasis to the central idea in a sentence, or draw attention to a particular aspect of a

## LEARN MORE >>>

### Suggested Tasks

Read through this paragraph identifying and underlining or highlighting any of the following types of words:

nouns  
 pronouns  
 verbs  
 adverbs  
 prepositions  
 interjections

Profiling – when a crime has been committed a criminal psychologist may be called in to act as a criminal profiler. Many of us have an idea of what a profiler does through TV, cinema and crime novels. Criminal profiling involves a psychologist using his/her understanding of human behaviour, pathology and motivation to try to create a psychological profile of the offender. Profiles can be very accurate. The profiler can use information from the scene of the crime to infer behavioural characteristics of the person who committed the crime. The profiler will also use their knowledge of the ‘typical offender’ who commits this sort of crime and predict how the offender is likely to behave in the future and what their physical appearance may be. Profiling can be very exciting but fortunately there are not a lot of serial offenders around.

sentence (e.g. “wow”, “hooray”, “oh”)

## WHERE DO WORDS COME FROM?

### THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF WORDS:

#### 1. Eponyms

Eponyms are words that are created by naming something after a person – e.g. a place or thing named after the person who discovered it. Alzheimer’s disease, for example, was named after Alois Alzheimer, the person credited with identifying the first published case of pre-senile dementia.

#### Other examples include:

**Achilles’ heel** – after the Greek hero Achilles

**Adam’s apple** – after the biblical Adam

**Asperger Syndrome** – Hans Asperger

**Halley’s Comet** – Edmond Halley

#### 2. Systematically Constructed Words

These are words that have evolved from other languages. They are most commonly created systematically using other words, or parts of (or derivations from) other words, typically from Ancient Greek or Latin. An example of this is the word “dichotomy”, from the Greek *dichotomia*. It is estimated that over 60% of modern English is derived from Ancient Greek and Latin.

## ADDITIONAL READING >>>

Look online or in your library and find five examples of eponyms.



Yet English is comprised of words from many languages, deriving words from Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, and via a host of Romance languages (i.e. languages in the Latin language group). Many other words have simply entered the English language through use or as loan words. These include words such as “pizza”, “lasagne”, “bon voyage”, “bazaar” and more.

## STRUCTURE OF WORDS

Most words are comprised of three parts:

### 1. THE WORD ROOT

This is usually the middle of the word and provides its core meaning.

### 2. THE PREFIX

Prefixes are usually at the start of a word and may identify or modify a part of the core meaning. Not all words have prefixes.

### 3. THE SUFFIX

This comes at the end and modifies the core meaning (e.g. what it is interacting with or what is happening to it). A suffix is sometimes called a postfix or ending as it comes at the end of the word. Not all words have suffixes.

Prefixes can be attached to nouns and adjectives. When a prefix that ends in a consonant is placed before a word that begins with a consonant, the ending of the prefix may be changed to that of the word itself. This is known as assimilation and can be seen in the word itself. “Ad-” before “similis” becomes “assimilis” rather than “adsimilis”.

### A NOTE ON INFIXES

Infixes are inserted into the middle of a word. This may be done to change a singular word into a plural one (e.g. “passerby” to “passersby”). It may also be done to intensify meaning or draw attention to a particular concept (e.g. “fan-freaking-tastic”).

### A NOTE ON CIRCUMFIXES

Circumfixes encircle a word. They use a prefix and a suffix. They are not common in modern English, usually only appearing in “en- -en” or “em- -en” pairs (e.g. “enlighten”). They are also found in older constructions such as “a-caroling” or “a-wassailing”.