

## Module 3 - An Introduction to English Grammar

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## How is your grammar?

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Before you teach any grammar, the ideal thing to do is to learn it yourself!

When most people are asked about grammar, people often say they remember some odd rules from when they were at school or college (usually a verb is a 'doing word' and an adjective is a 'describing word').

Even though we say that we don't 'know' grammar, we use it perfectly every day. We use a set of finite rules to make an infinite choice of sentences and utterances.

The biggest problem is not being able to articulate **when** and **why** we use certain grammar. This is why, for the purpose of this module, we have broken down the basic grammar into three chunks – to make it as easy as possible for you to digest.

## Section A - Grammatical terms

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In this first section we will be considering some useful terminology and looking at the following **word classes**, or **parts of speech**:

- Nouns
- Adjectives
- Verbs
- Adverbs
- Pronouns
- Prepositions
- Conjunctions
- Determiners
- Interjections
- Numbers

These classes can be divided up into smaller classes themselves.

### I. Nouns

Nouns make up the largest class of words and are 'naming words'. They describe a thing, place, living being or abstract idea. For example, a car, a city, a dog, fear.

#### 1. Proper vs common, concrete vs abstract, countable vs uncountable vs group

Any noun is either common or proper. **Proper** nouns are names of people, places, ships, pets, etc. For example: Mary, Paris, Titanic, Fido, etc. They all begin with a capital letter. The rest of the nouns are **common**.

According to another classification, any noun is either concrete or abstract. **Concrete** nouns refer to something that exists in the physical world, for example 'stone', 'air', 'John', 'tiger'. **Abstract** nouns refer to an idea, event or general quality, e.g. 'feeling', 'knowledge', 'strength', 'meeting'.

Finally, every noun is either countable or uncountable. **Countable nouns** can be preceded by 'a', 'one', 'two', 'many' or 'several', for example 'house', 'day', 'song'. **Uncountable nouns** cannot be preceded by those words, e.g. 'sugar', 'water', 'love'.

Some nouns are also called **group** nouns. They are countable nouns that refer to a group of similar objects. For example, 'a team' (of players), 'a flock' (of birds), 'a class' (of students).

Let's look at the noun 'doctor'. It is

- common
- concrete
- countable

The noun 'courage' is:

- common
- abstract
- uncountable

## 2. Irregular plurals and nouns with countable and uncountable uses

Most nouns are made plural by adding -s or -es to the end. But nouns such as woman (becoming women) or mouse (mice) function in a different way. We call these **irregular plurals**. More examples are sheep, child, foot, ox, cactus and phenomenon.

Many nouns have both countable and uncountable uses.

Sometimes, uncountable nouns can function as countable nouns. This is because we can put them into a container. For example: a coffee (meaning 'a cup of coffee') or a soda (meaning 'a glass of soda pop').

As a result, we can order two coffees in a restaurant. When we do this, however, what we are really asking for are two cups of coffee.

## 3. The possessive form

Sometimes we add 's to a noun (or just ' after a plural that ends in s). It is called the **possessive** form. For example, the **bird's** cage (there is one bird) or the **students'** books (there are many students). If a singular noun ends in s, either ' or 's can be added. For example, the boss' office or the **boss's** office (there is one boss).

## II. Adjectives

Adjectives are used to describe nouns, e.g. the **red** book, the **big** picture. Take a look at the adjectives in the following paragraph:

I had a **horrible** experience yesterday. I was getting into a **lovely, hot** bath, when a **huge, black, ugly** spider appeared near the tap. It had **long, hairy** legs and **beady little** eyes. Needless to say, I ran a mile!

When comparing things we use the **comparative** form for two things and the **superlative** form for three or more things.

For example:

A cat is **bigger** than a hamster, but a dog is **the biggest** domestic animal. A chair is **more comfortable** than a stool, but a sofa is **the most comfortable** seating. In this example, **bigger** and **more comfortable** are the comparative form, while **the biggest** and **the most comfortable** are the superlative form.

## III. Verbs

Verbs are sometimes thought of as 'doing' words. They denote action or being, and can also refer to events, emotions or processes.

E.g. He **walks** to work. I **am** a student. He **hated** his job.

If we take the sentence, 'I lost my keys', we can see that 'lost' is the verb, 'I' is the **subject** of the verb, i.e. the 'doer' of the action, and 'keys' is the **object** of the verb, i.e. the thing to which the action of the verb is done.

## IV. Adverbs

Adverbs add information or describe other words, usually verbs. Many adverbs end in '-ly', for example, 'he walked **quietly** into the room'.

Adverbs are a large and varied word class and can be:

- Of manner (she steps **carefully**)
- Of time (I want that ice cream **now**)
- Of place (Jeremy lives **here**)

- Of frequency (I **usually** think before I speak).

## V. Pronouns

A pronoun refers to a noun that has been mentioned previously. For example, consider the following sentences: Roberto phoned earlier. He reckons he'll get here at around 10 o'clock so make sure the kettle's on. '**He**' is a pronoun, and it is used to avoid repeating Roberto's name. In this case, it is a **personal pronoun**.

There are several subclasses of pronoun, but for now just take a look at the three main subclasses in this table.

Personal Pronouns		Reflexive Pronouns	Possessive Pronouns
Subject	Object		
I	me	myself	mine
you	you	yourself	yours
he	him	himself	his
she	her	herself	hers
it	it	itself	its
we	us	ourselves	ours
you	you	yourselves	yours
they	them	themselves	theirs

Some sentences have more than one pronoun as shown here:

- These books are mine (Pronoun: mine, Subclass: possessive)
- You should do the homework yourself (Pronoun: you, Subclass: personal. Pronoun: yourself, Subclass: reflexive)
- I'll see you in the morning (Pronouns: I, you, Subclass: personal)

## VI. Prepositions, conjunctions, determiners, interjections and numbers

A preposition goes before a noun or pronoun and links it with another word or phrase. E.g. I was talking to my boyfriend when we were **at** the pub. He was standing **behind** me **in** the queue **at** the bar.

A **conjunction** is a 'joining word' linking words or parts of sentences together. E.g. I left the party early **because** I was tired. I'll phone you **when** I get home.

**Determiners** precede nouns and quantify them in some way. There are many types of determiners, so take a look at a grammar book if you want to find out more. The most common determiners are the definite article (the) and the indefinite article (a/an).

Take a look at this paragraph. The determiners are the words in bold.

John says: "**An** apple a day keeps **the** doctor away", and I think **that** statement is true, but **your** best bet is not to eat sweets (not **all** children do). As for me, I don't like **any** kind of chocolate.

Certain words express feelings and are often exclamatory, such as "Oh!" or "ugh!". These are called **interjections**.

When it comes to numbers, there are two kinds of number words (or 'numerals') in English.. These are cardinal numbers and ordinal numbers. **Cardinal numbers** are one, two, three, etc. **Ordinal numbers** are first, second, third, etc.



## Section B - Verb phrases

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In this section we will be looking at the verb phrase and considering how it is formed and how it forms the tenses.

### I. Verb types

Verbs, as a word class, are split into two groups. These are main verbs and auxiliary verbs.

<b>Main Verbs</b>		write, walk, go, eat, etc.
<b>Auxiliary Verbs</b>	<b>primary</b>	be, have, do
	<b>modal</b>	Can, may, might, could, would, should, will, shall, must, ought to, used to

The verbs 'be', 'have' and 'do' can be either main verbs or primary auxiliaries. If it is the only verb in a verb phrase, it is a main verb. If it modifies another verb, it is an auxiliary verb. For example, in the sentence 'I have a brother', 'have' is the main verb. In the sentence 'I have met her before', 'have' is an auxiliary modifying the main verb 'met'.

#### 1. Main verb forms

Let's look at the **main verbs** first.

English verb phrases are made by combining different basic parts. This is different from some other languages where verbs are conjugated uniquely for every subject and tense. Unlike other languages such as Spanish, English verbs are not highly inflected. That is, the verbs do not have many different conjugated forms.

English verbs have (arguably) two 'real' tenses (the present and the past), because it is only in these two tenses that we can see the verb forms change slightly (I have/he has/I had). All the other verb tenses are constructed by combining a few basic components.

There are **five verb forms** that combine with each **other** and with **auxiliary verbs** to express different tenses and meanings.

<b>Infinitive Form</b>	<b>to + verb</b>	walk/ think/ forget  Examples: He prefers to <b>walk</b> . She has to <b>think</b> about her future. She <b>wants</b> to forget it.
<b>Present Tense Form</b>	<b>adds the suffix 's/es' in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular</b>	walk/ walks/ think/ thinks/ forget/ forgets  Examples: I <b>walk</b> to school. She <b>thinks</b> a lot. He <b>forgets</b> everything.
<b>Past Tense Form</b>	<b>adds '-ed' or has an irregular form</b>	Walked/ thought/ forgot  Examples: He <b>walked</b> to school. She <b>thought</b> a lot. He <b>forgot</b> everything.
<b>Past Participle Form</b>	<b>adds '-ed' or has an irregular form</b>	Walked/ thought/ forgotten  Examples: He had <b>walked</b> to school. She had <b>thought</b> a lot. We have <b>forgotten</b> everything.
<b>Present Participle Form</b>	<b>adds '-ing'</b>	Walking/ thinking/ forgetting  Examples: We were <b>walking</b> home. She is <b>thinking</b> about it. He is always <b>forgetting</b> my things.

## 2. Primary auxiliary verbs

The primary auxiliaries 'be', 'have' and 'do' help other verbs to form verb phrases and indicate different tenses. These verbs can also stand as main verbs themselves.

We can use the auxiliary verb 'do' to form questions. For example:

- **Do** you **like** ice cream?

Here '**do**' indicates that this is a question in the present tense. '**Like**' is the main verb and does not change its form.

- **Did** you **go** to the cinema yesterday?

Here '**did**' indicates a question in the past tense. Note that '**go**', the main verb, does not change its form.

### 3. Tense formation

Auxiliary verbs, in conjunction with main verbs, are used to indicate different tenses.

<b>Present Simple</b>	He <b>works</b> in New York.
<b>Present Continuous</b>	He <b>is working</b> in New York.
<b>Present Perfect</b>	He <b>has worked</b> in New York.
<b>Present Perfect Continuous</b>	He <b>has been working</b> in New York.
<b>Future Perfect etc.</b>	He <b>will have worked</b> in New York.

### 4. Modal auxiliary verbs

**Modal auxiliary verbs** are used to express a variety of different meanings related with time and mood. They allow us to more accurately express degrees of obligation, ability, permission, possibility, willingness, politeness, hypothetical modes and others.

Here are some examples of different functions of the modal verbs **will/would** and **can/could**.

I **can** play the guitar. (ability)

You **can** leave the table now. (permission)

He **could** have lost it. (possibility)

I **will** give him a call. (intention)

I **will** do it. (willingness)

I **won't** go! (unwillingness)

I **will** have finished it by tomorrow. (prediction)

**Would** you like something to drink? (politeness)

She **would** have passed the exam if she had studied more. (hypothetical past)

## 5. Regular and irregular verbs

Most verbs are **regular**, i.e. the past tense is formed by adding -ed, but many common verbs are irregular, for example be (was/were, been), drive (drove, driven), leave (left, left), put (put, put), speak (spoke, spoken) and others.

## II. The English tenses

### 1. Facts about tenses

Here is some more information about tenses:

- There are twelve tenses in the English language
- Many grammarians view the future tenses as ‘forms’ or ‘structures’ rather than tenses per se
- Each tense has two components: time and aspect
- The times are **Past, Present** and **Future**
- The aspects are **Simple, Continuous** (also called **Progressive**), **Perfect** and **Perfect Continuous** (or **Perfect Progressive**)
- The name of each tense includes a time and an aspect, for example **the Past Continuous** tense or the **Present Perfect** tense. Don't be confused by the word ‘time’ here as it is used approximately, and very often the tense and the actual time of the action do not match (more about this later on). For example, the present continuous tense often refers to the present but may also refer to the future.

### 2. How to identify the tense in a sentence

To identify the tense it is important to look at the form of the verb phrase rather than try to guess what the tense is from the meaning of the sentence.

For example, ‘**I have been to London several times**’ is the **Present Perfect** tense despite the fact that all the person’s visits to London are in the past. We understand that it is the present perfect by looking at the verb phrase ‘**have been**’, since the present perfect consists of the auxiliary verb ‘**have/has**’ and **the past participle** form of the main verb.

### 3. A table of tenses

To view a useful table which shows the indicative form of each English tense, visit:

Tense	Auxiliary verb	Main verb	Comments	Examples
Present Simple	-	Base form	-s is added in third person singular	I <b>like</b> pizza. She <b>lives</b> in Boston.
Past Simple	-	Past simple form	-ed is added to regular verbs; irregular verbs take a special form	They <b>missed</b> the bus. We <b>spoke</b> Japanese.
Future Simple	will	Base form	-	We <b>will rock</b> you!
Present Continuous	am/are/is	Present participle	-	Dan and Andy <b>are playing</b> tennis.
Past Continuous	was/were	Present participle	-	Maria <b>was doing</b> her homework.
Future Continuous	will be	Present participle	-	We <b>will be lying</b> on the beach
Present Perfect	have/has	Past participle	-ed is added to regular verbs; irregular verbs take a special form	Nobody <b>has recognized</b> him. I <b>have seen</b> 'Titanic' twice.
Past Perfect	had	Past participle	-ed is added to regular verbs; irregular verbs take a special form	I <b>had traveled</b> to Leeds three times. We <b>had met</b> before.
Future Perfect	will have	Past participle	-ed is added to regular verbs; irregular verbs take a special form	He <b>will have retired</b> . We <b>will have left</b> by then.
Present Perfect Continuous	have been/has been	Present participle	-	I <b>have been waiting</b> for an hour. Helen <b>has been thinking</b> about it.
Past Perfect Continuous	had been	Present participle	-	Alex <b>had been trying</b> to open the door.
Future Perfect Continuous	will have been	Present participle	-	We <b>will have been working</b> here for a decade next year.

Different aspects are highlighted in different colours, e.g. all simple tenses are yellow. Note similarities between the tense forms, e.g. all continuous tenses use the present participle form of the main verb.

Additionally, there is the form 'am/are/is + going to' which is used to talk about the future and is sometimes referred to as a tense ('**future with going to**'). For example, 'She is **going to look** for a new job'.

#### 4. Guidelines: 'What is usually taught at what level?'

This can vary from country to country, however here is a general guide to what is usually taught at each level. This guide can be used to help you ascertain a student's level during the course. Please see below:

##### **Beginner:**

Introductions  
Colours  
Numbers  
Asking about names and jobs  
Saying where people and things are from  
Yes/no questions and short answers  
Telling the time  
Useful classroom language: Sorry I'm late etc.  
Giving personal information

##### **Elementary:**

To Be  
Adjectives  
Pronouns and Possessive Adjectives  
Present Simple  
Articles  
There is / There are  
Adverbs of Frequency  
Possessive 'S  
Can/can't  
Some and Any  
Capital Letters  
Past Simple  
Present Continuous  
Comparatives and Superlatives  
Adverbs  
Question forms  
'Going To' and Present Continuous for Future  
Prepositions of Time  
Whose?  
'Have' and 'Have Got'

##### **Pre-intermediate:**

Past Continuous  
Aux verbs: be, have & do  
Zero Conditional  
First Conditional  
Quantifiers  
Present Perfect simple  
For, Since and Ago

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'Should', 'May' and 'Might'  
'Will' or 'Going To'?  
'Like' as verb and preposition.  
'Have To' and 'Must'  
Introduction to Phrasal Verbs  
Question Tags  
Compound Nouns  
So and Such

**Intermediate:**

Present Perfect Continuous  
Second Conditional  
Passive  
Past Perfect  
'Make', 'Let' and 'Allow'  
Used To  
Gerund or Infinitive?  
Needn't  
Subject and Object Questions  
Relative Clauses

**Upper- intermediate:**

Third Conditional  
Mixed Conditionals  
Wishes and Regrets  
Reported Speech  
Reported Questions  
Future Continuous  
Gerund or Infinitive? Part 2  
Comparatives. Part 2  
Modals of Deduction  
Despite, Although, etc  
Relative Clauses II

**Advanced:**

Developing speaking, writing, Reading and Listening skills  
Grammar consolidation  
Developments of Idiomatic expressions and phrasal verbs (intro from pre-int level)  
Grammar extension such as: noun phrases, substitution etc

## 5. The perfect, continuous and perfect continuous aspects

Let us now look briefly at the meaning of the perfect, continuous and perfect continuous aspects.

### The Perfect

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The perfect aspect expresses the following ideas:

1. The exact time of the verb is not important:
  - She **has gone** out to lunch.
  - We **have been** there before.
2. The action being discussed happened before another time and the two points of time are related in the mind of the speaker.
  - Jack **had** already **rescued** the survivors when the ambulance arrived. (This happened before the ambulance arrived.)
  - It **will have taken** me 10 years to get my degree when I finish. (Ten years will pass before I finish.)

### The Continuous

The continuous (or progressive) aspect expresses the following ideas:

1. An action/ activity in progress
  - She **is washing** the dishes.
  - I **will be working** then.
  - He **was riding** his bike when the wheel came off.
2. Something temporary
  - **I'm living** in Washington.
3. Something unfinished
  - **I'm working** on a novel at the moment.

### The Perfect Continuous

The combination of perfect and continuous usually expresses the idea of something which started before a specified moment and has been going on uninterrupted until that moment. With the present perfect continuous tense the moment is 'now'.

For example, 'She has been working on the assignment for three weeks'. She started working three weeks ago and has been working until now (she may still be working or she may have just stopped).

### III. The active and passive voices

In addition to the different tenses and aspects, the verb phrase has two **voices: active and passive**. The active voice has the effect of focusing attention on the 'doer' while the passive voice has the effect of focusing attention on the object to which the action is directed.

#### Active

In the active voice the doer of the action is in the subject position. E.g. **The dog** bit the man. 'The dog' is the subject (the doer of the action).

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The active voice has the effect of focusing attention on the subject i.e. the 'doer' of the action.

### **Passive**

In the passive voice the position of the subject is taken by something or someone the action is directed towards (NOT the doer of the action). E.g. **The man** was bitten by the dog. The passive subject is 'the man' but the action was done by the dog towards the man. The structure of the passive is subject + a form of 'to be' + past participle. The passive voice can be used in all tenses, although it is quite uncommon in the future continuous.

## IV. Conditional forms

There are four main types of conditional in English. The form of the conditional clause (also called the if-clause) is different in each conditional. The form of the main clause is also different.

### Present Conditional

(sometimes called the **Zero Conditional**)

If + Present/ Present

E.g. If you **mix** yellow and blue, you **get** green.

### 1st Conditional

If + Present/ Future

E.g. If you **drink** this, you'll **get** better.

### 2nd Conditional

If + Past/ Would + Infinitive

E.g. If I **saw** him again, I **would shake** his hand.

### 3rd Conditional

If + Past Perfect/ Would + Have + Past Participle

E.g. If I **had run** faster, I **would have caught** the bus.

## Section C - Functions of grammatical structures

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In this third section we will continue to look at tenses, structures and verb phrases but we shall be considering their function or use.

As well as different time references, tenses also express different functions.

For example, we can use the present continuous to talk about what is happening now. We can also use it to express future arrangements.

### I. The Present Simple tense functions

Here are some functions of the **Present Simple** Tense as an example.

- Michael gets up at seven every morning. This expresses routine.
- Water boils at 100 degrees centigrade. This expresses general truth or fact.
- Rachel smokes about 40 cigarettes a day. This expresses habit.
- The train to London leaves at 11.30. This expresses timetabled or scheduled events.
- Jane lives in Tokyo. This expresses fact about the present.
- 'Pope visits war zone!' This is used in newspaper headlines to express recent past events.

### II. The Past Simple tense functions

This time, you can see how some **Past Simple** sentences relate to their uses.

- I wish I lived in Paris. Present regret or wish.
- If I had a boat, I'd sail around the world. 2nd Conditional used for hypothetical situations.
- I'd rather you didn't. Polite refusal.
- When I was a child I went to bed at 9pm. Past habit.
- He said he was 25 years old. Reported speech.
- I visited my uncle last week. Completed action.
- France was a monarchy. Past state.

### III. The Past Continuous tense functions

The **Past Continuous** tense can have the following functions:

- I was having a shower when the doorbell rang. A continuous action interrupted by another action.
- At 8.15 p.m. I was having dinner. An ongoing action at a defined time in the past
- I was watching a film and talking on the telephone. Two simultaneous actions

- I was working on my assignment all night. A continuous action covering a definite time period of time

#### IV. Functions of future forms

Look at these sentences using **will** and **going to**. They have the following functions:

- He'll ask her to marry him soon. A prediction
- The dam is going to break! A future event with present evidence
- I'm going to visit her tonight. A future intention
- He'll be 18 on Saturday. A definite future event
- I'll probably go to India in the summer. A future possibility

#### V. Comparing the Past Simple and the Present Perfect

Non-native speakers are often uncertain when to use the Present Perfect and when to use the Past Simple. (American speakers often use the Past Simple when British speakers use the Present Perfect.)

##### The Past Simple

The Past Simple is used to talk about something that finished in the past. The time of the action is either stated or understood through context. E.g. She lived in Edingburgh until 2001. She graduated from Edingburgh University. (while she was in Edingburgh)

##### The Present Perfect

The Present Perfect is used to talk about:

- something that finished in the past but the exact time is neither stated nor implied. We mention the event because it has some significance in the present. E.g. William has broken the CD player. Anna has been to Manchester.
- something that began in the past and still continues. E.g. I have loved you all my life. This is used with verbs of states such as know, have, like, understand, believe, see, etc. Most action verbs require the present perfect continuous to convey this meaning, e.g. I've been working since morning.

## VI. Modal verb functions

As it has been mentioned before, modal verbs can perform a variety of functions. These include obligation, deduction, advice, ability, permission, asking for permission, prohibition, probability, willingness, hypothetical situations, prediction, etc.

Here are some examples:

- Fiona **can** type very fast. Ability
- You **must** be kidding. Deduction
- Liam **should** be here any moment now. Expectation
- You **should** listen to the doctor. Advice
- You **can't** smoke here. Prohibition
- Husbands and wives **must** be faithful to each other. Obligation

Note that there are only three modal verbs in these six sentences, each verb performing two different functions.

## VII. Conditional functions

Conditional sentences have the following typical functions:

**Present** conditional as in If you mix yellow and blue, you get green.

- to talk about general truths, or actions which happen all the time

**First** conditional as in If you drink this, you'll get better.

- to talk about a future possibility/probability

**Second** conditional as in If I saw him again, I would shake his hand.

- to describe a present situation which is unreal/imaginary

**Third** conditional as in If I had run faster, I would have caught the bus.

- to talk about a hypothetical situation in the past (i.e. things which can never be true)