



# GRAMMAR: A QUICK TOUR

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**Prepositions** locate the reader in space, showing spatial relationships.

EG: *at, by, for, from, in, on, over, to, of, with*

**Co-ordinating conjunctions** show and evaluate logical connective relationships between ideas or parts of sentences.

EG: *and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet*

**Phrases** are groups of words that belong together.

EG: noun phrases, verb phrases, prepositional phrases

Noun phrase: a noun plus any adjectives or indexical/pointing words: *this, that, those, a, an, the*

EG: *a book*  
*the dull party*  
*the charitable doctor*  
*an attractive Yaletown apartment*

Verb phrase: a verb plus any modifiers (adverbs) and anything following it

EG: *was purchased*  
*easily jumped the fence*  
*drives 100 miles daily*

Prepositional Phrase:

sentences are called **dependent (or subordinate) clauses** and are typically preceded by introductory words such as *because, after, whom, until, that, or which* (see overleaf).

**Independent Clauses:**

<i>Monica</i> (subject)	<i>visited her uncle</i> (predicate).
<i>Barack Obama</i> (subject)	<i>spoke eloquently</i> (predicate).
<i>A good friend</i> (subject)	<i>is hard to find</i> (predicate).

**Dependant Clauses:**

(introductory word)	(subject)	(predicate)
<i>Because</i>	<i>the hurricane</i>	<i>struck</i>
<i>after</i>	<i>the dance</i>	<i>is over</i>
<i>whom</i>	<i>her uncle</i>	<i>hired</i>
<i>that</i>	<i>he</i>	<i>could lie so unskilfully</i>
<i>until</i>	<i>the Vikings</i>	<i>won York.</i>

Dependent clauses cannot stand alone. If they are on their own, they can be called **sentence fragments** and marked as errors. Dependent clauses also require careful thought to use as a part of a complete sentence; **modification errors** tend to arise because of them.

EG: *With the taste of victory in his mouth, an ankle twisted and John lost the race.* (misplaced preposition phrase/dependent clause).

Also: *To be truly tasty, you should broil lobster, then dip in butter.* (misplaced infinitive phrase)

In both cases, what follows the dependent clause is NOT what that dependent clause is about, but it SHOULD be.

**Sentences:** As mentioned above, an independent clause can also function on its own as a sentence, which in this most basic form consists of a noun phrase and a finite verb phrase (sometime called a predicate). The noun phrase would have uttered a complete sentence. Noun phrases (subjects) and finite verb phrases (predicates) can be quite long too.

Consider: *The capable and enthusiastic linguistics professor* (NP) *gently cajoled her class of trembling undergraduate students* (VP).

And: *I* (NP) *see* (VP).

If you made it to the end of this handout, then you are probably ready to hear that grammar is a fascinating area of *The Scope of Grammar: A Study of Modern English*. Boston, MA: McGraw Hill, 1980.