

ENGLISH

Grammar: Phrases



Phrases

What is a Phrase?

A **phrase** is a group of words put together to be used in a sentence. Phrases do not hold much value in themselves, but they become meaningful when used along with a noun.

Example: Rajiv is a smart boy.

The phrase 'A smart boy' does not explain much when written independently, but it adds meaning when used in a sentence.

Example: Ram wore a turban for the function.

The phrase 'A turban' or 'for the function' does not explain much when written independently, but they add meaning when they are used in a sentence.

Types of Phrases

Noun Phrase

A **noun phrase** (NP) is a phrase which has a noun as its head word. It usually performs the function of a subject or an object in a sentence. It is the most commonly occurring type of phrase. A pronoun can also be identified as a noun phrase in cases where it functions as the subject or object of a sentence.

Examples:

- **Rama** will be going to the market in some time.
- **The fat boy** enjoyed bullying other children.
- **The old man** sat under the old oak tree.
- **They** did not appreciate his disregard for art.

Verb Phrase

Similar to a noun phrase, a **verb phrase** (VP) uses a verb as its head word. It always performs the function of a predicate in a sentence. A single verb can also be called a phrase if it functions as a predicate of the sentence.

Examples:

- Jay **had been kind** to the poor beggar who asked for alms.
- Meera **is** confident that she will crack the test.
- The mat **was** so dirty that the children **threw** it out.
- The sheriff **will help** you if you approach him.

Adjective Phrase

An **adjective phrase** (AjP), just like an adjective, modifies or describes the noun in a sentence. It may occur before or after a **noun** in a sentence. In cases where it occurs after the main verb and in the absence of a noun following it, it stands independently as a complement (C) in the sentence.

Example:

- A **very small book** was lying on the floor.

In the above sentence, '**book**' is a noun and '**very small**' describes the size of the book; therefore, it is the adjective phrase functioning as a **modifier**.

Let us look at some more examples of the same kind.

- The **lukewarm water** did not cure his cold.
- An **extremely valuable ring** was found hidden in the store room.
- The **mildly familiar news** caught his attention.
- A **very old friend** visited me yesterday.
- The **book** lying on the floor is **very small**.

In the above sentence, the phrase '**very small**' occurs after the verb 'is' and is not followed by the verb it describes, i.e. '**book**'; therefore, it is the adjective phrase functioning as a **complement** in the sentence.

Let us look at some more examples of the same kind.

- The **boy** is **too old** for the part.
- **He** was **very proud** of his son's achievements.
- The wounded **puppies** were **very tame**.

Adverb Phrase

An **adverb phrase** (AvP) is a group of words used in a sentence to describe the predicate or the verb phrase in it.

Like adverbs, they answer the questions How, Where Why, When etc.

Examples:

- The thief **entered** the room **very quietly**. (How?)
- The poor boy was told to **sit in a corner**. (Where?)
- The train **should reach** Pune **in an hour**. (When?)