

University of Tikrit

College of Education for Humanities

Department of English



Noun and Verb Phrases

Grammar

Second year

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Phrases, Clauses and sentences

A phrase is a group of words that acts as a single part of speech (e.g., a noun, verb, or preposition) but does not contain both a subject and a finite verb. It cannot stand alone as a complete sentence and it functions as a unit within a clause or sentence.

A clause is a group of words that contains a subject and a predicate (finite verb).

Clauses are of two main types:

- a. Independent (main) clause: can stand alone as a sentence.
 - She is reading a book.
- b. Dependent (subordinate) clause: cannot stand alone; it depends on a main clause.
 - Because she was tired

A sentence is the largest grammatical unit. It consists of at least one independent clause, and it expresses a complete thought.

- a. It begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop, question mark, or exclamation mark.
- b. A sentence must have at least one subject and one predicate (verb).

Noun phrases

A noun phrase consists of a noun and all the words and word groups that belong with the noun and cluster around it. The noun itself is called the headword or head, and the other words and word groups are modifiers of the noun.

Examples:

- The yellow tulips
- The yellow tulips in the garden
- The yellow tulips in the garden which were gaily blooming

In these examples, tulips is the head. Of the rest of the words, the modifiers, we observe that the single-word modifiers, like the and yellow, precede the head and that the word-group modifiers, like in the garden and which were blooming,

follow the head. Most sentence positions that are occupied by nouns can also be occupied by noun phrases. Examples:

- Boys often build dams in the spring.
- Small boys who are not in school often build dams in the spring.
- Jim wanted a car.
- Jim wanted a new sports car with wire wheels which would have a fast getaway.

Verb phrases

A verb phrase consists of a verb and all the words and word groups that belong with the verb and cluster around it. The verb itself is called the headword or head, and the other words and word groups are the auxiliaries, modifiers, and complements of the verb. Complements is the generic term for the completers of the verb, which we shall later learn to know as direct object, indirect object, objective complement, and subjective complement. Examples:

soon arrived
arrived late
soon arrived at the station
arrived just as the plane came in
was waiting at the door
may have been stolen by the cashier

Types of the verb phrase

1. **Simple VP:** Just the main verb (or with a single auxiliary).
She dances. / He is dancing.
2. **Complex VP:** Multiple auxiliaries/modifiers.
The project will have been completed by tomorrow.
3. **Finite vs. Non-Finite VPs:**
Finite: Shows tense (They ate dinner).

Non-Finite: Infinitive/gerund (to eat, eating).

Subject and verb agreement

Subject-verb agreement refers to the grammatical rule that the verb must agree in number (singular or plural) with its subject. This means:

- A singular subject takes a singular verb.
- A plural subject takes a plural verb.

Subject Type	Example Subject	Correct Verb Form	Example Sentence
Singular	The cat	eats	The cat eats its food.
Plural	The cats	eat	The cats eat their food.
First person	I	am / eat	I am hungry. I eat early.
Second person	You	are / eat	You are welcome. You eat late.
Third person	He / She / It	is / eats	She is kind. He eats well.

The relationship between subject and verb (or subject and auxiliary) involves reciprocal changes in form. However, a notable exception exists:

1. Inflected Auxiliaries (Third-Person Singular):

Only be, have, and do take the -s ending in third-person singular.

Example: She has gone (vs. They have gone).

2. Uninflected Modals:

Other auxiliaries (can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, must, ought) do not change for singular/plural subjects.

Singular: He will go.

Plural: They will go.

Singular: The neighbor may help.

Plural: The neighbors may help.

3. Past Tense Verbs:

No singular-plural distinction exists in past tense forms.

Singular: I sang. / The thief ran.

Plural: We sang. / The thieves ran.