

Glossary of Terms Used in **Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar**

Teaching in Primary Schools

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Adjective

A word which describes a **noun**, e.g. shiny, fragrant.

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Adverb

A word which describes how a **verb** action is being carried out, e.g. noisily, very.

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Apostrophe ‘

A punctuation mark used to show possession or to represent missing letters in a **contracted form**. See also **possessive apostrophe**.

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Comma ,

A **punctuation mark** used in a **sentence** to mark a slight break between different parts of a sentence, or to separate clauses in order to reduce **ambiguity** and increase **cohesion**. Primary pupils are taught to use commas to separate items in a list, to demarcate clauses and before introducing direct speech.

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Command

A type of **sentence** which instructs or orders an action to take place. Contains an **imperative verb** which does not need a **subject**. Often a command will begin with this imperative verb or with a **time connective**. For example, ‘Eat your dinner. Next add the eggs to the mixture’.

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Common exception word

A word which does not follow the common phonetic spelling rules of the language, or where the usual rules act in an unusual way. Children have a list of these words which they are expected to learn by the end of each year in primary school.

Comparative

The comparative form of an adjective compares one thing with another. For example, 'My cake is big but hers is bigger'. Usually formed by adding the **suffix** '-er' (smaller, higher, happier) or the word 'more' (more beautiful). See also **superlative**.

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Compound sentence

Formed by joining two **main clauses** with a **co-ordinating conjunction**. The two clauses can stand on their own as **sentences**. For example, 'I like dogs but my friend likes cats'.

Compound word

A combination of two or more individual words that have a single meaning. For example, 'football', 'carwash', 'sunflower'.

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Conjunction

A type of **connective** that joins clauses. **Co-ordinating conjunctions** include 'and', 'but' and 'so'. **Subordinating conjunctions** include 'because', 'if' and 'until'. See also **subordinating clause**.

Contracted word

Short words made by putting two words together and omitting some letters, which are replaced by an **apostrophe**. For example, 'did not' is contracted to 'didn't'.

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Co-ordination

The joining of **clauses** in a way that gives each one equal importance. For example, 'I am seven and my friend is eight'.

Co-ordinating conjunction

A conjunction which joins two **main clauses** to create a **compound sentence** (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so).

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Exclamation

A **sentence** which expresses surprise or wonder, and ends with an **exclamation mark** in place of a **full stop**. Begins with the words 'how' or 'what' and must also contain a **verb**. For example, 'What big eyes you have, Grandma!' or 'How cold it is today!'

First person

A **sentence** is written in the first person if it is written from the point of view of the subject – in other words, using the **pronouns** 'I' or 'we'.

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Grammar

The rules that cover spoken and written language.

Homophone

Words that sound the same but have different meanings. Some have different spellings and meanings but sound the same – for example, 'there/their/they're'; some are spelt the same but have different meanings – for example, 'fair' ('Let's go to the fair!'/ 'That's not fair').

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Noun phrase

A small group of words that does not contain a **verb**. A noun phrase contains a noun plus words to describe it – for example, 'the spotty, black dog'.

Past tense

Any one of a set of verb tenses which describe action that took place in the past. See also **progressive tense**, **past perfect tense**.

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Past progressive tense

Also known as past continuous tense, a form of the **past tense** where something goes on for a period of time in the past – for example, 'I was walking in the park'. Usually formed by adding the suffix '-ing' to a verb.

Possessive apostrophe

An **apostrophe** used before the letter s to show ownership. For example, 'This is Sally's coat'.

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Present tense

Any one of a set of tenses that describe actions which are happening now. See also **present perfect tense** and **present progressive tense**.

Present progressive tense

A tense which describes an action which began in the past and is still going on now. For example, 'I am learning to speak French'.

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Question

A type of **sentence** which asks a question. It either begins with one of the question words (who, what, where, when, how, why) or reverses the **(pro)noun/verb** order in a **statement** - for example, 'Sarah is washing the dishes' becomes 'Is Sarah washing the dishes?'

Statement

A **sentence** that conveys a simple piece of information. For example, 'It is a sunny day today'.

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Subordinating conjunction

A **conjunction** that connects a main **clause** to a **subordinating clause**. Examples include 'because', 'until', 'when', 'as', 'since', 'whereas', 'even though'.

Subordination

The joining of clauses and phrases in a way that links a main clause to a subordinate clause that does not stand alone.

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Superlative

A form of an adjective used to compare one object to all others in its class. Usually formed by adding the **suffix** '-est' or the word 'most'. For example, 'Mia ran fastest on Sports Day'. 'I am hungry, you are hungrier than me, but he is the hungriest of all'. See also **comparative**.

Syllable

A sequence of speech sounds in a word. The number of syllables in a word sounds like the 'beats' in the word, and breaking a word into syllables can help with spelling. One-syllable words include words such as, 'dog', 'cat', 'walk' and 'bath'; two-syllable words include, 'teacher' and 'Christmas'; three-syllable words include, 'beautiful', 'manager'.

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Time conjunction

Words or phrases which tell the reader when something is happening. For example, 'After dinner you must do your homework. Then you can read your book'.