

PHRASE STRUCTURE

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PHRASE STRUCTURE

A phrase (PH) consists of one or more words. Phrases are a combination of words the main constituent of which acts as the essential element. It is useful for practical purposes to categorize phrases into 5 different types. As the denominal word controlling 'phrase' indicates it may work like a noun, a verb, an adjective, an adverb or a preposition. For language understanding they are often referred to as: Nominal phrase (NP); Verbal Phrase, (VP), Adjectival Phrase (AdjP), Adverbial Phrase (AdvP), Genitive Phrase (GP), Prepositional Phrase (PP)

1. TYPES

CONSTITUENCY: [The [efficient] (AdjP) opposition] (NP) [is demanding] (VP) [a more representative government (NP) those days (AdvP)]

[The two (n) intelligent (e) | tramps (h) | who were coming to the University (q)] (NP)

TYPES OF PHRASES (1)			
NOMINAL		PREPOSITIONAL	ADJECTIVAL
NP	GP	PP	ADJP
The (d) food (h) houses next door	Peter's book The Queen's press secretary in a month or two's time]		hot (h) enough (q) so lucky slow to respond guilty of a serious crime good enough subject to approval by someone!

TYPES OF PHRASES (2)	
Verbal	Adverbial
(VP)	(AdvP)
studies (v) has (a)studied(v)	happily (h) quite (m) happily (h) hardly ever fortunately enough very quickly

2. IMPORTANT PROCESSES

PHRASE COMBINATION	Peter (NP) is (VP) in Madrid (PP) with his wife (PP)					
		(NP)	(VP)	(PP)	(PP)	
		Peter	is	In Madrid	with his wife	
SUBSTITUTION		HE	is	THERE	with HER	
DELETION		He	is	there	-----	
TRANSPOSITION	THERE	he	is		with her	
EXPANSION	Here	he	is	In Madrid	with his wife	once more

NOMINAL PHRASES

3. NP'S CONSTITUENTS

NOMINAL PHRASES CONSTITUENCY:	HEAD PRECEDED BY MODIFIERS	HEAD NOUN FOLLOWED BY COMPLEMENTS
[The (d) two (n) intelligent (e) tramps (h) who were coming to the University (q)]	[A house] [these houses] [the house] [some houses] [her gold watch] [Dawn] [nothing] [anything else]	[girls next door] [the city of London proper] [dishes which were eaten by the Director] [the journey back]
NP'S AND FORMAL EQUIVALENTES	The two (n) intelligent tramps (h) who were coming to the University (q)	
	the little girl next door;	
	the food which was eaten by the Director; the journey back;	
GP'S	The tragedy of his mother's death That beautiful house's owner (...)	
	THE QUEEN'S press secretary	
	in a month or two's time	
PP'S	the city of London proper The owner of that beautiful house (...)	

4. THE SYNTACTIC ROLES OF NOUN PHRASES

FUNCTIONS	EXAMPLES
SUBJECT	[TWO WOMEN had come, <...>]
DIRECT OBJECT	[The pilot saw A FIELD ahead]
INDIRECT OBJECT	[They will make HER a birthday card]
PREPOSITIONAL OBJECT	[I don't know whether my brain can cope with ALL THIS]
COMPLEMENT OF A PREPOSITION	[He worked in A SHOP - probably at THAT TIME]
SUBJECT PREDICATIVE	[His son was A GREAT BOY]
OBJECT PREDICATIVE	[They'll probably christen him ALBERTE]
ADVERBIAL	[I studied ALL DAY and MOST NIGHTS to prepare this book]
PREMODIFIER OF NOUN	[The ECONOMIC GROWTH figures have already been <...>]
APPOSITION	[They sing, HE AND MRS JONES, CARUSSO]
PREMODIFIER IN ADJECTIVE AND ADVERB PHRASE	[The story broke all right, but TWO WEEKS earlier than planned]
DISCONTINUOUS NOUN PHRASES	[THE TIME was coming FOR ME TO GO AHEAD OR GIVE UP]

ADJECTIVE PHRASES¹

Adj.P	SYNTACTIC ROLES OF ADJECTIVE PHRASES	
so lucky slow to respond guilty of a serious crime good enough subject to approval by someone	EXAMPLES	SYNTACTIC FUNCTIONS
	[He writes CATCHY tunes with LAVISH pop hooks and HUGE slices of melody]	PREMODIFIER OF A NOUN
	[He's TOTALLY CRAZY] [There were three people PRESENT] [He considered it MORE DANGEROUS]	SUBJECT PREDICATIVE POSTMODIFIER OF NOUN OBJECT PREDICATIVE
	[You couldn't have a BETTER name THAN THAT]	DISCONTINUOUS ADJECTIVE PHRASES [

¹ NUMERAL PHRASES:

[2 +2 TWO PLUS TWO; 225 = TWO HUNDRED AND TWENTY FIVE]

TYPES OF NUMERICAL EXPRESSIONS: CLOCK TIME [It's a quarter past --fifteen minutes past six]; DATES [October thirty-five (1935); July the ninth (9 July); on the fourth of July two thousand and nineteen (4 July, 2019)]; CURRENCY [It's three ten [\$3.10]; TEMPERATURE [It's ten degrees -ten above zero (10º) minus one hundred degree (-100º)]; DECIMALS, PERCENTAGES, FRACTIONS [Point five (.5); It's nought point five (0.5); Four point three O (4.30)]; MATHEMATICAL EXPRESSIONS [Fifteen add fifteen is thirty add one is thirty-one (15 +15 =30; 30 +1 =31)]; APPROXIMATE NUMBERS [THE DERIVATIONAL SUFFIX -ISH: about elevenish; COMBINATIONS WITH ODD: a hundred and fifty odd meals a day; APPROXIMATING ADVERBS: about twenty odd teachers there, approximately 60%]; COORDINATION TAGS: Four hundred or so, 2000 or so, four thousand and something]; PHRASAL AND CLAUSAL COORDINATION [Mother and I saw it; video equipment and a new painting]; COORDINATING TAGS [They are all sitting down AND STUFF; to stay AND THINGS]

PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

PPS	SYNTACTIC ROLES OF PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES	
to town, to him, in the morning in a street with no name three days after leaving Lugo [EXTENDED PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES [exactly at noon, nearly at eleven]	EXAMPLES	SYNTACTIC FUNCTIONS
	[He worked IN A SHOP -probably AT THAT TIME	ADVERBIAL ON THE CLAUSE LEVEL
	[He was a poet, a teacher OF PHILOSOPHY]	POSTMODIFIER AND COMPLEMENT OF A NOUN
	[after an IN-FLIGHT explosion]	PREMODIFIER OF NOUNS
	[I'm not afraid OF ANYTHING]	COMPLEMENT OF ADJECTIVES
[WHAT MORE could a child ask FOR?; What are you looking for?, What age group are you applying to work WITH; what FOR?	STRANDED PREPOSITIONS	

VERB PHRASES²

5. FORMAL DEVICES

VP'S TYPES						
FINITE				NON-FINITE		
AUXILIARIES				MAIN VERB	SIMPLE	COMPOUND
1	2	3	4			
(he) was				exploiting	To go To study	To have gone To have studied
He had	been			exploiting	Going Smoking	Having gone Having smoked
He might	have	been		exploited		
He might	have	been	being	exploited		

The English VP can have a maximum of 4 auxiliaries.

² Verb phrases (VPs) contain a lexical or primary verb as the head or main verb (alone or with auxiliaries and or modals). The first auxiliary has a special syntactic role: the operator. Verb phrases can be finite (i.e. marked by tense and/or voice, tense and/or modality). A VP (finite or non-finite) is the central clause element [I HATE TRAVELLING by myself; stop TALKING]; In English they can be organised in different ways:

- Either CONTINUOUSLY [I WILL DO it],
- Or DISCONTINUOUSLY [Will you do it? I SHALL not ARGUE on that, they WILL always COMPLAIN about it]
- As AUXILIARY-ONLY VERB PHRASES [She realized that she would never leave. She COULDN'T]
- In ELLIPTICALLY
- In TAGS, etc.

ADVERB PHRASES

PPS	SYNTACTIC ROLES OF ADVERB PHRASES	
[hardly ever, very quickly, fortunately enough]	[I thought it was utterly disgraceful]	MODIFIER IN ADJECTIVE OR ADVERB PHRASE
	[She smiled SWEETLY]	ADVERBIALS ON THE CLAUSE LEVEL
	[This is a (modifier) REALLY surprising development; (adverb) REALLY this is a <...>; This development is (ambiguous) REALLY surprising]	MODIFIERS AND ADVERBS
	[the THEN democratic candidate; the long journey HOME was a nightmare]	PRE- AND POSTMODIFIER IN NOUN PHRASE
	[She had only just got back from ABROAD]	COMPLEMENT OF A PREPOSITION
	[I stopped JUST outside the circle of light]	PREMODIFIER IN PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE

6. REFERENCES

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