

# Glossary

**adjectival modifier** A word, phrase, or clause that acts as an adjective in qualifying the meaning of a noun or pronoun. *Your* country; a *turn-of-the-century* style; people *who are always late*.

**adjective** A word that modifies, quantifies, or otherwise describes a noun or pronoun. *Drizzly* November; midnight *dreary*; *only* requirement.

**adverb** A word that modifies or otherwise qualifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. Gestures *gracefully*; *exceptionally* quiet engine.

**adverbial phrase** A phrase that functions as an adverb. (See *phrase*.) Landon laughs *with abandon*.

**agreement** The correspondence of a verb with its subject in person and number (Karen *goes* to Cal Tech; her sisters *go* to UCLA), and of a pronoun with its antecedent in person, number, and gender (As soon as Karen finished the exam, *she* picked up *her* books and left the room).

**antecedent** The noun to which a pronoun refers. A pronoun and its antecedent must agree in person, number, and gender. Michael and *his* teammates moved off campus.

**appositive** A noun or noun phrase that renames or adds identifying information to a noun it immediately follows. His brother, *an accountant with Arthur Andersen*, was recently promoted.

**articles** The words *a*, *an*, and *the*, which signal or introduce nouns. The definite article *the* refers to a particular item: *the* report. The indefinite articles *a* and *an* refer to a general item or one not already mentioned: *an* apple.

**auxiliary verb** A verb that combines with the main verb to show differences in tense, person, and voice. The most common auxiliaries are forms of *be*, *do*, and *have*. I *am* going; we *did* not go; they *have* gone. (See also *modal auxiliaries*.)

**case** The form of a noun or pronoun that reflects its grammatical function in a sentence as subject (*they*), object (*them*), or possessor (*their*). *She* gave *her* employees a raise that pleased *them* greatly.

**clause** A group of related words that contains a subject and predicate. *Moths swarm* around a burning candle. While *she was taking* the test, *Karen muttered* to herself.

**colloquialism** A word or expression appropriate to informal conversation but not usually suitable for academic or business writing. They wanted to *get even* (instead of they wanted to *retaliate*).

**complement** A word or phrase (especially a noun or adjective) that completes the predicate. **Subject complements** complete linking verbs and rename or describe the subject: Martha is my *neighbor*. She seems *shy*. **Object complements** complete transitive verbs by describing or renaming the direct object: They found the play *exciting*. Robert considers Mary *a wonderful wife*.

**compound sentence** Two or more independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction, a correlative conjunction, or a semicolon. *Caesar conquered Gaul*, but *Alexander the Great conquered the world*.

**compound subject** Two or more simple subjects joined by a coordinating or correlative conjunction. *Hemingway and Fitzgerald* had little in common.

**conjunction** A word that joins words, phrases, clauses, or sentences. The coordinating conjunctions, *and, but, or, nor, yet, so, for*, join grammatically equivalent elements. Correlative conjunctions (*both, and; either, or; neither, nor*) join the same kinds of elements.

**contraction** A shortened form of a word or group of words: *can't* for cannot; *they're* for they are.

**correlative expression** See *conjunction*.

**dependent clause** A group of words that includes a subject and verb but is subordinate to an independent clause in a sentence. Dependent clauses begin with either a subordinating conjunction, such as *if, because, since*, or a relative pronoun, such as *who, which, that*. *When it gets dark, we'll find a restaurant that has music.*

**direct object** A noun or pronoun that receives the action of a transitive verb. Pearson publishes *books*.

**gerund** The *-ing* form of a verb that functions as a noun: *Hiking* is good exercise. She was praised for her *playing*.

**indefinite pronoun** A pronoun that refers to an unspecified person (*anybody*) or thing (*something*).

**independent clause** A group of words with a subject and verb that can stand alone as a sentence. *Raccoons steal food.*

**indirect object** A noun or pronoun that indicates to whom or for whom, to what or for what the action of a transitive verb is performed. I asked *her* a question. Ed gave *the door* a kick.

**infinitive/split infinitive** In the present tense, a verb phrase consisting of *to* followed by the base form of the verb (*to write*). A split infinitive occurs when one or more words separate *to* and the verb (*to boldly go*).

**intransitive verb** A verb that does not take a direct object. His nerve *failed*.

**linking verb** A verb that joins the subject of a sentence to its complement. Professor Chapman *is* a philosophy teacher. They *were* ecstatic.

**loose sentence** A sentence that begins with the main idea and then attaches modifiers, qualifiers, and additional details: He was determined to succeed, with or without the promotion he was hoping for and in spite of the difficulties he was confronting at every turn.

**main clause** An independent clause, which can stand alone as a grammatically complete sentence. Grammarians quibble.

**modal auxiliaries** Any of the verbs that combine with the main verb to express necessity (*must*), obligation (*should*), permission (*may*), probability (*might*), possibility (*could*), ability (*can*), or tentativeness (*would*). Mary *might* wash the car.

**modifier** A word or phrase that qualifies, describes, or limits the meaning of a word, phrase, or clause. *Frayed* ribbon, *dancing* flowers, *worldly* wisdom.

**nominative pronoun** A pronoun that functions as a subject or a subject complement: *I, we, you, he, she, it, they, who*.

**nonrestrictive modifier** A phrase or clause that does not limit or restrict the essential meaning of the element it modifies. My youngest niece, *who lives in Ann Arbor*, is a magazine editor.

**noun** A word that names a person, place, thing, or idea. Most nouns have a plural form and a possessive form. *Carol; the park; the cup; democracy.*

**number** A feature of nouns, pronouns, and a few verbs, referring to singular or plural. A subject and its corresponding verb must be consistent in number; a pronoun should agree in number with its antecedent. A solo *flute plays; two oboes join in.*

**object** The noun or pronoun that completes a prepositional phrase or the meaning of a transitive verb. (See also *direct object, indirect object, and preposition.*) Frost offered *his audience a poetic performance* they would likely never forget.

**participial phrase** A present or past participle with accompanying modifiers, objects, or complements. The buzzards, *circling with sinister determination*, squawked loudly.

**participle** A verbal that functions as an adjective. Present participles end in *-ing* (*brimming*); past participles typically end in *-d* or *-ed* (*injured*) or *-en* (*broken*) but may appear in other forms (*brought, been, gone*).

**periodic sentence** A sentence that expresses the main idea at the end. With or without their parents' consent, and whether or not they receive the assignment relocation they requested, *they are determined to get married.*

**phrase** A group of related words that functions as a unit but lacks a subject, a verb, or both. *Without the resources to continue.*

**possessive** The case of nouns and pronouns that indicates ownership or possession (*Harold's, ours, mine*).

**predicate** The verb and its related words in a clause or sentence. The predicate expresses what the subject does, experiences, or is. Birds *fly*. The partygoers *celebrated wildly for a long time.*

**preposition** A word that relates its object (a noun, pronoun, or *-ing* verb form) to another word in the sentence. She is the leader *of* our group. We opened the door *by* picking the lock. She went *out* the window.

**prepositional phrase** A group of words consisting of a preposition, its object, and any of the object's modifiers. Georgia *on my mind*.

**principal verb** The predicating verb in a main clause or sentence.

**pronominal possessive** Possessive pronouns such as *hers*, *its*, and *theirs*.

**proper noun** The name of a particular person (*Frank Sinatra*), place (*Boston*), or thing (*Moby Dick*). Proper nouns are capitalized. Common nouns name classes of people (*singers*), places (*cities*), or things (*books*) and are not capitalized.

**relative clause** A clause introduced by a relative pronoun, such as *who*, *which*, *that*, or by a relative adverb, such as *where*, *when*, *why*.

**relative pronoun** A pronoun that connects a dependent clause to a main clause in a sentence: *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *which*, *that*, *what*, *whoever*, *whomever*, *whichever*, and *whatever*.

**restrictive term, element, clause** A phrase or clause that limits the essential meaning of the sentence element it modifies or identifies. Professional athletes *who perform exceptionally* should earn stratospheric salaries. Since there are no commas before and after the italicized clause, the italicized clause is restrictive and suggests that only those athletes who perform exceptionally are entitled to such salaries. If commas were added before *who* and after *exceptionally*, the clause would be nonrestrictive and would suggest that *all* professional athletes should receive stratospheric salaries.

**sentence fragment** A group of words that is not grammatically a complete sentence but is punctuated as one: *Because it mattered greatly.*

**subject** The noun or pronoun that indicates what a sentence is about, and which the principal verb of a sentence elaborates. *The new Steven Spielberg movie* is a box office hit.

**subordinate clause** A clause dependent on the main clause in a sentence. *After we finish our work,* we will go out for dinner.

**syntax** The order or arrangement of words in a sentence. Syntax may exhibit parallelism (*I came, I saw, I conquered*), inversion (*Whose woods these are I think I know*), or other formal characteristics.

**tense** The time of a verb's action or state of being, such as past, present, or future. *Saw, see, will see.*

**transition** A word or group of words that aids coherence in writing by showing the connections between ideas. William Carlos Williams was influenced by the poetry of Walt Whitman. *Moreover,* Williams's emphasis on the present and the immediacy of the ordinary represented a rejection of the poetic stance and style of his contemporary T. S. Eliot. *In addition,* Williams's poetry.

**transitive verb** A verb that requires a direct object to complete its meaning: They *washed* their new car. An *intransitive verb* does not require an object to complete its meaning: The audience *laughed*. Many verbs can be both: The wind *blew* furiously. My car *blew* a gasket.

**verb** A word or group of words that expresses the action or indicates the state of being of the subject. Verbs *activate* sentences.

**verbal** A verb form that functions in a sentence as a noun, an adjective, or an adverb rather than as a principal verb. *Thinking* can be fun. An *embroidered* handkerchief. (See also *gerund*, *infinitive*, and *participle*.)

**voice** The attribute of a verb that indicates whether its subject is active (Janet *played* the guitar) or passive (The guitar *was played* by Janet).

Glossary prepared by Robert DiYanni.