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**2.Sentence Structure**

**Lesson Three : Phrases**

In a sentence, words do not only act individually,but also in groups.The grouped words act together as a unit which my function as a modifier,a subject,a verb,an object,or a predicate nominative.The most common group of related words is known as *the phrase*

*Phrases* are groups of related words that *do not contain* both a subject and a verb. They act as parts of speech within sentences. In other words, phrases are groups of words that serve as *nouns, adjectives or adverbs* in sentences. Because sentences are made up of *phrases* and *clauses,* understanding these basic elements of sentence structure will help you to create writing that is clear, concise, stylistically interesting and free of errors such as *sentence fragments*.

**1.Phrase Definition**

*A phrase* is *two or more words* that do not contain the subject-verb pair necessary to form a clause. Phrases can be very short or quite long. Here are two examples:

1. After lunch
2. After slithering down the stairs and across the road to scare nearly to death Mrs. Philpot busy pruning her rose bushes

Traditionally *“phrase”* is defined as “*a group of words that does not contain a verb and its subject and is used as a single part of speech.”.*

**2**.**Kinds of Phrases and their Functions**

Certain phrases have specific names based on the type of word that begins or governs the word group: *noun* phrase, *verb* phrase, *prepositional* phrase, *infinitive* phrase, *participle* phrase, *gerund* phrase, and *absolute* phrase.

* Some people classify them as : **Prepositional phrase** (used as *a noun*,an *adjective* ,or an *adverb*), **verbal phrase** ( including the participial phrase, the gerund phrase,and the infinitive phrase) ,and **appositive phrase**.

**2.1.Noun Phrase**

*A noun phrase* includes *a noun* (a person, place, or thing) and *the modifiers* -either before or after-which distinguish it. Its pattern looks like this:

**O P T I O N A L M O D I F I E R ( S ) + N OUN + O P T I O N A L M O D I F I E R ( S )**

**E.g.s.** a-The shoplifted pair of jeans ( the + shoplifted (modifiers) + pair (Noun) + of jeans ( modifiers))

b - A cat that refused to meow

c- A great English teacher

* Noun phrases function as *subjects, objects*, and *complements*
* As said before, noun phrase contains a noun and its modifiers and functions as a noun within a sentence.

**E.g.s** a-*The tree with the purple blossoms* hangs over the sidewalk, sprinkling flowers along the path (as a Subj)

b-He decided to wear *the yellow shirt*. (as an object)

c-With her love of Shakespeare and knowledge of grammar, Jasmine will someday be *a great English teacher (* as a subject compliment)

**2.2.Verb phrase**

Sometimes a sentence can communicate its meaning with *a one-word verb*. Other times, however, a sentence will use a verb phrase, a multi-word verb, to express more nuanced action or condition. A verb phrase can have up to four parts. The pattern looks like this:

**A U X I L I A R Y V E R B (S) + M A I N V E R B +V ER B E N D I N G IF N E C E S S A R Y**

**E.g.s.:** a- Had cleaned( Had = auxiliary verb ; clean = main verb; ed = verb ending ) .

b - Should have been writing ( Should, have, been = auxiliary verbs; write = main verb; ing = verb

ending)

1. Must wash ( Must = auxiliary verb; wash = main verb.

Here are the verb phrases in action:

* Mom *had* just *cleaned*  the refrigerator shelves when Lawrence knocked over the pitcher of orange juice.
* Sarah *should have been writing* her research essay, but she couldn't resist another short chapter in her Stephen King novel.
* If guests are coming for dinner, we *must wash* our smelly dog!

**2.3. Prepositional phrase**

At the minimum, a prepositional phrase will *begin with a preposition* and end *with a noun, pronoun, gerund, or clause* ( i.e. the **"object"** of the preposition) The object of the preposition will often have one or more modifiers to describe it. These are the patterns for a prepositional phrase :

**P R E P O S I T I O N + N OUN , P R O N O U N , G E R U N D , OR C L A U S E.**

**P R E P O S I T I O N + M O D I F I E R ( S ) + N OUN , P R O N O U N ,G E R U N D , OR C L A U S E**

**E.g.s. On** time (On = preposition; time = noun ) , **Underneath** the sagging yellow couch **(** Underneath = preposition; the, sagging, yellow = modifiers; couch **=**noun **) , From** eating too much ( From = preposition; eating = gerund; too, much = modifiers.)

A prepositional phrase will function as *an adjective or an adverb*.Occasionally, a prepositional phrase is used as a noun.

* **As an adjective**, the prepositional phrase will answer the question Which one?

**E.g.** The librarian *at the check - out desk* smiles whenever she collects a late fee.

Which librarian? The one at the check-out desk!

Tourists *from the East* visit the old frontier towns *in the West.*

* **As an adverb** ,a prepositional phrase will answer questions such as How? When? or Where?

**E.g.** He practises *in his studio* ( *Where* he practises)

He practises *with diligence* ( *How* he practises)

He practises *for his own good* ( *Why* ge practises)

He practises *before a concert tour* ( *When* he practises)

He practises *for weeks* ( *To what extent / how long* he practises)

He was true *to his words* ( The adverb phrase modifies the adjective " true")

**2.4.Verbal phrases**

Less common than the prepositional phrase but still very useful to a writer are the verbal phrases : the participial phrase , the gerund phrase ,and the infinitive phrase.They are called verbal phrases because the most important word in them is a verbal.Verbals are so called because they are formed from verbs.In some respects they act like verbs.They may express action, they may have modifiers ,and they may be followed by compliments.In one important respect,however,they are not like verbs.Verbals are used as other parts of speech as nouns,adjectives,or adverbs .

**2.4.1.Participial phrase ( Participle phrase)**

A participle is a *verb form* that is used *as an adjective*. A participle phrase will begin with *a present or a past participle*. If the participle is present, it will dependably end in ing. Likewise, a regular past participle will end

in a consistent "ed" as in ( saved-asked-… .) . Irregular past participles, unfortunately, conclude in all kinds of ways ( eaten-seen dealt- set….) (Check a dictionary for help).

* Since all phrases require two or more words, a participle phrase will often include *objects and/or modifiers that complete the thought.*That is to say a participial phrase*,*is a phrase that contains *a participle* and any *compliments* or *modifiers.*

**E.g.** The student *sitting in the front row* raised his hand to answer the question.

The sculpture**,** *broken during the last earthquake***,** is no longer valuable.

* You can notice that the participial phrase in the second example is set off by commas. This is because it is *a nonrestrictive* phrase. That means that, while it modifies "*sculpture* " and adds detail to the sentence, if the clause were removed the sentence would still have the same meaning.

**2.4.2.Gerund Phrase**

A gerund is a verb form ending in *" ing"* that is used as *a noun.*A gerund phrase is a phrase that consists of a *gerund* and any *compliments or modifiers* it may have.

**E.g.s**  *Driving a car* takes concentration. (The gerund phrase is *the subject* of the verb takes).

Paul finished *painting the ceiling*. (The gerund phrase is *the direct object* of finished).

*After hiking for two hours*, we sat down to rest. (The gerund phrase is *the object of the preposition* after).

**2.4.3.Infinitive phrase**

An infinitive phrase contains *a verb in its infinitive form* (starting with *“to”*), and *its modifiers or complements.*Infinitive phrases can function as *nouns, adjectives* or *adverbs*.

**E.g.s**. Shannon likes *to play tennis*.( The inf.phrase acts as *a noun* i.e. the object of the sentence )

*Exercising everyday* is one way to increase your energy level ( as an adj that modifies " way" ).

*To save money* becomes his obsession ( as the subject of the sentence)

I am too busy *to go to the movies tonight* ( as an adverb that modifies the adj." busy").

**2.5.Appositive phrase**

An appositive is *a noun or a pronoun*-often with modifiers-set beside another noun or pronoun to explain or identify it.An appositive phrase renames a noun and functions as a noun within a sentence.

**E.g.s**: Carol, *my friend from college*, lives in San Francisco.

Margaret Atwood, *bestselling author*, wrote The Handmaid’s Tale.

**2.6. Absolute Phrase**:

An absolute phrase most often contains a noun or pronoun, a participle, and modifiers; however, rather than modifying one single element of a sentence, absolute phrases modify the entire sentence. You’ll notice that absolute phrases (again, most often) have a subject modified by a participle but no verb. You can think of absolutes as “almost sentences” because adding “was” or “were” to most of them creates an independent clause. A second way to identify an absolute phrase is to look for a possessive pronoun (my, his, her, its, our, their) at the beginning of the phrase. You’ll find absolute phrases not only at the beginning of sentences, but also as subject-verb splits and sentence closers.

**E.g.s**: *His study habits thorough*, Alex earned an A in the class.

Lauren, *her mouth watering*, waited for the pasta to cool before taking a bite.

The players staggered into the locker room defeated, their faces showing disappointment.

In the first sentence, the absolute phrase modifies the entire independent clause Alex earned an A in the class.Likewise, the absolute phrase in the second example also modifies the entire independent clause rather than one single element of it

\*\*\* **Easy come, easy go**\*\*\*