This chapter is concerned with one facet of structure, English syntax: how words are grouped and ordered within sentences, clauses, and phrases. For instance, English places adjectives before nouns (e.g. beautiful house) rather than after them (*house beautiful), a feature of English syntax that distinguishes Germanic languages from Italic languages, which generally favor the placement of adjectives after the nouns that they modify (e.g. Italian casa bella ‘house beautiful’).
This chapter marks a major transition in the book. It moves the discussion from a focus on principles of pragmatics to a description of rules of grammar. In other words, instead of describing why particular structures are used in specific contexts, the discussion will focus more explicitly on how particular constructions are formed. At the center of any discussion of syntax is the notion of *constituency*: the idea that syntactic units are not simply arbitrarily grouped and ordered but form identifiable units. Traditionally, syntacticians have identified four different levels of structure at which constituents can occur:

```
sentences → clauses → phrases → words
largest smallest
```

The largest constituent is the sentence; the smallest is the word. Between these two extremes are clauses and phrases, though as will be demonstrated later, sometimes sentences and clauses are identical: a declarative sentence, for instance, may consist of one *main clause*.

There are two different types of constituents: immediate constituents and ultimate constituents. Exactly which elements constitute immediate constituents depends upon what level of structure (sentence, clause, phrase) is being considered. To illustrate this point, consider the sentence below:

Robbin Mayfield and his graffiti-removal crew drive an old Wonderbread truck

(ICE-USA W2C-002)

At the highest level, the sentence itself is a constituent. But within the sentence, one can find several immediate constituents: separate units into which a given structure can be divided. For instance, the sentence can be divided into two immediate constituents: the *subject* (*Robbin Mayfield and his graffiti-removal crew*) and the *predicate* (*drive an old Wonderbread truck*). The predicate, in turn, contains two additional immediate constituents: the verb (*drive*) and the noun phrase (*an old Wonderbread truck*). At the level of the word, the lowest level of structure, we find the ultimate constituents: the individual words themselves (*Robbin*, *Mayfield*, *and*, *his*, etc.). The details of exactly how notions such as subject and verb are defined will be described in greater detail in subsequent sections of the chapter. At this stage, however, it is reasonable to consider why *an old Wonderbread truck* is considered a constituent, but *his graffiti-removal crew drive an* is not.

To identify constituents, it is possible to apply specific tests. One test for constituents that Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 21) describe involves the insertion of a moveable adverb into the sentence, since an adverb such as *probably* can only be placed at constituent boundaries. Notice that in the above example, the adverb *probably* can be inserted between immediate constituents (the subject and predicate), but not within a constituent itself (e.g. between *old* and *Wonderbread*):
Robbin Mayfield and his graffiti-removal crew probably drive an old Wonderbread truck

*Robbin Mayfield and his graffiti-removal crew drive an old probably Wonderbread truck [an asterisk placed before a sentence indicates that the sentence is ungrammatical]

Other tests for constituency include whether one word can be substituted for another (e.g. a pronoun for a noun) and which constructions can be moved when systematic changes are made to a sentence. In the example below, the pronouns it and them could be substituted for the first and last part of the sentence, indicating that these two parts of the sentence are constituents, specifically noun phrases:

One of the best known models was constructed by J. A. Howard and J. Sheth

(BNC G3F 1121)

It was constructed by them

This example is also in the passive voice. If the sentence is changed to the active voice, the noun phrase following by is moved to the subject position in the sentence:

J. A. Howard and J. Sheth constructed one of the best known models

If the original sentence is made into a question, the subject switches places with the verb was:

Was one of the best known models constructed by J. A. Howard and J. Sheth?

What insertion, substitution, and movement tests illustrate is that at the level of syntax, certain structures form units but others do not. Those structures that do form units are not an arbitrary and ad hoc collection of constructions, but constructions that can be assigned formal grammatical descriptions – descriptions that identify a finite set of grammatical constructions that form the building blocks of English syntax. The remainder of this chapter describes and defines these constructions. But before the constructions are defined, it is necessary to describe the two primary ways that grammatical categories are defined.

### Formal vs. notional definitions

Grammatical descriptions are of two types: formal or notional. Formal descriptions focus on specific characteristics of a grammatical construction. For instance, the word *truck* in English can be classified as a noun because it shares with many (but not all) nouns in English the ability to be pluralized by the addition of orthographic *s: trucks*. Notional definitions, in contrast, are more semantic in nature and define constructions in terms of general qualities that they possess. Notionally, nouns are defined as anything that is a person, place, thing, or idea. *Truck* is a noun because it is a “thing.”
Modern linguistics favors formal over notional definitions, largely because formal descriptions provide a better means of identifying constructions than notional descriptions. As an illustration of this point, consider the opening lines of Lewis Carroll’s *Jabberwocky*:

’Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.

This poem is often cited as evidence that when readers or listeners parse sentences (i.e. identify nouns, verbs, and so forth), they rely not on notional definitions of grammatical categories but on formal definitions instead. Because readers unfamiliar with the poem will not know what *toves* means, they will be unable to determine whether it is a person, place, thing, or idea. Instead, they will have to rely on more formal criteria: *toves* ends in the plural marker *-s* and follows the adjective *slithy*. And even though readers will also not know what *slithy* means, they will be able to identify it as an adjective because it follows the article *the*; precedes the noun *toves*, the precise position in the noun phrase where adjectives in English typically occur; and ends in *-y*, a word ending associated with adjectives (e.g. *filthy* and *hefty*). Now, there may seem to be considerable circularity in the reasoning here: both *slithy* and *toves* are simultaneously interpreted as an adjective and noun, respectively. But this is the essence of syntactic analysis: how constructions are parsed depends crucially upon where they occur in a sentence or clause in relation to other constructions.

While some kind of notional, or semantic, analysis can complement purely formal analyses, notional analyses alone are way too vague to provide definitive definitions of grammatical constructions. For instance, in many notional grammars, verbs are characterized as expressing either action (e.g. *walk*, *talk*, *run*) or a state of being (e.g. *am* as in *I am tired*). However, while this definition works in many cases, in some instances it leads to an incorrect analysis. The word *handshake* expresses an action: the movement of hands involved in the act of shaking someone’s hand. But this word is not a verb but a noun, a determination that can be reached on purely formal grounds. In the example below, although *handshake* cannot be pluralized, it occurs after the possessive pronoun *His*, which occurs in the same position prior to the noun that the article *the* does:

His handshake was dry and firm and his smile reached his clear grey eyes.  

*(ICE-GB W2F-004 061)*

Because notional definitions do not always yield correct analyses, most linguists rely primarily on formal definitions of grammatical constructions, a methodology that will be followed throughout this chapter.
If notional definitions are so problematic, it is worth asking why they persist. One reason is that they have a long tradition in English grammar, largely because grammars of English are based on the terminology found in classical Greek and Roman grammars. For instance, the notional definition of a sentence as a “complete thought” can be traced back to Dionysius Thrax’s Greek grammar written ca. 100 BC. Linguists of the modern era have modified this terminology as a result of advances in linguistic science and the need to have terminology that describes languages that are very different from Greek, Latin, English, and other Indo-European languages— the languages upon which traditional grammar is based. Thus, many of the modern, more scholarly grammars of English, such as Randolph Quirk et al.’s (1985) A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language; Rodney Huddleston and Geoffre Pullum’s (2002) The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language; and Douglas Biber et al.’s (1999) The Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English, will contain a mixture of more traditional and more recent terminology.

Advances in linguistics, however, have led to the development of a fairly extensive and sophisticated vocabulary of linguistic terms—terms that are far too advanced for the potential audience for discussions of English grammar. Hence, notional definitions persist in many school grammars. School grammars are different from scholarly grammars in that they are written for school-age children and young adults. They contain primarily notional definitions because it is thought that more formally based definitions are too advanced for students at this level: simple and straightforward definitions are more important than those that are theoretically more accurate. This trade-off has led to considerable controversy among educators, since there is extensive evidence that students taught purely notional definitions never fully learn grammar. Moreover, in the study of foreign languages, notional definitions become even less valuable: to learn how gender is marked in Spanish or French, for instance, one needs formal knowledge of articles and of gender endings for nouns. Notional definitions of gender will not suffice in this instance, since beginning learners of languages do not know enough vocabulary to be able to determine, for instance, whether something is a person, place, thing, or idea.

### The linear and hierarchical structuring of constituents

English has constraints on both the linear ordering of constituents and on their hierarchical groupings. As an illustration of the difference between the linear and hierarchical nature of syntax, consider the expression foreign language specialist, which exemplifies the notion of structural ambiguity: two different meanings depending upon how the words in the expression are grouped.
How foreign language specialist is interpreted depends not just on how the words are ordered but upon whether language is grouped with foreign or specialist, as schematized in (a) and (b) below:

(a)

foreign  language  specialist

(b)

foreign  language  specialist

In (a), because foreign and language are grouped, the phrase has the meaning of ‘a specialist in foreign languages.’ In (b), in contrast, the grouping of language and specialist creates the meaning of ‘a language specialist who is foreign-born.’

Groupings of this nature constitute the core of English syntax, and along with constraints on the linear order of constituents, they allow linguists to describe the form and function of various kinds of constructions in English, from the sentence down to the word.

Form and function

Constituents can be described in terms of their form and their function. In the clause The child is healthy, healthy has the form of an adjective phrase and the function of a subject complement. The form of some constituents can be determined by the particular suffixes that they contain as well as their positions relative to other constituents. Healthy contains an ending, -y, that is used to convert nouns to adjectives. Thus, healthy is derived from health, tasty from taste, wealthy from wealth, and so forth. Healthy is also a predicative rather than an attributive adjective: it occurs following the linking verb is rather than directly before the noun, as in the healthy child. Healthy is functioning in the clause as a subject complement because it follows the linking verb is and describes the subject of the sentence, the child.

The kinds of criteria applied above to identify adjectives and subject complements can be applied to all forms and functions in English. Such an analysis reveals that constituents have forms at all four levels of structure:

Word Classes: noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, etc.
Phrases: noun phrase, verb phrase, adjective phrase, adverb phrase, prepositional phrase
Clauses: main, dependent
Sentences: declarative, interrogative, imperative, exclamatory

While all types of phrases, clauses, and sentences are given in the list above, only a sampling of word classes is given, since additional classes exist in English (e.g. articles, pronouns, conjunctions).
English has far fewer functions, and these functions are restricted to elements occurring within clauses (both main and subordinate). Thus, the functions below are often referred to as clause functions:

Subject
Predicator
Complement (subject and object)
Object (direct and indirect)
Adverbial

Since constituent forms and functions are key components of syntax, the next two sections provide an overview of some of the important form classes in English and the particular clause functions that these particular forms can have.

**Word classes and phrases**

Word classes and phrases are very closely linked. First of all, a phrase is named after the word class that acts as head of the phrase. A head is a word upon which everything in a phrase is centered. In a phrase such as full of hope, for instance, all parts of the phrase are associated with the adjective full. Therefore, this construction is called an adjective phrase. Likewise, in the phrase might have mattered, everything is associated with the lexical verb mattered, making this a verb phrase. In fact, word classes and phrases are so closely linked that there are cases where a single word can constitute a phrase. In the sentence Necessity is the mother of invention, necessity is both a noun and a noun phrase. It is a noun, as will be demonstrated in the section immediately below, because it contains the suffix -ity, one of a series of suffixes that occur on nouns. It is a noun phrase because it is functioning as subject of the sentence, one key function of noun phrases that will be described more fully in a later section on clause functions.

To describe both word classes and phrases, the discussion in this section will focus on two of the more important phrase types – noun phrases and verb phrases – and the other types of phrases (such as prepositional phrases) that can occur within them.

**Noun phrases**

All noun phrases (NPs) are centered on either a head noun or pronoun (more on pronouns later in this section). One key characteristic of nouns is that most exhibit number: they have a singular or plural form often marked in writing by orthographic s. (In speech, as will be demonstrated in Chapter 7, there are actually three different pronunciations of -s.) However, as Table 5.1 illustrates, not all nouns fit into this pattern.

Nouns have traditionally been distinguished as being count or non-count. Count nouns are literally “countable”: we can think of a table as either a single (one) or plural (more than one) entity. Although most count nouns take the regular plural ending, some like ox take an irregular plural ending (oxen); others exhibit a change in vowel going from the singular to
the plural: singular *goose*, for instance, becomes plural *geese*. Typically, the examples in this category preserve forms going back to Old English: -en ended a number of nouns during this era; the vowel changes, resulting from the process of umlauting, were common too. Number can also be marked by:

- Singular and plural forms borrowed from other languages. The endings on singular *criterion* and plural *criteria*, for instance, were borrowed into English from Ancient Greek. Sometimes borrowings of this type will have both regular and irregular forms: *concerto* was borrowed into English from Italian and can either be pluralized with English -s (*concertos*) or Italian -i (*concerti*). Sometimes borrowed forms have lost their foreign suffix and become a regular English plural: although *gymnasium* was borrowed from Latin, it is more common to see *gymnasiaums* than *gymnasia*.

- No overt plural markers at all (e.g. one *deer*, two *deer*). Occasionally, nouns in this category will have a regular plural form too. For instance, biologists often use *fishes* rather than *fish*.

- No singular, but only a plural form (e.g. *scissors* but not *scissor*). These forms are generally found on objects having two parts, such as the two blades on a pair of scissors, or the two legs on a pair of pants.

There are also non-count nouns, which make no distinction between a singular or plural form. Thus, it is possible to talk of *furniture* – which would include a group of items, such as chairs, couches, beds, etc. – but not *furnitures. Some nouns have both count and non-count forms. In the first example below, *water* is a non-count noun, since it is being used to describe a liquid of unknown quantity:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.1. Count and non-count nouns in English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Count Nouns</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• regular plural marker: -s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• archaic plural marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• borrowed plural marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• same form for singular and plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• no singular form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-count Nouns</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Medical care was virtually non-existent, food and water often withheld, and torture rife.

(BNC AO3 224)

In the next example, however, because waters refers to more than one lake or river, it is being used as a count noun in this context:

The northern squawfish ... has caused substantial depletions of juvenile salmonids in various waters

(ICE-USA-W2A-022)

Nouns can also be marked by various suffixes. For instance, the suffix -ion can be added to verbs to form an abstract noun called a nominalization: create → creation or fascinate → fascination. Other noun suffixes include -er or -or, which are added to verbs to create nouns for someone who does something (e.g. wait → waiter, act → actor), and -ence or -ance, which are also added to verbs to create nouns (exist → existence, tolerate → tolerance). Other nouns, particularly those that are animate, can take possessive ‘s: the man’s watch, the teacher’s book.

Personal pronouns in English, which can also serve as the head of a noun phrase, make distinctions not found on nouns. Table 5.2 lists the various forms that personal pronouns take in English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Subjective</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Reflexive</th>
<th>Possessive</th>
<th>Indefinite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>I (sg.)</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>myself</td>
<td>my/mine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>we (pl.)</td>
<td>us</td>
<td>ourselves</td>
<td>our/ours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>you (sg. and pl.)</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>yourselves</td>
<td>your/yours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>he, she, it (sg.)</td>
<td>him, her, it</td>
<td>himself, herself, itself</td>
<td>his, her(s), its their(s)</td>
<td>somebody, someone, everyone, all, none</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Like nouns, most personal pronouns (with the exception of you) are marked for number (e.g. singular she, plural them). The pronoun you is quite anomalous in this regard. It appears to be marked only for plural number because it always takes a plural verb:

And you are Mrs McDougall?

(BNC CKF 214)

However, in the example above, you is clearly being directed toward a single individual. In earlier periods, English did have both a singular and plural form, but over time the distinction was lost. To explicitly pluralize you in Modern English, it is only possible to use a circumlocution such as all of you:
First of all I’d like to thank all of you for agreeing to be on the committee, reading the draft, and coming to the defense.

(MICASE DEF500SF016)

Plural forms of you do exist, but in restricted contexts: y’all in Southern varieties of American English, and youse in some non-standard varieties of English.

Pronouns make many more distinctions than nouns:

- Pronouns have three persons. First person pronouns are directed towards the speaker or writer, second person pronouns toward the addressee, and third person pronouns to someone or something being discussed.
- First and third person pronouns have subjective and objective forms – the second person pronoun you does not. The subjective forms are used when the pronouns are functioning as subject of a clause (e.g. I like pizza, She jogs daily). The objective forms are used when the pronouns are functioning as objects in a clause or as objects of prepositions (e.g. My mother called us, The burden of proof is on them).
- All pronouns have reflexive and possessive forms. Reflexive pronouns refer back to a co-referential noun or pronoun, as in The children amused themselves or We must remind ourselves to arrive early tomorrow. Possessive forms occur either before a head noun in a noun phrase (e.g. my book, your watch) or as head of a noun phrase (e.g. That cookie is mine, Those glasses must be hers).
- Indefinite pronouns, such as someone or none, occur only in the third person and have only a single form. Unlike first and second person pronouns, they do not change form in subject or object positions.

The internal structure of noun phrases. While it is possible for a noun phrase to contain only a single head noun or pronoun, other form classes can optionally occur before or after the head noun. The diagram below schematizes some common form classes occurring in noun phrases and their positions relative to the head noun:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Determinative Phrases</th>
<th>Adjective Phrases</th>
<th>Head Noun</th>
<th>Prepositional Phrases/Relative Clauses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the</td>
<td>expensive</td>
<td>house</td>
<td>on the hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>every</td>
<td>beautiful</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>that we visited</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first position in the noun phrase contains a class of words called determinatives (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 368–99), which are part of determinative phrases. These words include the articles (a, an, and the), demonstratives (e.g. this, that, these, those), indefinite pronouns (e.g. all, every, most, many), and cardinal numbers (e.g. one, two, three).

The second position (if the noun phrase contains a determinative phrase) is occupied by adjective phrases, which immediately precede the head noun. Like nouns, adjectives can sometimes be identified by the suffixes that they contain. Degree adjectives (i.e. adjectives that can be measured on
a scale) that are one or two syllables in length will have comparative and superlative forms ending in, respectively, -er and -est: small, smaller, smallest; nice, nicer, nicest. Adjectives that are lengthier will take more or most instead: beautiful, more beautiful, most beautiful; conservative, more conservative, most conservative. Adjectives also sometimes have suffixes found only on adjectives, such as -ic (e.g. electric, fantastic, diabetic), -able (e.g. reasonable, comfortable, tolerable), -ive (e.g. festive, conductive, restive), or -al (e.g. diabolical, rational, seasonal).

In the examples in the diagram above, adjective phrases consist of a single adjective. However, it is also possible for adjective phrases to contain more than one adjective as head, as is the case with quick and just preceding victory in the example below:

It was in the U-S government’s interest to present Desert Storm as a quick and just victory

(MICASE LEL220JU071)

The head adjective can also be preceded by an intensifying adverb, such as very or somewhat:

The people in the wheelchairs in the group are already very proficient dancers.

(ICE-GB S1A-001 076)

This somewhat idiosyncratic interpretation is no doubt coloured by the specificities of French history

(BNC AOK 21)

The final position in the noun phrase, which follows the head noun, can optionally contain either a prepositional phrase or a relative clause (a type of clause discussed in a later section on subordinate clauses). Unlike nouns and adjectives, prepositions have no particular form: no suffix, for instance, that uniquely marks a word as a preposition. In addition, prepositions cannot usually stand alone but require an object, typically a noun phrase such as the hill, in on the hill, but also clauses. In the first example below, the preposition in is followed by a clause beginning with keeping. In the second example, of is followed by a clause beginning with what:

It plays a key role in keeping city streets on the move and is even the object of the best modern designers’ desire.

(BNC A3M 67)

So we have this idea of how well they’re closing and opening.

(ICE-GB S2A-056 056)

The semantic classes in which prepositions can be classified are quite complex. Two of the more basic meanings that prepositions express are time and location. In on the hill, on specifies location. In other contexts, however, it can express time: on time, on my birthday. Other prepositions can likewise express both time and space: in a moment/in the garden; at noon/at my father’s house; by tomorrow/by the bookcase. However, while these meanings are easy to discern, others are more difficult. For instance, the preposition in preceding keeping city streets on the move in the above example has no easily
identifiable meaning. Instead, its use is more a consequence of its following the head noun *role*, which purely for reasons of idiom takes the preposition *in*. English contains many idiomatic combinations of prepositions with nouns, verbs, and adjectives. Table 5.3 contains some examples. Of course, this is a mere sampling of the various idiomatic combinations represented in the table. Verb–preposition combinations are so common in English that they are sometimes referred to as phrasal verbs or prepositional verbs. One difference between the two constructions is that while the preposition can be moved in a phrasal verb –

I’ve got to **take down** all that wallpaper.

(\text{CIC})

... **take** all that wallpaper **down**.

– in a prepositional verb, it cannot:

She **looked** at Ethel, who had secured a notebook and pencil.

(BNC AOD 2249)

"She looked Ethel at, ..."

**Embedding and recursion.** The occurrence of a prepositional phrase within a noun phrase is one example of a more general phenomenon in syntax, **embedding**: the inclusion of one structure within another structure. The noun phrase below contains multiple instances of embedding:

... acts of successful mob violence against the authority of the church and nobility

(ICE-USA W2A-001)

The head noun of the phrase, *acts*, is followed by an embedded prepositional phrase beginning with *of*. This prepositional phrase, in turn, contains an embedded noun phrase, *successful mob violence*. Embedded in the head of this noun phrase, *mob violence*, is another prepositional phrase beginning with *against*, whose object, *the authority*, contains an additional embedded prepositional phrase: *of the church and nobility*.

The process of repeatedly embedding similar structures in other structures is known as **recursion**. In theory, recursion is potentially endless,
since in an example such as the one above, one could embed prepositional phrases in noun phrases *ad infinitum*. In practice, however, there are obvious limitations on embedding: excessive embedding leads to lengthy constructions that are not just stylistically awkward but difficult to interpret.

**The verb phrase**

In general, linguists and grammarians have offered fairly similar definitions of the noun phrase. However, there are two varying perspectives on the verb phrase: one providing a relatively constrained definition of the verb phrase, the other a more expansive definition.

For Quirk *et al.* (1985), the verb phrase contains two components: an obligatory **lexical verb** (or “full verb,” to use their terminology), which acts as head of the verb phrase, and one or more optional **auxiliary verbs**.

If there are any auxiliary verbs in the verb phrase, they will always precede the lexical verb, with **modal auxiliaries** coming first and **primary auxiliaries** second. In the example below, the verb phrase begins with the modal auxiliary *can*, which is followed by the primary auxiliary *be* and then the lexical verb *read*:

Certainly, a lot **can be read** into a hairstyle.

*(BNC A7N 698)*

Lexical verbs are an **open class** – new lexical verbs are continuously being added to the English language – and can be classified as **regular** or **irregular**. Table 5.4 lists the five forms that all lexical verbs take and contains examples of regular verbs as well as irregular verbs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.4. Forms for regular and irregular verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Base</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regular Verbs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>move</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Irregular Verbs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regular verbs have two characteristics: they will always contain the same set of verb endings (-s, -ed, etc.), and their stems will never change. The verb *walk*, for instance, will have a **base form** (sometimes called the infinitive form) that has no verb ending and that is the form that would be used following the infinitive marker *to: to walk*. In addition, there are
four forms used to mark tense and aspect (semantic notions that will be discussed in the next chapter). Walk has an -s and an -ed form used to mark the present tense (walks) and past tense (walked), respectively. The -s form, however, only occurs with third person singular subjects: He walks, She walks, It walks. With first person I or second person you, for instance, no ending is used: I walk, You walk. The -ed and -ing participle forms are used with the various forms of the primary auxiliaries have and be to mark perfective aspect (have/has walked) and progressive aspect (am/was/were walking).

Irregular verbs do not always have the same endings as regular verbs. In addition, the stems of irregular verbs do not remain constant but sometimes contain internal vowel changes: fight, for instance, becomes fought in the past tense. But despite irregularities such as these, irregular verbs do follow certain patterns. Quirk et al. (1985: 104–14) posit seven different classes of irregular verbs based on such criteria as the number of different forms a verb has as well as similarities in the change of vowels that the verb undergoes. For instance, drink and ring in Table 5.4 have five different forms. In addition, the vowel changes that the stems undergo are identical. The verbs bet and sit are similar in that they have only three distinct forms: the fewest number of forms that a verb can have in English. In contrast, the verb be, as Table 5.5 illustrates, has the greatest number of forms – eight – of any verb in English.

### Table 5.5. The eight forms of the verb be

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base</th>
<th>-s form</th>
<th>-ed past</th>
<th>-ed participle</th>
<th>-ing participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>be</td>
<td>(I) am</td>
<td>was</td>
<td>have been</td>
<td>am being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(we) are</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(you) are</td>
<td>were</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(he/she/it) is</td>
<td>(they) are</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Be has so many forms because it makes distinctions that other verbs do not. For instance, while regular verbs in the present tense end in -s only when they occur with third person singular subjects, be has three different forms in the present tense that vary by person (e.g. am with first person I and is with third person he, she, it). In addition, be has two different past tense forms – was and were – for singular and plural subjects, a distinction not made on regular verbs.

In contrast to lexical verbs, auxiliary verbs are members of a closed class rather than an open class. As a result, auxiliary verbs in English are finite in number and can simply be listed, as is done in Table 5.6.

As Table 5.6 illustrates, the primary auxiliaries be and have are marked for number, and they indicate, as was noted earlier, the progressive and perfective aspect, respectively. However, the primary auxiliary do has a different function: it mainly occurs in certain kinds of questions and negated sentences. In the first example below, did occurs with the lexical verb
In the second sentence, \textit{did} occurs with the phrasal verb \textit{pick up}.

**Why did the Vietnamese ultimately \textit{fight} on?**

\textit{I did not pick her up}

\textit{Joanne’s commitment to the next 12 months \textit{will} leave her little time for the hobbies that she enjoyed before tennis came along.}

**Table 5.6. Primary and modal auxiliaries in English**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Auxiliary Type</th>
<th>Present Tense</th>
<th>Past Tense</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>do(es)</td>
<td>did</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>am/are/is</td>
<td>was/were</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>has/have</td>
<td>had</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modal</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Phrasal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>may/might</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>can/could</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>will/would</td>
<td>be going to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>shall/should</td>
<td>ought to/need to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>must</td>
<td>have to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textit{fight} in a \textit{wh-question}. In the second sentence, \textit{did} occurs with the phrasal verb \textit{pick up}.

\textit{I did not pick her up}

\textit{Joanne’s commitment to the next 12 months \textit{will} leave her little time for the hobbies that she enjoyed before tennis came along.}

**I do like to hear you talk.**

\textit{Without \textit{do} – I like to hear you talk – the statement is far less emphatic.}

There are two types of modal auxiliaries: central and phrasal. Table 5.6 lists all the central modals in English, plus some select phrasal modals. An expression such as \textit{be going to} is considered a modal because, like \textit{will}, it express future time and occurs at the beginning of the verb phrase. In the examples below, both \textit{will} and \textit{is going to} mark future time and occur before the lexical verb \textit{leave}:

\textit{Joanne’s commitment to the next 12 months \textit{will} leave her little time for the hobbies that she enjoyed before tennis came along.}

\textit{Joanne’s commitment to the next 12 months \textit{is going to leave} her little time for ...}
However, while will and is going to are interchangeable in this context, in other contexts they are not.

Unlike primary auxiliaries, modal auxiliaries are typically not marked for either number or tense. The modal must, for instance, has the same form whether its subject is singular or plural:

The **machine** must serve the customer, not the other way around.

*(ICE-GB W2E-009 084)*

The **machines** must ...

In addition, the difference between modals such as can and could is usually one of meaning, not of tense. In the example below, substituting could for can does not change the tense in the sentence but instead the meaning:

Can you give us the title of the book?

*(MICASE COL999MX040)*

Could you give us the title of the book?

By using can, the speaker is asking the addressee whether she can actually supply the name of the book: this is a question requiring a yes or no answer. However, if could is substituted for can, the sentence becomes a polite request for the book title. In other words, the speaker assumes that the addressee knows the title of the book and is indirectly asking her for the title. This use of could was extensively discussed in Chapter 3 in sections on indirect speech acts and politeness.

While only one modal can occur in a verb phrase at a time, more than one primary auxiliary is possible. In examples below, two primary auxiliaries (have been) follow the modal auxiliary may.

Detectives said Mrs Page-Alucard **may have been murdered** as early as Friday morning, more than 24 hours before her body was discovered.

*(BNC A49 659)*

While it is possible to find up to three primary auxiliaries, such examples are rare. The example below contains three primary auxiliaries – has, been, and being – preceding the lexical verb discussed:

That er, er, little action has been taken in the last thirty forty years since this **has been being discussed**, erm, I think the first international conference erm, produced their own report in nineteen sixty.

*(BNC JIG 542)*

Only two examples of verb phrases like this occurred in the 100-million-word British National Corpus.

**Expanding the scope of the verb phrase.** Because Quirk *et al.* (1985) restrict the verb phrase to consisting of only an obligatory lexical verb and one or more optional auxiliaries, they would schematize the verb phrase in the sentence *I called my mother* as diagrammed in Figure 5.1.
Aarts and Haegeman (2006: 130) argue for this analysis on the grounds that *called my mother* is a single unit rather than separate constituents in the sentence. As support for this claim, they note that if the pro-verb *do* were used to substitute for a part of the above sentence, *do* would substitute for both the verb and noun phrase, not just the verb. Therefore, if someone inquired “Did you call your mother,” a possible reply would be “Yes, I did” with *did* substituting for *called my mother*. Substitution, as noted earlier, is one test for constituency.

Aarts and Haegeman (2006) provide additional evidence for including other elements in the verb phrase, such as adverb phrases. In an earlier discussion of the adjective phrase, it was noted that certain kinds of adverb phrases can occur within the adjective phrase and be used to intensify adjectives, as *very* does in the adjective phrase *very nice*. However, there is a second kind of adverb phrase that is quite moveable in a clause and as
a result can occur in many different positions. For instance, consider the positions in which the adverb only occurs in the examples below:

I was the only teacher in the whole school who did not have textbooks  
(SBCSAE)

The planner is set up so you can only choose one action for each state.  
(MICASE DEF270SF061)

In the first example, only is focusing the head noun teacher, stressing that the teacher was the only instructor in the school without textbooks. Because only occurs between the article the and the head noun teacher, it makes sense to say that only is part of the noun phrase. In the second example, only occurs between the modal auxiliary can and the lexical verb choose. By the same logic, one would have to claim that only is part of the verb phrase. To claim otherwise (i.e. that only is outside the verb phrase), Aarts and Haegeman (2006: 129) argue, one would have to allow for a verb phrase that is “discontinuous”; that is, that can and choose in the above example are literally split in two and would constitute separate verb phrases separated by an adverb phrase containing only. Since such a constituent structure is implausible, it makes sense to say that verb phrases must be expanded to include adverb phrases as well.

Adverbs, which serve as heads of adverb phrases, are a very heterogeneous form class. As Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 563) comment, “the adverb is a miscellaneous or residual category – the category to which words are assigned if they do not satisfy the more specific criteria for nouns, verbs, adjectives, prepositions, and conjunctions.” Although Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 264) attempt to limit the number of items included in the class of adverbs, the class is still very large and diverse.

While many adverbs end with the suffix -ly, this is not always the case. For instance, the sentence below contains four adverbs ending in -ly:

A single-volume history has recently been courageously and skillfully attempted by Hugh Honour and John Fleming, which inevitably suffers from the problem of compression.  
(BNC AO4 450)

The first adverb, recently, is a time adverb, a class including other adverbs ending in -ly, such as momentarily and temporarily. However, other time adverbs, such as now and then, do not end in -ly. Moreover, some words ending in -ly, such as lovely and lonely, are not adverbs at all but attributive adjectives, because they occur before nouns:

It’s a lovely dress.  
(BNC FS1 1260)

The remaining adverbs illustrate other adverb-types. The words courageously and skillfully are manner adverbs: adverbs that can be paraphrased as ‘in a courageous manner’ or ‘in a skillful manner.’ The last adverb, inevitably, is part of a large class of adverbs that Quirk et al. (1985: 620) label as content disjuncts: adverbs that enable a speaker or writer to “comment on the content of what he [or she] is saying [or writing].” In the above
example, the writer uses the adverb *inevitably* to express his view that because the book was only one volume in length, it did not contain enough detail.

Although it is common for adverb phrases to be one word in length, if the adverb head expresses degree it can be intensified with the same adverbs used to intensify adjectives: *very recently, somewhat skillfully, quite erratically.* While intensifiers occur only before the adverbs that they intensify, other adverbs are moveable. However, different types of adverbs often have preferred positions within a clause. For instance, if place and time adverbs occur together, the place adverb (*here* in the example below) will always precede the time adverb (*yesterday*):

I saw that some of you were *here yesterday.*

(MICASE STP545JU091)

The adverb *hopefully* is both a disjunct (or *stance adverb* in some grammars) and a manner adverb. As a disjunct, it means ‘It is hoped’ and occurs either first in a sentence or shortly thereafter:

*Hopefully* it will improve Neil a bit but I think he’s happier where he is now.

(ICE-GB S1A-025 285)

Well *hopefully* I won’t be with Natalie by then so

(SBCSAE)

As a manner adverb, however, it means ‘in a hopeful manner’ and will tend to be positioned after the verb:

Loretta waited *hopefully,* anxious to hear more about Veronica’s relationship with Puddephat.

(BNC HTR 2384)

Since manner adverbs are so closely related to the verb in a clause, they tend to occur either close to the verb or sentence-finally.

Conjunctive adverbs, such as *therefore* or *however,* occur very close to the start of a clause:

*SU-m:* So is that the review questions, all the review questions?

*S1:* Yeah um *however,* you can rest assured that the questions that were on the midterm will not be on the final.

(MICASE LAB175SU033)

As was noted in Chapter 3 in the section on cohesion, adverbs such as *however* establish links between parts of a text – links that are best established early in a clause. As a result, conjunctive adverbs occur towards the beginning of a clause.

The factors influencing the positioning of time adverbs such as *here* or conjunctive adverbials such as *consequently* apply not just to adverb phrases but to other phrases, such as prepositional phrases, as well: like *consequently,* the prepositional phrase *as a result* will occur towards the start of a clause. While these constructions have different forms, they have the same function: adverbial. The next section describes the notion of clause
function in detail, and also elucidates the structure of two additional form classes: clauses and sentences.

**Clauses, sentences, and clause functions**

Like words and phrases, clauses and sentences have a specific form. For instance, the declarative sentence *The child rode a bicycle* consists of a noun phrase (*The child*) and a verb phrase (*rode a bike*) within which there is another noun phrase (*a bike*). However, clauses and sentences differ from words and phrases in that they can additionally be analyzed into clause functions: subject, predicator, object (direct or indirect), complement (subject or object), and adverbial. In the above example, *The child* functions as subject, *rode* as predicator, and *a bike* as direct object. Similar forms can have different functions because the function that a particular form has is relative to other forms with which it occurs. In the sentence *The police officer questioned the child*, *the child* now has the function of direct object, not subject of the sentence.

Of all the clause functions, the predicator is most important, since the lexical verb within the predicator determines the argument structure of a clause: the number and type of clause functions other than the predicator that can appear within a given clause. For instance, because the verb *died* is intransitive (i.e. does not allow an object), it can occur in a clause with as little as a single argument, the subject noun phrase *the patient* in the example below:

> Although technically the health authority bears responsibility, in practice the funeral arrangements are made by the staff of the hospital where *the patient* died.

*(BNC A0Y 258)*

In the next example, in contrast, because the verb *gave* is transitive (i.e. permits up to two objects), it allows for more arguments than *died*, in this case three arguments: a subject (*I*), an indirect object (*him*), and a direct object (*a red pepper*):

> I gave *him* a red pepper

*(SBCSAE)*

While the verb within the predicator dictates which clause functions can occur within a clause, how functions such as subject and object are defined is determined by a series of linguistic characteristics that each function possesses and that distinguish one function from another. One characteristic is positional: subjects tend to occur before the verb, objects after the verb. However, this generalization does not always hold true: when objects are topicalized (as in *Beans I like*), they occur before the subject. For this reason, to adequately define a given clause function, more than one linguistic characteristic is typically associated with the function. Many sentences containing direct objects, for instance, can often undergo passivization, with the direct object becoming subject of a corresponding sentence in the passive voice. Thus, in the sentence *The police officer
questioned the child, the direct object – the child – becomes subject of a corresponding sentence in the passive voice: The child was questioned by the police officer.

To define clause functions as well as the form of the clauses and sentences in which they occur, this section begins with a discussion of the difference between main and subordinate clauses, describes how such clauses can be coordinated, and then defines the various clause functions as they occur in the four main types of sentences in English: declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory.

**Main and subordinate clauses**

All sentences consist of an obligatory main clause and one or more optional subordinate clauses. To begin describing main and subordinate clauses, it is useful to distinguish between finite and non-finite verb forms, and to discuss the various kinds of **subordinating conjunctions** that occur in subordinate clauses.

Although a single main clause can theoretically contain many different clause functions, the defining characteristic of all main clauses is that they must contain a predicator consisting of a finite verb. The predicator is a clause function that includes all of the elements making up Quirk et al.’s (1985) definition of a verb phrase: an obligatory lexical verb and one or more optional auxiliary verbs. In the three examples below, the predicates occur in a single main clause and are, respectively, *walks*, *talked*, and *was thinking*:

She just *walks* away.  
(BNC A74 3045)

We *talked* about this yesterday too  
(MICASE COL285MSSX038)

I *was thinking* of Turkish yoghurt  
(ICE-GB S1A-063 018)

Each of the predicates, in turn, consists of either a lexical verb or auxiliary that is finite, some verbal element that is marked for tense: *walks* is marked for present tense, *talked* and *was* for past tense. Because each of the examples contains a finite verb and no markers of subordination, each of the examples qualifies as a main clause.

A clause becomes subordinate if it:

1. lacks a finite verb and instead contains one or more non-finite verbs; or
2. is headed by a subordinating conjunction such as *when*, *if*, *because*, or *who*.

In the verb phrase *was thinking*, while *was* is finite, *thinking* is non-finite. The verb *thinking*, an *-ing* participle, is non-finite because it is marked for **aspect**, not for tense. Because tense and aspect are semantic notions, they will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. But an analysis of the verb phrase *was thinking* will briefly illustrate the difference between
the two notions. In this phrase, because the auxiliary was is marked for past tense, it locates the activity of “thinking” at some time in the past. The lexical verb thinking, in contrast, does not situate the act of “thinking” at any specific point of time. Instead, it focuses more on the “temporal flow” of the utterance, as Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 117) describe aspect, indicating that the activity of “thinking” was a continuous process. If the auxiliary am is used instead of was, the idea of a continuous activity persists, but the time frame of the “thinking” shifts to the present.

English has two aspects: the progressive and the perfective. The progressive, as noted above, is associated with -ing participles, the perfective with -ed participles. When these two participles occur in a clause without an accompanying finite verb, the clause will always be subordinate. To illustrate how subordination works, consider the example below, which contains two clauses: a subordinate clause (enclosed in brackets) followed by a main clause:

[Thinking he was taking a call from the FBI liaison man in London to announce Simon Cormack’s release,] Michael Odell did not mind the hour: 5 a.m. in Washington.

(BNC CAM 1828)

As the term ‘subordinate’ suggests, a subordinate clause is always part of a main clause. In the example above, the opening clause (repeated as [a] below), which contains the non-finite participle thinking, is subordinate to the main clause ([b] below), which is marked by the finite auxiliary did, which is in the past tense:

(a) Thinking he was taking a call from the FBI liaison man in London to announce Simon Cormack’s release ...
(b) ... Michael Odell did not mind the hour: 5 a.m. in Washington.

Theoreticians will differ over whether the subordinate clause is part of the main clause or separate from it. But the important point is that a subordinate clause is always associated with a main clause.

Clauses containing -ing participles are one of three types of non-finite verbs that Quirk et al. (1985: 150–1) identify as occurring in subordinate clauses. A second type contains a non-finite -ed participle. In the two examples below, the irregular -ed participles driven and taken head the subordinate clauses enclosed in brackets:

[Driven by disappointment in the present, concern for the future and nostalgia for the past,] feelings of nationalism flowed out again into old moulds.

(ICE-GB W2B-007–086)

So I have a Spanish um, English bilingual sample, [taken from a class actually of self identifying U-S Latinos.]

(MICASE STP355MG011)

In the two following examples, a third type of non-finite clause, called a to-infinitive clause, contains the base form of the verb preceded by the infinitive marker to:
[To choose the best model initially,] we examined main effects and interaction terms for the Armed Forces Qualifying Test composite.

(ICE-USA W2A-024)

[To begin to decrease this isolation] is therefore a vital part of the stress-reduction programme.

(BNC CKS 1275)

While all of the previous subordinate clauses contained non-finite verb phrases, it is also possible for a subordinate clause to contain a finite verb and be headed by a subordinating conjunction, such as if, because, while, who, when, and even though. In the example below, the subordinating conjunction if heads a subordinate clause containing the verb phrase has been discussed, which is headed by the finite verb has:

I don’t know [if that issue has been discussed by the um coordinating council].

(SBCSAE)

The examples below contain additional instances of subordinate clauses with different subordinating conjunctions:

[When my finances are more stable] I will visit Paris.

(ICE-GB W1B-008 135)

They had a vague idea [where the place was].

(BNC AO3 846)

They were actually selling their beadworks [because they realized a lot of Westerners were really into that.]

(MICASE LEL115JU090)

These actors are place entrepreneurs [who strive for maximum financial return through investing, renting, or taxing property.]

(ICE-USA W2A-014)

The last example above with who is a specific type of subordinate clause known as a relative clause. Relative clauses are embedded in noun phrases. They begin with a relative pronoun: who(m), which, that, whose, and (sometimes) where and when. In the above example, who is chosen because it is used to replace a personal noun, in this case place entrepreneurs. The relative pronoun that could also have been used:

These actors are place entrepreneurs that strive ...

That can also replace non-personal nouns along with which. In the example below, which replaces the non-personal noun cottage:

I lived with an elderly lady in a little thatched cottage which looked like something out of Hansel and Gretel.

(BNC BN1 2204)

The clause function of the noun phrase being relativized determines the choice of who vs. whom. Who is used below because it replaces the
subject of the clause in which it occurs, a function illustrated by the fact that if a personal pronoun such as *they* or *them* is substituted for *who*, the choice is the subject form *they*:

Women *who* were never married or widows uh continue to play a major role in Pauline churches.

Women [women were never married or widows] uh continue ... [they were never ...]

In the next example, *whom* is chosen because in this case an object is being replaced, as indicated by the choice of *them* rather than *they* to replace *those*:

Aeneas suffers perpetual isolation as he wanders from place to place, having lost those *whom* he loved.

Those [he loved those] [he loved them]

Because *whom* is dying out in English, it is being replaced by *who* in less formal styles:

... having lost those who he loved.

When objects are relativized, it is also possible to omit the relative pronoun altogether, creating a clause containing what is sometimes referred to as a zero-relative:

... having lost those he loved.

There is one additional type of subordinate clause, termed a verbless clause, that contains a subordinating conjunction but no predicator whatsoever. The example below contains the subordinator *when* followed by a prepositional phrase:

Franco never took major steps *[when in doubt]*.

Implied in the above clause is a subject and predicator: *when [Franco was] in doubt*.

**Coordination.** Subordinate clauses are sometimes referred to as dependent clauses because they are part of some other unit and cannot stand alone. A relative clause, for instance, is embedded in a noun phrase. With coordination, however, there is no dependency. Instead, two or more “like” units are connected by *and*, *or*, or *but*. The examples below illustrate four noun phrases coordinated by *and*:

These are an elite group comprising *Hong Kong, S. Korea, Taiwan*, and *Singapore*
two noun phrases coordinated by or:

The body is not an instrument we can replace or a symbol we can contest; it is inescapably us.

(ICE-USA W2A-001)

two non-finite -ing participle clauses coordinated by and:

Coming out of the libraries and walking through the courtyard towards the gate at the other end, you will see on your left the façade of the Church of St Mary.

(BNC APT 661)

and two main clauses coordinated by but:

There are a lot of ways you could you know check for inactivity but the point is that’s not a good measure of global quiescence.

(MICASE MTG270SG049)

While and and or can connect more than two clauses, but is restricted to conjoining only two clauses.

While it is clear in the preceding examples that “like” units are coordinated, in some cases this notion becomes problematic. For instance, in the example below, two noun phrases are conjoined. However, the first noun phrase consists only of a forename – Frank – while the second noun phrase contains both a forename and surname: Dweezil Zappa.

However, free tempo soloing can sound great – just look at Frank and Dweezil Zappa.

(BNC C9J 2301)

To resolve the issue of non-parallelism in examples such as this, Matthews (1981: 203—7) argues that in the first conjoin of this example, the surname is “latent”; that is, its existence in this noun phrase is implied so that what is really coordinated is something like:

Frank [Zappa] and Dweezil Zappa

In other cases, it is necessary to propose ellipsis: the omission of some item that is identical to another item. The example below illustrates an instance of gapping: the deletion of some item in the middle of the second conjunct:

It looked like the sort of place where muggers might lurk and accidents [] wait to happen.

(ICE-GB W2F-006 #16:1)

In this example, the auxiliary might before wait in the second conjunct is deleted under identity with the instance of might before lurk in the first conjunct. By proposing ellipsis in the second conjunct, it is possible to claim that two like units – main clauses – are coordinated rather than one main clause and an incomplete second clause.
Clause functions are best defined in terms of their relationship to one another. While the pronouns I and me can clearly be regarded as subject and object pronouns, respectively, noun phrases in English have no such markings. Consequently, other linguistic criteria need to be considered to determine which function a particular element in a clause should be assigned. For instance, noun phrases can function as subject, object, complement, or adverbial. However, whether a noun phrase is functioning as, say, subject or direct object will depend upon the relationship the noun phrase has with the predicator. In the sentence The child paints pictures, the noun phrase The child is subject, not pictures, because subjects agree with predicates in number and direct objects do not. If child had been plural, the predicator would have had a different form: The children paint pictures. Of course, if the verb is changed to the past tense, agreement becomes irrelevant, since the same form, painted, would have been used with either child or children: The child/children painted pictures. This latter example does not invalidate agreement between subject and verb as an indicator of what is subject in a sentence. It simply indicates that additional linguistic criteria are needed to define each of the clause elements.

Because subject and predicator are functions that most clauses contain, these functions will be considered first as they help define the four types of sentences in English: declarative, interrogative, exclamatory, and imperative sentences. The section will close with a discussion of the remaining clause functions: objects (direct and indirect), complements (subject and object), and adverbials.

Although terms such as “subject” and “direct object” are used fairly consistently across various grammars of English, in some more traditionally based grammars other functions have different names. For instance, in some grammars, “predicate adjective” is used instead of “subject complement.” For the sake of consistency, the terms used in this section (with one exception) follow those used in Quirk et al. (1985). The one difference concerns the term “verb,” which Quirk et al. (1985) use to describe both the form of verbs as well as their function. Since this dual use of the term “verb” might create unwanted ambiguity, the term “predicator” is used instead to describe the function of verbal elements and “verb” reserved only to describe their form.

Subject and predicator. In an analysis of 677 sentences in 100 business letters, Pelsmaekers (1999: 266) found that 83 percent of the sentences were declarative, 11 percent imperative, and 6 percent interrogative (the frequency of exclamatory sentences was not included in the study). Although business English is hardly representative of English in general, these statistics do point to the prominence in written English of declarative sentences over imperative and interrogative sentences. In spoken English, the distributions are different. While Biber et al. (1999) do not give figures for the frequency of declarative sentences in spontaneous conversations, they do note that interrogatives (p. 211) and imperatives (p. 221) are more common in spontaneous conversations than in fiction, news, or academic
writing, with interrogatives occurring more frequently than imperatives. These distributions obviously have a functional basis: unlike writing, conversation is interactive, resulting in speakers questioning one another more often or making more frequent use of imperatives to issue requests. Although imperatives lack subjects (except in special circumstances), the other three types of sentences contain (minimally) both a subject and predicator, making these two clause functions central clause elements.

The predicator has a fairly straightforward definition. It consists only of verbal elements: an obligatory lexical verb and one or more optional auxiliary verbs. In addition, only these elements can function as predicator, and they cannot have any additional functions. Subjects, however, are more varied in form – they can be noun phrases or certain types of clauses – and these forms can have other functions as well: noun phrases, for instance, can also function as objects, complements, or adverbials. For this reason, subjects are defined in terms of their position in a clause and their relation to the predicator.

Because the unmarked word order in English is S (subject) V (verb, or predicator) O (object), in declarative sentences the subject will most frequently precede the predicator. However, position alone is not sufficient to define the subject of a sentence because other clause elements, as noted earlier, can precede the predicator as well. In the example below, two noun phrases – This morning and two workmen – precede the predicator, were screwing:

This morning, two workmen were half-heartedly screwing new bulbs into the sockets.

(BNC HOF 1708)

Because the verb is plural (were) rather than singular (was), subject–verb agreement in the clause identifies the plural noun phrase two workmen as subject rather than the singular This morning. In cases where agreement is not relevant, however, the subject can be identified by comparing the structure of declarative and interrogative sentences, since systematic changes in the positioning of subjects and certain parts of the predicator occur when the structure of a declarative sentence and comparable interrogative sentence are contrasted.

In a yes/no question, one type of interrogative sentence, the subject and what Quirk et al. (1985: 79–81) term the operator switch positions within the clause. When the example above becomes a yes/no question, notice how the auxiliary were changes places not with This morning but with two workmen:

This morning, were two workmen half-heartedly screwing new bulbs into the sockets?

All auxiliary verbs (both primary and modal) can be operators as well as all forms of the lexical verb be, sometimes referred to as a copula. The examples below illustrate subject–operator inversion with, respectively, a modal auxiliary, primary auxiliary, and the lexical verb be:

Abortion should be illegal.

(MICASE STP545JU091)
→ Should abortion be illegal?

Both firms have taken a 45 per cent stake in each other’s truck business.  
(BNC A6W 172)

→ Have both firms taken a 45 per cent stake ...?

Some people are lucky  
(SBCSAE)

→ Are some people lucky?

There is one additional operator that is used in questions containing a lexical verb other than be and no auxiliaries. The two examples below contain the lexical verbs left and listens. When the examples are made yes/no questions, the lexical verbs and subjects do not change positions (*leave she ...?). Instead, the operator do appears before the subject, carrying the tense of the lexical verb (past tense in the first example, present tense in the second):

She left it on the seashore.  
(ICE-GB S1A-018 069)

→ Did she leave it on the seashore?

She listens to herself.  
(BNC KBE 1398)

→ Does she listen to herself?

The use of so-called periphrastic do in the above examples is a relatively new phenomenon in English, dating back to Early Modern English. Not only is it used in questions such as the above but in parallel environments with the negative marker not. Consequently, when the first two examples below are negated, not will be positioned directly following should and are.

Should abortion be illegal?
→ Abortion should not be illegal.

Are some people lucky?
→ Some people are not lucky.

In the next example, however, did is added before not, just as it was added when the sentence had the form of a yes/no question:

Did she leave it on the seashore?
→ She did not leave it on the seashore.

In the other kind of major interrogative sentence in English, the wh-question, whether do is used or not with lexical verbs other than be is a matter of whether the question is subject-oriented or object-oriented. A wh-question begins with a wh-word such as which, why, when, who, where, and how. While a yes/no question elicits a yes or no response (except, of course, in the case of indirect speech acts), a wh-question requests specific information from the listener, or in written texts asks a rhetorical question of the reader:

What do we have in common, what can we talk about?  
(ICE-USA W2A-020)
When is it appropriate to use a T-test and when isn’t it?
(MICASE OFC575MU046)

How have you been since then?
(ICE-GB S1A-089 221)

Where did that language of exaggeration come from?
(SBCSAE)

In the above examples, the choice of an operator follows the pattern exhibited with yes/no questions and negation: do with the lexical verb have in the first example, for instance; inversion with can in the second example. However, this pattern differs when the focus of the wh-word is on the subject rather than the object. Both of the examples below contain some form of the lexical verb go. In the first example, the focus is on whom the person went to. A possible response to the question is He went to her. This is therefore an object-oriented wh-question and requires use of periphrastic do.

Who did he go to?
(BNC HTX 4084)

The next example, however, focuses on the individual who went into the room. A possible reply to the question is She went into the room. In contrast to the previous example, this is a subject-oriented wh-question. Therefore, periphrastic do is not used:

Who went into my room?
(BNC FS8 2110)

In addition to declarative and interrogative sentences, English also has exclamatory and imperative sentences. As Quirk et al. (1985: 834–5) note, exclamatory sentences (or ‘exclamatives’ as they term them) are very restricted in form. They begin with only two wh-words: either what or how. If the sentence begins with what, what will typically be followed by an indefinite article, an adjective, and a head noun, and finally a subject and predicate:

What a lovely day it was!
(BNC EFW 1763)

What a jerk you are
(SBCSAE)

How will precede an adjective and intensify it; the adjective will be followed by a subject and predicate:

How wonderful she is you know
(ICE-GB S1A-010 217)

How stupid I was!
(BNC FRX 134)

As two of the above examples illustrate, in writing, exclamation marks will end an exclamatory sentence. However, not all sentences ending in exclamation marks are exclamatory. The first example below is an imperative sentence, the second example a declarative sentence.
Please support generously!

(BNC A03 297)

YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU!

(BNC CHW 342)

Exclamation marks are used more for emphasis in these examples.

While exclamatory sentences can be complete sentences, often they are abbreviated, with the subject–predicator section of the sentence implied:

What a gorgeous view

(MICASE LAB175SU026)

How stupid

(ICE-GB S1A-014 198)

The final sentence type in English is the imperative sentence. Unlike the three other sentence types, imperatives can include as little as a single predicator, such as Leave or Stop. However, in imperatives of this type there is an implied subject you:

(You) leave
(You) stop

While including you in an imperative is not common, often it is done to add emphasis to the command:

You listen carefully to what he wants.

(BNC J13 1756)

The verb in all imperatives of this type will be in the base form. It is not possible for imperatives to have other forms: *leaves or *leaving.

In addition to second person imperatives, there are also first person imperatives. These have a very fixed form and always begin with Let's followed by the base form of the verb:

Let's talk about race in terms of power

(SBCSAE)

let's sorta go through step by step what the newspaper did in that case, and whether it was ethical or not.

(MICASE LES220SU140)

Objects and complements. Objects and complements are clause functions that in unmarked clauses occur following the predicator. The particular lexical verb occurring within the predicator, in turn, determines which of these functions will occur within a clause.

There are two types of objects in English: direct and indirect. Although both objects require a transitive verb, they require different types of transitive verbs. Because a direct object can occur alone within a clause, it takes a monotransitive verb (i.e. a verb requiring a single object). In all the examples below, direct objects follow monotransitive verbs:
She has written several books.

Headland is buying Multisoft, a software group which makes business accounting systems designed for the personal computer market.

He named like half a dozen viruses

The key test for an object is that it can be made subject of a sentence in the passive voice:

Several books were written by her.
Multisoft is being bought by Headland.
Half a dozen viruses were named by him.

However, because the acceptability of a passive construction is, as was demonstrated in the last chapter, very context-dependent, often passivization of an object yields a sentence of questionable acceptability. For instance, while similarities between the two kinds of parents in the example below is a direct object, passivization results in a sentence that is grammatical but of questionable acceptability:

We saw similarities between the two kinds of parents

?Similarities between the two kinds of parents were seen by us.

But despite the questionable acceptability of the above example, passivization is nevertheless a good indicator of a direct object.

Like direct objects, indirect objects can also undergo passivization. However, indirect objects require a ditransitive verb: a verb that allows for two objects. Each of the examples below contains a ditransitive verb followed first by an indirect object (in italics) and then a direct object (in boldface):

She was showing me some photographs of herself and John in the Lake District

DVLA will then send you a new Registration Document in your name.

She poured me a second cup of coffee.

And when they banned me from playing cricket for a month, they actually did me a favour.

All of the indirect objects in the above examples can be made subjects of sentences in the passive voice, as in, for instance:

I was shown some photographs
You will be sent a new Registration Document
One additional test for an indirect object is that it can often be moved after the direct object and become an object of the prepositions to or for:

She was showing some photographs to me.
They actually did a favour for me.

If the direct object is a personal pronoun, an indirect object is not possible. Instead, the potential indirect object must be moved to the object position in prepositional phrases headed by to or for:

I’m just showing it to him

*I’m just showing him it.

While these sentences are roughly equivalent in meaning to those in which the indirect object precedes the direct object, the prepositional phrases above are not indirect objects because objects can only have the form of noun phrases. As will be demonstrated in the next section, the prepositional phrases are best analyzed as adverbials.

Complements are constructions related to either the subject of the sentence or the object. Subject complements follow a specific type of verb: either copular be or a linking verb such as appear, seem, resemble, or look. In this type of construction, the complement either names or describes the subject. In the example below, the subject complement ill, an adjective phrase, is linked by the copular verb is to the subject of the sentence, my husband, and describes this person’s state of health:

What’s more, my husband is ill, and I can’t afford to buy his medicine.

(BNC G3U 131)

In the next example, the copular verb was links the subject complement my very first contact ... with the subject Radford. In this instance, the subject complement serves to identify Radford as the speaker’s “first contact ... with Chomsky’s theories”:

Yeah, Radford was my very first contact with right uh okay, with, with, Chomsky’s theories

(MICASE STP355MG011)

The next two examples provide illustrations of subject complements occurring with the linking verbs seems and appears. Because the subject complements are adjectives, they describe the subjects.

The government hopes that at some point the Liberation Front can be persuaded to accept some form of autonomy short of independence, but that seems unlikely in the foreseeable future.

(BNC CR7 815)

The second of the paired versions of each signature appears somewhat different.

(ICE-USA W2A-031)

A similar relationship exists with object complements, which describe or name the object rather than the subject. However, while a subject and
subject complement are linked by a predicator, the object and object complement are related by an implied predicator. For instance, in the example below, the object complement *infectious* describes the direct object, *her own enthusiasm for the subject*:

She has made *her own enthusiasm for the subject infectious*.

(MICASE COL575MX055)

Because a copular relationship exists between the two functions, the two parts function in many ways as a clause, or what some theorists, such as Aarts (1992), refer to as a **small clause**:

**Her own enthusiasm for the subject is infectious**

But because no overt predicator occurs, more descriptively oriented grammars refer to the object and object complement as separate clause functions, realized by phrases, within a clause.

Like direct and indirect objects, objects and object complements require specific kinds of verbs, such as *find* and *consider* in the examples below, capable of taking three arguments:

I find it **fascinating**.

(ICE-GB S1A-002 035)

Although she turns up for the interview her customary peaked-capped urchin self, she is worried that her feminist interpreters will consider *her video a sell-out*.

(BNC A7S 194)

While object complements are typically noun or adjective phrases, they can also be prepositional phrases headed by the preposition *as*:

If we consider *this as an equilibrium between two acids*, this is the stronger acid.

(MICASE LEL200MU110)

It is a recipe which adopts *semiotics as its overall conceptual structure*.

(ICE-GB W2A-007 012)

**Adverbials.** Because the terms “adverbial” and “adverb” are so similar, it is easy to confuse them. An adverb is a term used to describe a particular word class. An adverbial, in contrast, is a term used to describe a particular clause function. While some adverbs can function as adverbials, other adverbs cannot. The example below contains three adverbs, which are highlighted in boldface; only two of the adverbs are functioning as adverbials:

In Santeria, the teaching of ritual skills and moral behavior happens **informally and nonverbally**; thus embodiment is especially important.

(ICE-USA W2A-012)

The first two adverbs – *informally* and *nonverbally* – are manner adverbs that are coordinated heads of an adverb phrase. Because this phrase is not part of another phrase in the clause, it is functioning as an adverbial. The third adverb, *especially*, is an intensifying adverb occurring within an adjective phrase that is functioning as a subject complement. Because
especially is part of this phrase, it has no function in the clause and would therefore not be considered an adverbial.

Many different kinds of phrases can function as adverbials: noun phrases, adverb phrases, prepositional phrases, and clauses (both finite and non-finite). Adverbials differ from the other clause functions in three major regards. First, clauses are restricted to containing only one of the other clause functions: one subject, for instance, or one direct object. However, they can contain more than one adverbial. The clause below contains three adverbials:

A MAN was left homeless yesterday after his pet Jack Russell puppy Sam started a fire at his flat.

(BNC HJ3 218)

Second, although some adverbials favor certain positions in a clause, most can move around. In the example above, yesterday could move to the start of the clause:

Yesterday A MAN was left homeless

The entire clause beginning with after could also be shifted to the start of the sentence:

After his pet Jack Russell puppy Sam started a fire at his flat, a man was left homeless yesterday.

Of course, other clause elements can move around too. But when a direct object is made subject of a sentence in the passive voice, not only does the object change functions (from object to subject) but an entirely different type of sentence results (a sentence in the passive rather than active voice). Moving adverbials around mainly involves changes in emphasis and focus.

Finally, because of the diverse nature of adverbials, they form natural groupings. Biber et al. (1999: 763—5), for instance, identify three classes of adverbials: circumstance, stance, and linking. These classes are distinguished by the particular semantic relations that the adverbial expresses as well as by the extent to which the adverbial is integrated into the clause in which it occurs.

Circumstance adverbials exhibit close integration into clauses. For instance, quickly in the example below is very closely connected to the predicator walked, describing the pace at which Helen had walked.

Helen pulled on her jacket and walked quickly towards the door, not wanting to look at Mike.

(BNC HOF 2728)

Adverbials in this class, Biber et al. (1999: 763) note, answer questions “such as ‘How, When, Where, How much, To what extent?’ and ‘Why’.” Many different kinds of adverbials can answer these questions, and can additionally have many different forms. For instance, the example below contains three time adverbials answering the question “when.” The adverbials are, respectively, a prepositional phrase, a noun phrase, and an adverb phrase:
At dawn this morning the building was seen to be damaged and there’s been no power since.

The next two examples contain space adverbials answering the question “where.” The words up and there are adverbs; the other two adverbials are prepositional phrases:

Did you take a nap on the floor?

There’s a lot of other terminology up there in that document

The degree adverbials below, very well and tremendously, answer the question “To what extent”:

I can’t see very well from here.

and Vinnie Samways is able to calm it down put his foot on the ball steady it for Tottenham and find uh Terry Fenwick who must be enjoying this day tremendously

And the reason adverbials below answer the question “why.” In the first example, the non-finite -ing clause explains that the pupil is better able to communicate because he has developed these models:

Having developed these models the pupil is in a position to communicate much more readily with other technical people who can manipulate similar models.

In the next example, the reason why Romtvedt writes is spelled out explicitly in the finite because clause:

I do not think Romtvedt has a careerist bone in his body; he writes poetry, or writes prose, because that is what he needs to write.

Stance and linking adverbials are much less closely integrated into the clauses in which they occur. The stance adverbials in the examples below – an adverb, prepositional phrase, and two finite clauses, respectively – enable the speaker or writer to comment directly on what is being stated. By using certainly in the first example, for instance, the speaker is expressing certainty in his belief about glaciation in Scandinavia:

Certainly, there was a tremendous amount of glaciation in the Scandinavian countries

In the next example, the phrase in essence indicates that the writer believes that the crux of the problem in schools involves certain attitudes and behaviors: