**THE PHRASE**

**What Is a Phrase?**

A phrase is a group of related words that is used as a single part of speech and that does not contain both a verb and its subject.

VERB PHRASE: have been waiting [no subject]

PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE: during the storm [no subject or verb]

INFINITIVE PHRASE: to run swiftly [no subject or verb]

**Note**: A group of words that has both a subject and a verb is called a clause.

1. **Prepositional Phrases**

A prepositional phrase includes a preposition, the object of the preposition, and any modifiers of that object.

**EXAMPLES**

Did officials **of the Smithsonian Institution** recently unveil plans **for a new museum**? [The compound noun Smithsonian Institution is the object of the preposition of. The noun museum is the object of the preposition for.]

**According to them**, the National Museum of African American History and Culture will be built **next** **to the Washington Monument.** [The pronoun them is the object of the compound preposition According to. The compound noun Washington Monument is the object of the compound preposition next to.]

The object of a preposition may be compound.

**EXAMPLE**

Do you know the Greek myth about **Daedalus** and **Icarus**.

1. **The Adjective Phrase**

A prepositional phrase that modifies a noun or a pronoun is called an adjective phrase. An adjective phrase tells what kind or which one.

**EXAMPLE**

One **of my friends** is making a film **about school**. [Of my friends modifies the pronoun One, telling which one. About school modifies the noun film, telling what kind.]

**Note**: An adjective phrase almost always follows the word it modifies. That word may be the object of another preposition.

**EXAMPLE**

The film won’t include all **of the students** **in our class.** [Of the students modifies the pronoun all. In our class modifies the noun students, which is the object of the preposition of.]

**Note**: More than one adjective phrase may modify the same word.

**EXAMPLE**

Instead, it will relate the adventures **of five students** **at school** and ***in their neighbourhood.*** [The three phrases of five students, at school, and in their neighbourhood modify the noun adventures.]

1. **The Adverb Phrase**

A prepositional phrase that modifies a verb, an adjective, or an adverb is called an adverb phrase. An adverb phrase tells how, when, where, why, or to what extent (how much, how long, or how far).

* **An adverb phrase may modify a verb.**

**EXAMPLE**

**After the early 800s**, the Fujiwara family ruled **as regents** **in Japan** ***for more than three hundred years***. [Each phrase modifies the verb ruled. After the early 800s tells when, as regents tells how, in Japan tells where, and for more than three hundred years tells how long.]

As the preceding example shows, more than one adverb phrase can modify the same word, and an adverb phrase, unlike an adjective phrase, often precedes the word it modifies.

* **An adverb phrase may modify an adjective.**

**EXAMPLE**

Then the Minamoto, another family active **in court intrigues,** gained power. [In court intrigues modifies the adjective active, telling how.]

* **An adverb phrase may modify an adverb.**

**EXAMPLE**

The Fujiwara had ruled too complacently **for their own good.** [For their own good modifies the adverb complacently, telling how.]

1. **Verbals and Verbal Phrases**

A verbal is a verb form that is used as a noun, an adjective, or an adverb. The three kinds of verbals are the participle, the gerund, and the infinitive. A verbal phrase consists of a verbal and its modifiers and complements. The three kinds of verbal phrases are the participial phrase, the gerund phrase, and the infinitive phrase.

* 1. **The Participle**

A participle is a verb form that can be used as an adjective. Two kinds of participles are the present participle and the past participle.

**(1) Present participles end in –ing.**

**EXAMPLES**

The freezing rain made the road slick. [Freezing modifies the noun rain.]

Bowing, the performers acknowledged the applause. [Bowing modifies the noun performers.]

Did I hear someone knocking on the door? [Knocking modifies the pronoun someone.]

**(2) Most past participles end in –d or –ed. Others are irregularly formed.**

**EXAMPLES**

First prize was an engraved trophy. [Engraved modifies the noun trophy.]

The lab tested samples of water taken from wells in the area. [Taken modifies the noun water.]

Rested and relaxed, we returned to work. [Both Rested and relaxed modify the pronoun we.]

**Note**: In addition to their present and past forms, participles have a present perfect form. This form adds having or having been to the past participle of a verb and indicates a completed action.

**EXAMPLES**

**Having completed** his chores, Brian decided to join his friends playing soccer in the park.

**Having been declared** the winner, she called a press conference to thank her supporters.

* 1. **The Participial Phrase**

A participial phrase consists of a participle and its modifiers and complements. The entire phrase is used as an **adjective**.

**EXAMPLES**

**Grinning broadly**, Whoopi Goldberg accepted the award. [The participial phrase modifies the compound noun Whoopi Goldberg. The adverb broadly modifies the present participle Grinning.]

**Proclaiming his innocence**, the candidate vehemently denied the charges. [The participial phrase modifies the noun candidate. The noun innocence is the direct object of the present participle Proclaiming.]

* 1. **The Absolute Phrase**

An absolute phrase consists of (1) a participle or a participial phrase, (2) a noun or a pronoun that the participle or participial phrase modifies, and (3) any other modifiers of that noun or pronoun. The entire word group is used as an **adverb** to modify a clause in a sentence.

**Note**: An absolute phrase has no grammatical connection to any word in the clause it modifies. Rather, the phrase, which tells when, why, or how, modifies the whole clause.

**EXAMPLES**

**Their car having been repaired,** the Pfeiffers continued their road trip. [The absolute phrase modifies the independent clause, telling when the Pfeiffers continued their road trip. The present perfect participle having been repaired modifies the noun car.]

Chris said that, **the weather being so fine,** he would prefer to go for a hike. [The absolute phrase modifies the subordinate clause, telling why Chris would prefer to go for a hike. The participial phrase being so fine modifies the noun weather.]

Wearily, the explorer trudged onward through the snow, **his loyal Alaskan malamute keeping pace at** **his side**. [The absolute phrase modifies the independent clause by telling how the explorer trudged onward through the snow. The participial phrase keeping pace at his side modifies the noun Alaskan malamute.]

* 1. **The Gerund**

A gerund is a verb form ending in –ing that is used as a noun.

SUBJECT: Photographing animals requires great patience.

DIRECT OBJECT: Please stop whispering.

INDIRECT OBJECT: The team gave passing the ball their full attention.

PREDICATE NOMINATIVE: The issue is his whining.

OBJECT OF PREPOSITION: In answering, give specific examples.

Do not confuse a gerund with a present participle used as an adjective or as part of a verb phrase.

GERUND: I remember **driving** from Florida to Texas last fall. [direct object of the verb remember]

PRESENT PARTICIPLE: **Driving on long road trips**, we usually take turns behind the wheel. [adjective modifying the pronoun we]

PRESENT PARTICIPLE: We heard mostly country music on the radio while we were **driving**. [main verb in the verb phrase were driving.

**Note**: Generally, a noun or a pronoun directly before a gerund should be in the possessive case.

**EXAMPLES**

Lee’s pitching won the game.

What did the teacher say about your missing the test yesterday?

* **The Gerund Phrase**

A gerund phrase consists of a gerund and its modifiers and complements. The entire phrase is used as a noun.

**EXAMPLES**

**Managing the restaurant** efficiently required much hard work. [The gerund phrase is the subject of the verb required. The noun restaurant is the direct object of the gerund Managing. The adverb efficiently modifies Managing.]

My cousin enjoys **working as a lifeguard.** [The gerund phrase is the direct object of the verb enjoys. The adverb phrase as a lifeguard modifies the gerund working.]

Her greatest achievement was **winning three gold medals.** [The gerund phrase is a predicate nominative identifying the subject achievement. The noun medals is the direct object of the gerund winning.]

We were fined for **parking there.** [The gerund phrase is the object of the preposition for. The adverb there modifies the gerund parking.]

* 1. **The Infinitive**

An infinitive is a verb form that can be used as a noun, an adjective, or an adverb. Most infinitives begin with to.

NOUNS: **To leave** now would be rude. [subject of would be]

No one wants **to stay.** [direct object of wants]

Her goal is **to win**. [predicate nominative identifying the subject goal]

ADJECTIVES: She is the candidate **to watch**. [adjective modifying the noun candidate]

The one **to see** is the class president. [adjective modifying the pronoun one]

ADVERBS: We came **to cheer.** [adverb modifying the verb came]

Is everybody ready **to go**? [adverb modifying the adjective ready]

**Note**: In addition to the present form, infinitives have a present perfect form. This form adds to have to the past participle and to have been to the present or past participle and indicates completed action.

**EXAMPLES**

**To have seen** him would have pleased Jerome.

Elsa was known to **have been chosen.**

**Note**: The word to, the sign of the infinitive, is sometimes omitted.

**EXAMPLES**

Let’s [to] wait here.

The clowns made us [to] laugh.

Help me [to] wash the car.

* **The Infinitive Phrase**

An infinitive phrase consists of an infinitive and its modifiers and complements. The entire phrase can be used as a noun, an adjective, or an adverb.

NOUNS: **To get a medical degree** is her goal. [The infinitive phrase is the subject of the verb is. The noun degree is the direct object of the infinitive To get.]

They promised **to return soon**. [The infinitive phrase is the direct object of the verb promised. The adverb soon modifies the infinitive to return.]

ADJECTIVE: We have time **to walk to the concert**. [The infinitive phrase modifies the noun time. The adverb phrase to the concert modifies the infinitive to walk.]

ADVERB: He is eager **to give Chris the award.** [The infinitive phrase modifies the adjective eager. The noun Chris is the indirect object of the infinitive to give, and the noun award is the direct object of to give.]

1. **Appositives and Appositive Phrases**

An appositive is a noun or a pronoun placed beside another noun or pronoun to identify or describe it. An appositive usually follows the word it identifies or describes.

**EXAMPLES**

My cousin **María** is an accomplished violinist.

Riboflavin, **a vitamin**, is found in leafy vegetables.

**Note**: For emphasis, however, an appositive may come at the beginning of a sentence.

**EXAMPLE**

**Mollusks**, both snails and clams have shells.

**Note**: An appositive phrase consists of an appositive and its modifiers.

**EXAMPLES**

My brother’s car, **a sporty red hatchback with bucket seats**, has over 100,000 miles on it.

Mr. Hudson, **a member of the jury**, asked the judge a question.

**Note**: An appositive phrase usually follows the word it describes or identifies but may precede it.

**EXAMPLE**

**Once a pagan feast**, Valentine’s Day is now celebrated as a day of love.

1. A **conjunctional phrase**

It works as a conjunction in the sentence.

**EXAMPLE**

As soon as you got in, he went out.

We have to work hard so that we can win the next match.

I will attend the ceremony provided that you come.

John started working early in order that he could finish early.

**7. Interjectional Phrase**

Interjections that have more than one words are called the **interjectional phrases**.

**EXAMPLE**

What a pity! He is dead.

What a pleasure! I won the first prize.

Oh please! Don’t say that again.